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*NEPANTLA AND MESTIZAJE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS
OF THE MESTIZX HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS*

by

Jorge A. Montiel, B.A., M.A.

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School, Marquette University, in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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ABSTRACT
*NEPANTLA AND MESTIZAJE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE
MESTIZX HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS*

Jorge A. Montiel, B.A., M.A.

Marquette University, 2023

My dissertation consists of two main Parts. Part I draws from Edmund Husserl's notion of the "historical *a priori*" and from seminal decolonial thinker Anibal Quijano's formulation of "coloniality" to offer a framework for what I call the "coloniality of history." Chapter 1 draws from Husserl's and from contemporary analyses of the "historical *a priori*" as a historical horizon of conceivability for subject and truth formation. Chapter 2 brings this phenomenological analysis to interpret Quijano's formulation of "coloniality" as a historical horizon of conceivability and to offer a framework for what I call the "coloniality of history." This framework shows that historical ideals introduced during colonization continue to structure the ways in which colonized peoples relate to the past, present, and future. Part II applies the framework of the coloniality of history to interpret developmentalist conceptions of history which served to justify colonial enterprises in Latin America, and to delineate the limits and possibilities of the liberation project called *mestizaje*. Chapter 3 argues that developmentalist conceptions of history situated colonized peoples within a double bind: between an uncivilized indigenous past and a civilized European future. I characterize this historical situation as *nepantla*, an indigenous concept that captures the existential situation of being in-between worlds of meaning. Chapter 4 analyzes the liberation project of *mestizaje* in the work of mid-20th century Mexican philosopher Leopoldo Zea. I argue that Zea's conception of *mestizaje* traces the Latin American identity to its indigenous past, thereby continuing to relegate indigenous peoples as the *past* rather than the *present* of Latin America. Chapter 5 turns to Gloria Anzaldúa's formulation of *mestizaje*. I argue that Anzaldúa articulates *nepantla* in an *embodied* way, and that she articulates *mestizaje* as the juxtaposition of historical meanings which aims to generate a new conception of the colonized body.

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Jorge A. Montiel, B.A., M.A.

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Introduction:

0.1. Motivating the Dissertation Project:

The *mestizx* historical consciousness that I examine in this dissertation refers to the historical projects of Latin American peoples. Although we might think of this analysis as merely a historiographical effort, the relevance of this project becomes most evident when we consider the political landscape in Latin America over the past five years. At the same time as I wrote this dissertation, I witnessed a shift in the political landscape of Latin America towards what analysts call the “second pink wave” in the region.¹ Originally, the “pink wave” referred to the emergence of progressive governments in Latin America during the late 1990’s and early 2000’s. The most prominent governments of the first pink wave are Hugo Chávez in Venezuela (1999-2013), Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil (2003-2010), and Evo Morales in Bolivia (2006-2019). These governments not only advocated for recovering the welfare state but also opposed the imperialistic policies of the U.S. However, these governments were followed by a series of governments that implemented U.S. neoliberal policies, which consist in the privatization of rights protected by the welfare state such as the right to education, the right to health, the right to security, among others. Chile led this series of neoliberal governments with the implementation of neoliberal policies in 1980 under the leadership of dictator Augusto Pinochet, and Bolivia represents the most recent and violent transition towards a neoliberal government with the 2019 coup d’état against President

¹ In an interview with Mexican journalist Carmen Aristegui, seminal decolonial philosopher Enrique Dussel describes the transition between the first and second pink waves. See, Carmen Aristegui and Enrique Dussel (2019), “Dr. Enrique Dussel en Aristegui Noticias para Hablar de la Situación Actual de México y su Gobierno,” *Aristegui Noticias*, 9/10/2019. Accessed via web on 4/21/2023: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQtOay7eIk8>.

Evo Morales. Although Mexico was ruled by neoliberal governments from 1988 to 2018, and did not participate in the first wave, it led the second pink wave with the election of Andrés Manuel López Obrador in 2018. The governments of the second pink wave that followed Obrador's election are Alberto Fernández in Argentina (2019), Luis Arce in Bolivia (2020), Gabriel Boric in Chile (2021), Pedro Castillo in Peru (2021), Xiomara Castro in Honduras (2021), and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil (2022). Despite their differences, these governments share three distinct elements, namely, the recovering of the welfare state, a humanistic discourse that appeals to "*el pueblo*" as the site of sovereignty, and the Bolivarian project of integrating Latin America.

Although the effort to recover the welfare state by governments of the second pink wave is important from a political and economic point of view, the most relevant aspects for the purposes of this dissertation are their humanistic discourse and the Bolivarian project of integrating Latin America. Consider, for example, Obrador's speech during the 238th anniversary of Simón Bolívar's birthday in 2021.² Besides highlighting the humanistic ideals which guided Bolívar's liberating efforts in Latin America, Obrador traces the project of integrating Latin America to the geopolitical transition from Spanish to U.S. imperialism and, particularly, to the emergence of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. The Monroe Doctrine is captured in the famous dictum of "America for the Americans," and it secures the hegemonic presence in the hemisphere for the U.S. The central aim of Obrador's speech in contraposing Bolívar's liberating efforts to the Monroe Doctrine is to emphasize that the project of integrating Latin America as a political, economic, and

² Andrés Manuel López Obrador (2021), "Discurso en el 238 Aniversario del Natalicio de Simón Bolívar," *Gobierno de México*, 7/24/2021. Accessed via web on 4/21/2023: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JrvSTSyk2WE&t=1060s>.

ethnic entity emerges from the struggle against Spanish and U.S. imperialism.

Importantly, Obrador ends his speech by proposing the integration not only of Latin America, but the economic and humanitarian integration of the Americas, including the U.S. and Canada, into a project like the European Union. Similarly, during the inaugural address of his government, Colombian President Gustavo Petro displayed Bolivar's sword claiming that the sword is a symbol of the sovereignty of "*el pueblo*."³ Besides promising to end the cycle of violence that has afflicted Colombian society for the last two-hundred years and to protect the Amazon rainforest as an effort to prevent the extinction of humanity because of global warming, Petro also complained that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the governments of Latin America could not form a block to secure vaccines for themselves. Petro thus promised Colombians to contribute to realizing the Bolivarian dream of a unified Latin America. The historical project of integrating Latin America along political, economic, and ethnic terms is therefore not a project of the past but continues to guide the present-day struggles of Latin American peoples. As such, analyzing the historical horizon within which the project of a Latin American identity emerges continues to be a relevant endeavor for the political struggles of Latin American peoples.

The second distinctive aspect of the new pink wave in Latin America is a humanistic discourse which appeals to "*el pueblo*" as the site of sovereignty. The appeal to "*el pueblo*" as the site of sovereignty, however, is not new, but it dates from the liberatory movements that emerged throughout Latin America inspired by the Cuban Revolution in 1959. *El pueblo* is a collective construct which refers to the marginalized

³ Gustavo Petro (2022), "Discurso de Posesión de Gustavo Petro como Presidente de Colombia," *W Radio*, 8/7/2022. Accessed via web on 4/21/2023: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1IXjeze_RQ.

masses in Latin America, including indigenous peoples, Afro-Latinx peoples, farmers, and poor people more generally. However, with the advent of neoliberal governments throughout Latin America, the appeal to *el pueblo* was abandoned and was replaced by an individualistic conception of the body politic, thereby also de-politicizing the marginalized masses. The new wave of progressive governments, however, recover the appeal to *el pueblo* as the site of sovereignty. Consider, for example, that on November 27 of 2022, Obrador called his supporters to demonstrate at the civic plazas in the country to support his constitutional reforms. At this multitudinous demonstration, Obrador introduced a national debate when he claimed that the ideals of his movements come from what he called “Mexican humanism.”⁴ In his speech, Obrador drew the ideals of his Mexican humanism to three struggles that shaped the life of Mexico. These three moments are the war of Independence, when people fought to abolish slavery and serfdom, the Mexican Revolution, when people fought for democracy, and to the agrarian reform of the mid-20th century, which fulfilled the promises of the Mexican Revolution. Obrador concluded his message by arguing that the agent of history in Mexico is *el pueblo*, and that they are the guardians of his transformative project in the country. Similarly, at the inaugural speech of his government, President Petro referred to his transformative project in Colombia as a society of life. Arguing that extractivist policies and the war against drugs have brought death to Latin American peoples, Petro argued that the humanistic ideal which would guide his movement is the value of life. Analyzing the formation of a Latin American identity along humanistic ideals is not only a historiographical endeavor, but one that directly relates to the historical aspirations of the

⁴ Andrés Manuel López Obrador (2022), “La Marcha del 27N: Humanismo Mexicano,” *Rompeviento TV*, 11/29/2022. Accessed via web on 4/21/2023: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZeWfApkGs>.

Latin American masses who supported progressive government such as Obrador's and Petros'. This dissertation precisely aims to analyze the limits and possibilities of these historical aspirations as well as the historical projects they support.

0.2. The Framework of the Dissertation:

Before I introduce the central topics of my analysis regarding the project of a Latin American identity, I would like to make some clarificatory points about the general orientation of this project and the metaphysical presuppositions implied by my analysis. The first point I would like to make is that this dissertation offers a critical approach to the project of a Latin American identity as a historical-liberatory project. My approach is critical in the double sense that I aim to circumscribe the liberatory *limits* and *possibilities* of the project of a Latin American identity as a historical-liberatory project. This means that this dissertation does not aim to propose a historical conception which would ground the historical project of a Latin American identity, but simply to analyze the normative sense that the past, present, and future acquire within this historical-liberatory project. In this way, I aim to clarify the liberatory possibilities and failures of the 19th and 20th century project of a *mestizx* historical consciousness. As I show throughout the dissertation, although the project of a Latin American identity emerges as an anti-imperialistic project, it also continues to replicate colonial ways of relating to indigenous and Afro-Latinx peoples. The second point regards the way in which I treat identity categories such as "indigenous" and "Afro-Latinx." The aim of this dissertation is to clarify the normative sense that these identity categories acquire within the historical-liberatory project of a Latin American identity. This means that this dissertation does not aim to account for the political or historical relations of specific indigenous or Afro-

Latinx groups throughout Latin American, but for the way in which the *mestizx* historical consciousness I analyze constitutes these identity categories in historical terms. I particularly show that within the *mestizx* historical consciousness indigenous peoples are relegated as the *past* identity of *present* Latin America whereas Afro-Latinx peoples are relegated to the realm of the unhistorical realm of nature. Lastly, since I approach the project of a Latin American identity in historical terms, my analysis employs diachronic rather than synchronic categories. That is, rather than analyzing the project of a Latin American identity through a metaphysics of *stasis*, I analyze it through a *dynamic* metaphysics. Particularly important in this sense is my interpretation of the notion of *nepantla*. As James Maffie has recently shown (2014), although *nepantla* has been used as a spatial metaphor to capture the sense of being in-between cultures, it refers to an oscillating pattern or movement. I employ this oscillating pattern to capture the historical experience of *mestizx* peoples. Thus, rather than analyzing the historical experience of Latin American peoples through static categories, I employ dynamic categories to capture the historical movement of the *mestizx* experience.

I analyze the project of a Latin American identity through two concepts which, in my view, characterize the historical consciousness of Latin American peoples, namely, the concept of *nepantla* and the concept of *mestizaje*. Whereas *nepantla* is an indigenous concept that captures the existential situation of being in-between worlds of meaning, *mestizaje* refers to the historical project of a Latin American identity. I interpret these two concepts by drawing from the work of Leopoldo Zea (1912-2004) and Gloria E. Anzaldúa (1942-2004). Zea's work is important because he provides both the conceptual apparatus to theorize the project of a Latin American identity and because he provided

the institutional support for the study of the history of Latin American ideas. I interpret Zea's work from the point of view of what I call the "coloniality of history," which entails that the historical projects of Latin American peoples are situated within a double bind, namely, between an *uncivilized* indigenous past and a *civilized* European future. With this framework, I interpret the situation of being in-between worlds of meaning in Zea's work as a historical process whereby Latin American peoples aim to achieve a Eurocentric ideal of humanity that, in principle, is meant to exclude us. In this sense, I argue that *nepantla* refers to the historical movement of progress and failure which marks the historical experience of Latin American peoples. Moreover, I argue that, in Zea's work, *mestizaje* refers to the project of a Latin American identity along an ideal of humanity that emerges from the historical struggles of Latin American peoples. I show that although Zea's formulation of *mestizaje* involves an anti-imperialistic aspect which de-centers the Eurocentric ideal of humanity, it also continues to reproduce the coloniality of history because Zea relegates indigenous peoples as the *past* identity of *present* Latin America and excludes Afro-Latinx peoples from the historical realm. This analysis of Zea's work thus traces the possibilities and limits of the project of a Latin American identity which continues to inform the historical aspirations of the Latin American masses.

The second way in which I interpret the concepts of *nepantla* and *mestizaje* is through the work of Latinx feminist Gloria Anzaldúa. Although Anzaldúa does not propose a historical project of an authentic Latin American identity, she aims to reconceive the homogeneous way of conceiving our social identities, which represents an alternative to Zea's identity project. I particularly interpret the concept of *nepantla* in

Anzaldúa's work as referring both to the existential situation of being in-between the U.S. and Mexican worlds of meaning, which she calls the "borderlands," and to the dualistic meanings which inform our racial, gendered, and sexual identities. I show that Anzaldúa's conception of *nepantla* leads to an "intimate terrorism," which consists in the splitting of the self both as the object of oppression and as the agent of oppression. I then show that this splitting of the self takes place at the most intimate level of our relations to our own bodies and of our intersubjective relations with our communities. Moreover, I interpret Anzaldúa's formulation of *mestizaje* as what I call a "poetics of embodiment." For this, I supplement Anzaldúa's early theory of writing with her later "metaphysics of interconnectedness" and with her "aesthetics of transformation" by drawing from the influence of Nahua⁵ philosophy in her work. I show that Anzaldúa's theory of writing draws from the Nahua notions of "*teotl*" as the metaphysical principle that generates and regenerates reality and "*in xochitl in cuicatl*," which is the aesthetic principle through which human beings participate in the creative and recreative activity of "*teotl*." Importantly, I show that "*in xochitl in cuicatl*" consists in the juxtaposition of two unrelated meanings to generate a new semantic content. In this sense, I argue that, in Nahua philosophy, "*in xochitl in cuicatl*" functions as *poiesis*, or as the creation of new meanings. I show that Anzaldúa's theory of writing involves these two aspects from Nahua philosophy, namely, that she conceives her theory of writing as participating in the creation and recreation of the world and of the self, and that her theory of writing consists

⁵ Although we commonly refer to the Nahua philosophical tradition as "Aztec philosophy," the Aztecs are only a part of the broader Nahua culture. King and philosopher Nezahualcoyotl, for example, belonged to the city-state of Texcoco, which is part of the Nahua culture but does not belong to the Aztec city-state. Throughout the dissertation, I thus use the term "Nahua philosophy" to refer to the philosophical tradition commonly known as "Aztec philosophy."

in the juxtaposition of the meanings that inform our racial, gendered, and sexual identities to generate a new conception of the colonized body. Anzaldúa's conception of *mestizaje* then does not lead to a homogeneous identity, but to a hybrid identity which incorporates the sense of being an object and an agent of oppression, and which she captures with the hybrid identity she calls "*nos/otras*."

The framework I employ to analyze the concepts of *nepantla* and *mestizaje* in Zea's and Anzaldúa's work is through a phenomenological analysis of "historical consciousness." By "historical consciousness," I mean that normative meanings are historical both in the sense that they open a historical horizon of conceivability and in the sense that they are historically contingent, which means that they could be otherwise. My analysis of historical consciousness draws particularly from the work of seminal phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). Husserl's work is important for my analysis of historical consciousness for two reasons. First, Husserl's account of historical consciousness shows that although normative meanings or *ideals* are historically contingent, they acquire a historical inertia which opens a horizon of conceivability regarding our subject-world relations. Similar to Husserl's interpretation of the "mathematization of nature" as introducing a normative way of conceiving our subject-world relations in empirical terms, I interpret the coloniality of history as introducing a Eurocentric ideal of humanity which continues to inform the historical projects of Latin American peoples. Second, Husserl's interpretation of the origin of science also represents a point of contention to my critique of Eurocentrism. That is because Husserl traces the origin of science to the Greek "discovery of *the* world," thereby arguing that whereas Europe has a universal historical mission, non-European peoples have local

histories. I challenge Husserl's Eurocentric interpretation regarding the "discovery of *the* world" by arguing that *the* world transcends the subjective realm of experience of Europe and thus that it emerges through the encounter with the self-other relation. As such, I trace the "discovery of *the* world" to the colonization of the Americas. Husserl's work allows me to offer a formulation of historical consciousness and offers a point of contention to criticize Eurocentrism.

0.3. Description of the Chapters:

The dissertation is divided into two parts involving five chapters. Part I includes Chapters 1 and 2, and it offers a normative account of historical consciousness as a historical horizon of conceivability for subject and truth formation. Chapter 1 offers an account of historical consciousness at the subjective and intersubjective levels. At the subjective level, I argue that the individual subject is constituted throughout her meaning-making activity across time. This means that the subject is not a substance, but that the individual subject *becomes* who she is throughout her subject-world relations across time. At the intersubjective level, I argue that although normative meanings are historically contingent in the sense that they are subjectively introduced, they also open an intersubjective horizon of conceivability for our subject-world experiential relations. However, while I distinguish between the subjective and the intersubjective levels of historical consciousness for the sake of analysis, my view is that the subjective and intersubjective form a looping effect where the intersubjective informs subjective experience and, at the same time, subjective experience validates intersubjective experience. Moreover, Chapter 2 offers an analysis of normative critique by contrasting Husserl's and Michel Foucault's views on what they call the "historical *a priori*." By the "historical *a priori*," Husserl and

Foucault mean both that history is the condition that makes possible the ideality and normativity of meanings and that normative meanings are historically contingent.

However, Husserl and Foucault disagree on the conditions for normative critique.

Whereas Foucault does away with a teleological view of history and therefore also with an appeal to normative ideals for historical critique, Husserl poses the ideal of humanity as the condition for historical critique. In Husserl's view the ideal of humanity serves as a condition for historical critique both because meanings are subjectively dependent and because they are meant to serve human purposes. While I take Husserl's side on this issue, I also criticize the Eurocentric ideal of humanity that he proposes. Contrary to Husserl's view regarding the universal task of European history, I argue that universality is accomplished through the intersubjective self-other relation. In this sense, I argue that Husserl offers a Eurocentric account of the ideal of humanity and thus of universal history.

Part II of the dissertation includes Chapters 3 and 4, and it focuses on the liberatory-historical project of Leopoldo Zea. Chapter 3 introduces two main analyses regarding the historical experience of Latin American peoples. The first is the notion of the "coloniality of history," by which I mean that the Eurocentric ideal of humanity introduced during the colonization of the Americas situates the historical projects of Latin American peoples within a double bind, namely, between an *uncivilized* indigenous past and a *civilized* European future. I employ the notion of the coloniality of history to situate Zea's analysis of the sense of historical inferiority. My view is that the sense of historical inferiority emerges because the historical projects of Latin American peoples pursue a Eurocentric ideal of humanity which, in principle, is meant to exclude us. For this reason,

I argue that Latin American peoples experience historical development as a continuous movement of progress and failure. I characterize the historical movement of progress and failure as *nepantla*. Chapter 4 introduces Zea's project of *mestizaje* as a historical-liberatory project. If the colonality of history encloses the historical project of Latin American peoples within a Eurocentric ideal, Zea's project of *mestizaje* aims to liberate Latin American peoples by formulating an *authentic* historical project, one which emerges from the historical struggles of Latin American peoples. I highlight two aspects of Zea's project of *mestizaje*. The first is that Zea's historical-liberatory project is an anti-imperialistic one which not only criticizes the Eurocentric view of universality but that effectively *de-centers* Eurocentrism, thereby allowing for a dialogical conception of universality. The second is that Zea's historical-liberatory project traces the *past* identity of *present* Latin America to its indigenous past. I argue that the problem with Zea's formulation of an *authentic* Latin American historical project is that not only does it relegate indigenous peoples to the *past* rather than considering them the *present* of Latin America, but that it also relegates Afro-Latinx peoples to the realm of the unhistorical. Hence, I argue that while Zea's project of *mestizaje* is an anti-imperialistic project, it also continues to replicate the colonality of history.

Chapter 5 ends the dissertation with an analysis of Gloria Anzaldúa's account of the *mestizx* consciousness as what I call a "poetics of embodiment." My account of Anzaldúa's "poetics of embodiment" aims to do three things. The first is that I offer an expansive account of *nepantla* by drawing from Anzaldúa's early and later writings. I show that Anzaldúa intends the notion of *nepantla* to mean not only the in-between space between the U.S. and Mexico cultures, which she refers to as the "borderlands" in her

early work, but that she also means the dualistic meanings which inform our racial, gendered, and sexual identities and which split the self, the community, and our conception of the world. I argue that these dualistic meanings lead to what Anzaldúa calls “intimate terrorism,” which captures the sense that marginalized peoples are both the objects and the agents of our own oppression. The second aspect of my account of Anzaldúa’s poetics of embodiment is that I supplement her earlier theory of writing with an account of her later “metaphysics of interconnectedness” and with her “aesthetics of transformation” by drawing from Nahua philosophy. I show that Anzaldúa’s “metaphysics of interconnectedness” draws from the Nahua metaphysical principle of “*teotl*” as the monistic principle which generates and regenerates reality, and that her “aesthetics of transformation” draws from the Nahua notion of “*in xochitl in cuicatl*,” which is the aesthetic view of the Nahua whereby human beings participate in the creative and recreative activity of “*teotl*.” Moreover, I argue that, for the Nahua, “*in xochitl in cuicatl*” serves a *poietic* function which consists in juxtaposing two unrelated meanings to create a new semantic content, and I show that this element is also present in Anzaldúa’s theory of writing. I end the chapter by arguing that Anzaldúa’s “poetics of embodiment” serves a *poietic* function which consists in juxtaposing or *bridging*, as she also puts it, between the racial, gendered, and sexual meanings which inform our social identities to generate a new *mestizx* identity. Anzaldúa calls this *mestizx* identity “*nos/otras*” to capture the sense of being both the object and the agent of oppression. I conclude that Anzaldúa’s re-conception of a hybrid social identity represents an alternative to Zea’s conception of *mestizaje*.

I conclude the dissertation with a brief reflection about the results of my analysis regarding the *mestizx* historical consciousness, by noting the limitations of my analysis, and by pointing to the future direction of this project. Since the central project of this dissertation is to analyze the possibilities and limitations of the project of *mestizaje* as a historical-liberatory project, one aspect that characterizes this dissertation is that it highlights the way in which the project of *mestizaje* in Zea's work fails to overcome the coloniality of history. Nevertheless, the dissertation also opens different alternatives which require further analysis to develop their liberatory potential. I plan to continue exploring the liberatory potential of Latinx and Latin American philosophy.

Part I: History as a Horizon of Conceivability

In Part I of this dissertation, I offer an account of history as a horizon of conceivability. I analyze two aspects of the historical horizon, namely, the *ontological* and the *normative* aspects. These two aspects correspond to Chapters 1 and 2 of this dissertation, respectively. In Chapter 1, I analyze the horizontal-temporal structure of subjective and intersubjective life in the work of Edmund Husserl. I show that subjective and intersubjective life are temporally constituted not only in terms of temporal continuity, as the *same* subject across time, but in a horizontal way, where the *sense* of our previous experiences informs the *sense* of our future experiences. I apply this horizontal-temporal structure to explain the constitution of the individual subject's experiential life and, most important for my purposes, to the constitution of the lifeworld across intersubjective time. I argue that the temporal constitution of the lifeworld regards the *sense* of the subject-world experiential relation which is handed-down from previous subjects, and which informs our future experiential horizon. My account of the horizontal-temporal structure of the lifeworld is *ontological* because, contrary to the *substantial* conception of the world, the experiential *sense* that the world has for us is historically constituted. This implies that there is no *necessity* to our world-horizon, which means that it could be *otherwise*.

While in Chapter 1, I characterize the horizontal-temporal structure of the lifeworld as the *teleological inertia* of our subject-world experiential sense across generations, in Chapter 2, I consider the *normative* implications of *teleological* accounts of history. For this, I contrast the Husserl's and Michel Foucault's accounts of the

historical *a priori*. In Husserl's and Foucault's accounts, the historical *a priori* refers to the horizon of conceivability within which we organize our subjective and intersubjective lives. The difference, however, is that while Foucault offers an *anti-teleological* account of the historical *a priori*, Husserl offers a *teleological* account. This means two things. First, this means that Foucault accounts for the history of the present without appealing to *normative, teleological ideals*, whereas Husserl accounts for the history of the present as guided by teleological ideals. Second, this also means that Husserl and Foucault offer a teleological and anti-teleological account, respectively, of *cultural critique*, or the way in which we might conceive of the present *otherwise*. While I consider the issues that might arise from teleological accounts of history, like the *progressivist* interpretation which serves to *legitimize* the present, or the Eurocentric and colonizing conception of "universal" humanity, I account for an *ideal of humanity* that might serve as a principle for cultural critique and that might guide the historical struggles of oppressed peoples.

Part II of this dissertation applies the account of the historical *a priori* from Part I to offer an account of what I call the "coloniality of history," within which we can interpret historical struggles for liberation. The aim of this analysis is to show that the "universal" conception of humanity which emerges from the colonization of the Americas structures the historical experience of oppressed peoples. In this sense, I also interpret historical struggles of liberation in terms of *authenticity*, or as positing an ideal of humanity which emerges from the historical identity of oppressed peoples, and which can serve to conceive of the present *otherwise* than the Eurocentric and colonial conception of "universal" humanity. In this sense, the ontological and normative

frameworks of history as a horizon of conceivability serve, in Part II, to analyze the historical structure and the liberatory projects of oppressed peoples.

Chapter 1: Historical Consciousness in Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology

1.1. Introduction:

In this chapter, I offer an account of “historical consciousness” in Edmund Husserl’s (1859-1938) transcendental phenomenology. By “historical consciousness,” I do not mean the way in which we know about past events, but the way in which our past experiences *inform* our present and future experiences. This means that the past, present, and future are not discrete experiential moments, but form one experiential structure. The temporal-experiential structure between the past, present, and future is what I call historical consciousness. As we shall see, this account of historical consciousness can help in delineating the limits and possibilities of our historical projects, including our liberatory projects.

One of the central purposes of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology is to trace the original source of abstract logical and scientific meaning formations to the experiential contact between the subject and the world. As such, transcendental phenomenology accounts for the meaningful subject-world experiential relation. While early in the 1910s Husserl explicitly rejects historical genesis as relevant to the validity of meaning formations, later in the decade, Husserl considers temporality as central to the constitution of meaningful experience. Particularly important for my account of historical consciousness are the temporal-horizonal structure of experiential life and Husserl’s analyses of the “lifeworld.” For him, experiential life has a horizonal-temporal structure, where the *sense* of our previous experiences informs the *sense* of our future experiences. This means that meaningful experience is temporally constituted across our subject-world

experiential relations. Moreover, for Husserl, the “lifeworld” is the horizon of possibilities within which our individual experiences take place. Importantly, the “lifeworld” is intersubjectively constituted not only at one point in time, but also across time. In this sense, the “lifeworld” is the *historical* horizon of any *possible* experience. Husserl’s analyses of the horizontal structure of experiential life and of the “lifeworld” accounts for the historical structure of experiential life.

In the following, I argue that Husserl’s notion of “motivation” accounts for the informative relation between our previous, present, and future experiences both at the subjective and at the intersubjective levels. Motivation accounts for the horizontal structure of experiential life and thus for the basic structure of historical consciousness. Although the notion of “motivation” runs throughout Husserl’s work, I draw primarily from the second volume of his *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution* (1952), or *Ideas II* hereafter. In *Ideas II*, Husserl distinguishes between the “empirical” and “spiritual” domains of reality by clarifying the explanatory principles which apply to each domain. Thus, while causality explains relations between *extended* objects, “motivation” explains relations between *experiences*. Particularly, for Husserl, “motivation” is a *cumulative* relation, where the *sense* of our previous experiences informs the *sense* of our future experiences. As such, I argue that motivation accounts for the horizontal structure of experiential life both at the subjective and at the intersubjective levels. At the subjective level, I argue that “motivation” accounts for the temporal constitution of the individual subject’s experiential life as the accumulation of her meaningful experiences which informs her future experiences. At the intersubjective level, I argue that motivation

accounts for the relations of *sense* between subjects across time, throughout which the “lifeworld” is temporally constituted as the historical horizon of possible experience. Hence, “motivation” accounts for the horizontal structure of subjective and intersubjective life and thus for the basic structure of historical consciousness.

Although the notion of motivation is gaining prominence in the English-speaking Husserlian literature as a central principle of temporal genesis, the centrality of motivation in intersubjective life remains largely unexplored. Part of the reason for ignoring Husserl’s account of intersubjective temporality is the charge that transcendental phenomenology leads to a solipsism which reduces the experiential life of other subjects as experiential contents of the individual subject. This entails that transcendental phenomenology is unable to account for intersubjective life and thus for the *objective* and *historical* world. I address these issues by discussing the work of Alfred Schutz (1899-1959). Schutz’s work is important for two reasons. The first reason is that Schutz offers the most important critique of Husserl’s account of “empathy” as the way in which we experience other subjects as having an experiential life independently of our own. The second reason is that while Schutz abandons transcendental phenomenology, he draws from Husserl’s analyses of subjective temporality and the “lifeworld” to circumscribe the realm of social action. Important for my purposes is the *motivating* structure that Schutz calls the “stock of knowledge,” or the *knowing-how* structure of the world which we share with other subjects both at one point in time and across time. Across time, Schutz establishes relations between subjects through the categories he calls “predecessors,” “contemporaries,” and “successors.” With these categories, Schutz accounts for the intergenerational continuity of experience. While Schutz does not develop these

categories further, they are influential in later accounts of historical consciousness like those of Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) and David Carr (1940-). I thus show the way that Ricoeur and Carr account for the informative relation between the experiences of past and present subjects.

Although these approaches are important in their own right, I argue that Husserl's account of historical consciousness is an *a priori* one. That is because while Schutz's, Ricoeur's, and Carr's accounts regard particular experiences and knowledge formations, Husserl's regards the historical sense of the subject-world experiential relation itself, through which particular experiences and knowledge formations become meaningful. To put it differently, Husserl's account of historical consciousness regards the way in which we *conceive* of our *experiential relation* to the world and thus the way in which we conceive both of the world and of ourselves as subjects in the world. I argue that motivation accounts for the sense of the subject-world experiential relation across time, whereby we constitute the "lifeworld" as the historical horizon of any *possible* experience.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section is devoted to the horizontal structure of subjective life. I show that motivation accounts both for the horizontal structure of perceptual experience and for the temporal constitution of the individual subject's experiential life. The second section discusses Schutz's account of shared experience across time. I show the way that Ricoeur and Carr employ Schutz's intersubjective-temporal categories to account for the way in which the experiences of past subjects inform our present and future experiential horizons. The third section argues that motivation accounts for the relations of sense between subjects, which constitute the

“lifeworld” as a shared horizon of meaningful experience both at one point in time and across time. At one point in time, I interpret Husserl’s account of what he calls the “normalization” of experience as an account of social practices, and I argue that motivation explains the *typical normativity* of social practices. Across time, or diachronically, I show that, for Husserl, the horizontal structure of the “lifeworld” regards the historical sense of the subject-world experiential relation which informs our past, present, and future horizon of experience. I conclude by discussing what Husserl calls the “paradox of subjectivity” to show that individual subjects live the historical sense of the subject-world experiential relation in an *embodied* way. As we shall see, this discussion of the “paradox of subjectivity” will become relevant in Chapter 5, where I discuss social identities as splitting the self into both subjects and objects of oppression.

1.2. Motivation and the Horizontal Structure of Subjective Life:

One of the central purposes of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology is to return from the world of empirical experience to the world of meaningful experience. By the world of “empirical experience,” Husserl means a one-sided relation between subjects and the world according to which subjects are passive recipients of sense-data. Husserl calls this empirical relation “factual” because for an experience to be veridical, it must correspond to the extended qualities of the state of affairs to which it belongs.⁶ Although Husserl does not deny an empirical aspect to objects, his insight is that the *meaning* of objects is not determined by their extended qualities. Husserl thus turns the factual subject-world relation into a “transcendental” one, according to which meaning in the world is

⁶ Edmund Husserl (2014 [1913]), *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, translated by Daniel O. Dahlstrom, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, §1-2, 9-11.

subjectively dependent.⁷ Different from the passive role of the subject under the empirical conception of experience then the subject has an active, *agential* role in the formation of meaning. The account of meaning that Husserl offers, however, is not rationalist but experiential. Rather than focusing on predicative relations, Husserl traces the original source of meaning to the *experiential* contact between the subject and the world. As such, transcendental phenomenology consists in an analysis of the subject's *experiential* life in her *meaningful* relation to the world.

This section offers an analysis of motivation that situates it within Husserl's account of the subject's experiential life. I argue that motivation accounts for the horizational structure of perceptual experience and for the temporal constitution of the individual subject's experiential life. I show that the individual subject's experiential life is temporally constituted as the accumulation of her meaningful experiences, which inform her future experiences. For this, I first introduce the basic elements of Husserl's schema of "intentional" experience. I then analyze motivation as the explanatory principle of experiential life. And I show that motivation accounts for the horizational structure both of perceptual experience and of the individual subject's experiential life.

1.2.1. The Intentional Subject-World Schema of Experience:

The experiential contact between the subject and the world to which Husserl traces meaning formation is the basic schema of what he calls "intentional" experience.

Different from the empirical conception of experience, according to which the subject is a

⁷ Ibid, 5. I will use the terms "meaning" and "sense" interchangeably in this chapter. While Husserl also uses them interchangeably, he writes that his analyses correspond to the broader term "sense," whereas *meaning* proper involves logical articulation: "Originally, these words related only to the linguistic sphere, to that of 'expressing.' ... So too, for all intentional experiences, we always spoke of 'sense'—a word that is generally used in a way equivalent to 'meaning.' For the sake of clarity, however, we prefer the word *meaning* for the old concept and, in particular, in the complex expression '*logical*' *meaning* or *meaning that 'expresses'* *something*. We use the word *sense* as before with the more encompassing scope in mind. Ibid, §124, 245.

passive recipient of sense-data, the “intentional” conception of experience accounts for the *agential* aspect of the subject in her experiential relations with the world. More precisely, “intentional” experience involves a *directedness* towards the world which Husserl captures in the famous expression that consciousness is “consciousness *of* something.”⁸ While Husserl does not deny an empirical aspect to experience, the schema of intentional experience entails that objects do not passively give themselves as what they already are. Rather, the world acquires its *objective* character through the subject’s experiential relation. Intentional experience thus involves a process of “objectification” through which the object acquires meaningful articulation *for* the subject. Husserl refers to the objectifying process involved in intentional experience as “constitution,” by which he means the way in which consciousness articulates the object *as* an experiential object.⁹ Throughout this chapter, we shall see the many levels of the constitutive subject-world experiential relation. Important to note here is that Husserl’s account of constitution is, at the same time, an account of subjectivity. For Husserl, to be a subject is to be an agent in the constitution of meaning. As such, subjectivity is the *agential* aspect of our meaningful relation to the world.

In the first volume of his *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy: General introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (1913), or *Ideas I* hereafter, Husserl formulates the meaningful subject-world experiential relation as “*noesis-noema*.”¹⁰ While “*noesis*” refers to the objectifying activity of consciousness in her experiential relation to objects, “*noema*” refers to the subject-matter that our experience

⁸ Ibid, §84, 162.

⁹ Ibid, §86, 169.

¹⁰ Ibid, §88, 173-74.

is about. “*Noesis*” thus refers to the *meaning-conferring* activity of consciousness and “*noema*” refers to the object *as meant* within the experiential relation.¹¹ The *noesis-noema* relation entails that there are many ways in which consciousness relates to objects and that these different ways articulate the object’s sense differently. For example, the object acquires a different sense through an act of recollection than through an act of perception. Whereas in recollection the object appears *as* having been present, in perception the object appears *as* being currently present. Consider a chair, while we might seat on a perceived chair, we might not seat on a chair as recollected. The way in which consciousness relates to the object thus determines the meaning that the object acquires for the subject. While the ontological status of the *noema* is not uncontroversial in the English-speaking Husserlian literature,¹² Husserl makes it clear that he does not conceive the *noema* as a mental representation of a subjectively independent object.¹³ Rather, intentional experience entails that there is no object which lacks a meaning and, conversely, there is no experience which lacks a meaningful object. Intentional experience thus implies that there is no reality *simpliciter*, but reality is always meaningful reality *for* a subject.

Although intentional experience immediately yields a meaningful object, Husserl distinguishes between two fundamental acts through which the object acquires experiential sense. These acts correspond to the *noetic* activity of consciousness which constitutes the *noematic* sense of the object at two levels. Husserl refers to the two

¹¹ Ibid, 174.

¹² Dan Zahavi formulates the issue concerning the ontological status of the *noema* as, “the relation between the object-as-it-is-intended and the object-that-is-intended. Are we dealing with two different ontological entities, or rather with two different perspectives of one and the same?” See, Dan Zahavi (2003), *Husserl’s Phenomenology*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 58. For Zahavi’s discussion of the most prominent positions on this issue, see, *ibid*, 58-60.

¹³ Husserl, 2014 (1913), §90, 179.

objectifying acts of consciousness as “founding” and “founded,” and they are involved in *any* meaningful relation to an object.¹⁴ At a first level, consciousness constitutes the object as an experiential unity through “founding” acts. Founding acts are responsible for synthesizing the object as a spatio-temporal unity of experience, or as a unified *something*. At a second level, objects acquire experiential *significance* through “founded” acts. Whereas founding acts involve a synthesizing activity, “founded” acts involve what Husserl calls practical “position-takings.” By “position-takings,” Husserl means that every experience involves a *valuative* and volitional relation regarding the empirical qualities of the object, such that the object acquires experiential sense according to the *purposeful* life of the subject.¹⁵ It is through practical position-takings then that our experiences are of *beautiful*, of *useful*, of *frightening* objects. Yet, the valuative aspect of experience is not rationalist because it does not presuppose conceptual understanding of beauty, usefulness, or dreadfulness which the subject then predicates of objects. Rather, valuative acts involve “[n]ot merely *presenting a subject matter* but also *valuing it* (a valuing that encompasses that presenting).”¹⁶ Importantly, the valuative aspect of experience entails that one cannot but *take a position* regarding objects and thus that the world of meaningful experience is the world of position-takings.

¹⁴ Ibid, §37, 65

¹⁵ Husserl explains founded acts as follows: “Practical activity, the positing of value, the judgment of value, is, as such, dependent *on* pre-given objects, on objects which already stand before us in doxic certainty as existing and are treated as existing. Thus the realm of passive *doxa* of passive belief in being, provides a ground of belief which is the foundation not only of every particular act of cognition and every orientation of cognition and all judgment of what exists but also of every individual judgment of value, of all practical activity bearing on what exists.” Edmund Husserl (1973 [1939]), *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, Ludwig Landgrebe (ed.), translated by James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, §12, 53.

¹⁶ Husserl, 2014 (1913), §37, 65.

To exemplify what might otherwise seem like an abstract theory of experience, take the little prince's drawing of a boa constrictor digesting an elephant. At the founding level, the drawing is a spatio-temporal object in the sense that it is spatially delineated and that it endures experientially throughout time. At the founded level, however, it is from the point of view of their relation towards objects as practical things that the grown-ups see the drawing as a hat, and the object which was originally meant as frightening appears simply as an object of use. The drawing thus acquires different *valuative significance* from the position-taking of the grown-ups and from the position-taking of the little prince. In this sense, Husserl writes that founded acts immediately present objects as values and practical things:

At the same time, however, the possibility of a modification remains an essential property of these founded acts, a modification through which we attend to their full intentional objects. They become in this sense "*presented*" objects that, for their part, are now capable of serving as substrates for explications, relations, conceptual renderings, and predications. Thanks to this objectification, what stand over against us in the natural attitude and thus *as members of the natural world* are not merely matters of nature but values and practical objects of every kind, cities, streets with light fixtures, homes, furniture, artworks, books, tools, and so forth.¹⁷

In Husserl's schema of intentional experience then the subject constitutes objects as spatio-temporal unities of experience and as experientially significant. Yet, while Husserl distinguishes between the founding and founded levels of constitution, the experiential relation between the subject and the world is immediately significant. The distinction between the two levels of constitution does not correspond to separate temporal processes as if the subject first constitutes the object as a spatio-temporal unity of experience and, in a second moment, takes a position regarding the object. Rather, these levels of

¹⁷ Ibid, §37, 65-66.

constitution differ only with regard to the complexity of meaning they yield and thus with regard to the activity involved in experience.

1.2.2. *Motivation as the Explanatory Principle of Experiential Life:*

The schema of intentional experience as I presented it above is the programmatic version as it appears in *Ideas I*, where Husserl introduces phenomenology as a *transcendental* endeavor for the first time.¹⁸ This version of intentional experience is programmatic because it is restricted to analyzing the *noetic-noematic* structures of meaning formation. While early in the 1910s Husserl explicitly rejects historical genesis as relevant for the validity of meaning formations,¹⁹ later in the decade, Husserl refers to the programmatic version as “static” phenomenology to distinguish it from “genetic” phenomenology.²⁰ Static phenomenology considers the way in which different modes of consciousness yield different *noematic* senses, while genetic phenomenology considers temporality as essential for the constitution of meaningful experience.²¹ Husserl introduces the distinction between static and genetic phenomenology in his *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lecture on Transcendental Logic* (1920/21), where he also links temporal genesis to *motivating* relations between experiences. Husserl writes that

¹⁸ Ibid, 5.

¹⁹ In “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” Husserl argues that if historicism is true, then there would be no objective validity and, therefore, science would not be possible: “It is easy to see that historicism, if consistently carried through, carries over into extreme skeptical subjectivism. The ideas of truth, theory, and science would then, like all ideas, lose their absolute validity.” Edmund Husserl (1965 [1910]), “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” in Quentin Lauer (editor and translator), *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 125.

²⁰ Anthony Steinbock argues that while Husserl makes this distinction explicitly in 1921, there is historical evidence that Husserl had conceived of the distinction since 1918: “Moreover, 1921 was not the first time Husserl conceived of a distinction between static and genetic matters. For example, in June, 1918, Husserl writes to Paul Natorp that ‘already, for more than a decade, I have overcome the level of static Platonism and have situated the idea of transcendental genesis in phenomenology as its main theme.’” Anthony J. Steinbock (1998), “Husserl’s Static and Genetic Phenomenology: Translator’s Introduction to Two Essays,” *Continental Philosophy Review*, 31: 128.

²¹ Ibid, 129.

“there is genesis on the basis of active motivation.”²² Although Husserl explicitly links “motivation” to genetic phenomenology in his *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, he offers an extensive analysis of the notion in *Ideas II*.²³ In *Ideas II*, Husserl distinguishes between the “empirical” and “spiritual” domains of reality by clarifying the principles that apply to each of these domains. In Section Three of *Ideas II* entitled “The Constitution of the Spiritual World,” Husserl devotes Chapter Two to clarifying “Motivation as the Fundamental Law of the Spiritual World.”²⁴ In the following, I show that “motivation” is *systematically* central to explain subjective temporality.

In *Ideas II*, Husserl applies the schema of intentional experience to the constitution of what he calls “empirical” or “natural,” and “spiritual” realities, particularly with regard to the concepts that articulate our relation to objects within these domains. The “empirical” reality to which Husserl refers corresponds to the constitution of objects and the relations between them as the modern natural sciences treat them. More specifically, Husserl argues that, empirically conceived, our relation to objects is through the concepts of “extension” and “causality.” While extension corresponds to the *spatial* aspect of objects, causality corresponds to the *relations* between objects.²⁵ In this

²² Edmund Husserl (2001 [1966]), *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, translated by Anthony J. Steinbock, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, Sec. 4., Appx. A, 633.

²³ The notion of motivation antecedes Husserl’s *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*. That is clear from a footnote in *Ideas I*, where Husserl writes that the “phenomenological concept of motivation resulted for me right away with the specification of the purely phenomenological sphere in the *Logical Investigations* (and as a contrast to the concept of causality related to the transcendental sphere of reality). It should be noted that this concept is a *universalization* of the very concept of motivation, in keeping with which we are able, for example, to say that ‘wanting some purpose’ motivates ‘wanting the means.’ Moreover, while the concept of motivation undergoes various shifts for essential reasons, the respective equivocations become anything but dangerous and even appear as necessary depending upon how the phenomenological states of the matter are clarified.” Husserl, 2014 (1913), §47, 86, n8.

²⁴ Edmund Husserl (1989 [1952]), *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, translated by Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 223.

²⁵ Ibid, §15, 36; §31, 133-34.

way, extension and causality frame our spatio-temporal relation to objects considered from the empirical point of view. Importantly, in Section One of *Ideas II*, devoted to “The Constitution of Material Nature,” Husserl derives the concepts that frame our empirical relation to objects from the *embodied* aspect of experiential life. Embodiment is not only the *extended* aspect of consciousness, whereby consciousness is spatially localized, it is also the organ of *mobility*, an aspect that Husserl calls “kinesthesia.”²⁶ The embodied aspect of consciousness thus situates objects as *far* or *near*, and it accounts for the *relations* between the body and extended objects. Husserl formulates the kinesthetic aspect of the body as a “conditional” relation of the form “if, then,” where *if* I turn my body in a certain way, *then* my relation to the extended object changes.²⁷ Moving the body in certain ways might result in bringing the object nearer or in pushing it farther. By tracing the constitution of empirical reality to embodied experience, Husserl derives causal explanation from the conditional way in which the extended aspect of consciousness relates to extended objects. In this sense, Husserl argues that causal relations between extended objects refer to the conditional relations between the lived-body and the world.²⁸

Different from the empirical conception of reality as treated by the natural sciences, “spiritual” reality corresponds to the meaningful relations between experiences, with which the human sciences are concerned.²⁹ Husserl thus distinguishes relations

²⁶ Ibid, §18, 61.

²⁷ Ibid, 62.

²⁸ See, *ibid*, 69.

²⁹ While in “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” Husserl is critical of Wilhelm Dilthey’s historicism, in the introduction to the Third Section of *Ideas II*, Husserl praises Dilthey for the methodological distinction between the natural sciences and the human sciences. In *Ideas II*, Husserl translated Dilthey’s famous distinction between “explanation” and “understanding” in terms of the distinction between “causality” and “motivation.” See, *ibid*, §48, 181-82.

between extended objects from relations between experiences. Although Husserl does not deny that extended objects affect our experiential lives, his point is that causal relations do not explain the way in which one experience informs other experiences. For example, placing my hand on the fire and burning myself is a causal relation between extended objects. By itself, however, the causal burning does not prevent me from placing my hand on the fire one more time. Rather, it is the *learning* from my previous experience that deters me from placing my hand on the fire again. In this sense, Husserl argues that relations between experiences mark the historical aspect of spiritual life:

material realities are conditioned exclusively from the outside and are not conditioned by their own past; they are *history-less realities*... [whereas] it pertains to the essence of *psychic reality* that as a matter of principle it *cannot* return to the same total state: psychic realities have precisely a *history*.³⁰

In Section Three of *Ideas II*, Husserl distinguishes between causality as the principle that explains relations between *extended* objects and motivation as the principle that explains relations between *experiences*. Husserl formulates motivation as a “because, so” relation between experiences, by which he means a *cumulative* relation, where the *sense* of our previous experiences informs the *sense* of our future experiences.³¹ This means that our present and future experiences can be meaningfully explained *only* against the background of our previous experiences. As Husserl puts it, “*the present stock of lived experiences, as a totality, is dependent on earlier stocks of lived experiences.*”³²

Returning to the example of burning myself on the fire, we can say that *because* I learned from my previous experience, *so* am I deterred from placing my hand on the fire again.

³⁰ Ibid, §33, 144-45.

³¹ Husserl, 1989 (1952), §54, 241.

³² Ibid, §32, 143.

Different from causal relations between extended objects then motivation accounts for the way in which our previous experiences inform our present and future experiences.

In his analysis of motivation throughout Husserl's work, Phillip Walsh clarifies the informative relation between experiences in terms of the constitutive activity of consciousness. Walsh writes that the essence of motivation "lies in the peculiar 'descriptive unity' binding mental acts with distinct correlates into a *unitary experience* with a unitary correlate."³³ That is, motivation is a relation between the sense of our previous experiences and the sense of our future experiences, throughout which the object acquires sense as an experiential unity. Moreover, Walsh argues that "motivation is a kind of relation essentially distinct from both contingent probability and necessary entailment relations."³⁴ The informative relation between experiences is not one of contingent probability because, throughout our experiential relations, consciousness expects that further experiences will belong to the *same* object and thus that our future experiences will correspond to our previous experiences. Similarly, motivation is not a relation of necessary entailment because while previous experiences inform future experiences in a determinate way, our future experiences might be disconfirmed at any moment if the object turns out differently from the way in which it originally appeared. While previous experiences inform our future experiences in a determinate way then our future experiences do not necessarily have to correspond to our previous experiences. As such, relations of motivation are neither necessary nor indeterminate, but they are

³³ Phillip J. Walsh (2013), "Husserl's Concept of Motivation: The *Logical Investigations* and Beyond," *History of Philosophy and Logical Analysis*, 16: 73, my emphasis.

³⁴ Ibid.

relations where our previous experiences *inform* our future experiences in *determinate* ways.

1.2.3. *Motivation and the Horizontal-Temporal Structure of Subjective Life:*

Central to Husserl's account of subjective temporality is the concept of "association."

Association is a synthetic process through which consciousness joins experiences of the same kind as belonging to the same experiential unity. It is through associative synthesis that consciousness synthesizes the object as a temporal unity of experience. In his lectures on *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, Husserl thus writes that, to the sphere of experience belongs, "the whole series of originary temporal moments produced by means of primordial associations together with the other moments which belong to the temporal object."³⁵ Schematically put, association is the synthetic activity through which consciousness brings together the experience *p* and the contiguous experience *q* as *temporally continuous*. Moreover, in *Ideas II*, Husserl links associative synthesis and the motivating relation between experiences as a form of *striving* towards further experiences of the same object. Husserl writes as follows:

What is meant by the universal fact of passive motivation? Once a connection is formed in a stream of consciousness, there then exists in this stream the tendency for a newly emerging connection, similar to a portion of the earlier one, to continue in the direction of the similarity and to strive to complete itself in a total nexus similar to the previous total nexus.³⁶

Schematically then the relation between associative synthesis and motivation is one

where the association of *p-q* experiences *motivates* the further experience *r*, whereby the further association of *p-q-r* experiences emerges as temporally continuous. For this reason, temporality is subjectively lived in a *horizontal* way, where the sense of our

³⁵ Edmund Husserl (1964 [1928]), *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, Martin Heidegger (ed.), translated by James S. Churchill, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, §6, 39.

³⁶ Husserl, 1989 (1952), §56, 234.

previous experiences informs the sense of our future experiences. In what follows, I apply the schematic relation between association and motivation to the temporal constitution of perceptual objects and to the temporal constitution of the subject's experiential life. I show that motivation accounts for the temporal constitution of the individual subject's experiential life as the accumulation of her meaningful experiences, which inform her future experiences.

1.2.3.1 Motivation and the Horizontal Structure of Perceptual Experience:

The founding constitution of objects involves a process of spatio-temporal synthesis at the level of perceptual experience. Because perception regards spatio-temporal relations, perceptual experience is thoroughly an embodied process. Particularly, the extended aspect of the body entails that perceptual experience is *three-dimensional*, rather than two dimensional. The familiar description of a table as being perceived from one side while only “apperceiving” its rear side thus corresponds to the extended, *spatial* relation between the body and the object. Additionally, kinesthesia is the aspect of the body through which consciousness can modify its spatial relation to the object, thereby bringing to presence features of the object that were formerly “apperceived.” For example, if I move my body around the table, I can perceive the rear side that was formerly “apperceived.” This means that throughout the perceptual process, each perceived side of the object *points towards* further aspects that are only “apperceived” from the current localization of the body. Husserl writes that the perceptual process involves “this two-fold articulation: kinesthetic sensations on the one side, *the motivating*; and the sensations of features on the other, the *motivated*.”³⁷ Throughout the

³⁷ Husserl, 1989 (1952), §18, 63, my emphases.

perceptual process then past experiences *motivate* kinesthetic processes towards future experiences, whereby consciousness aims towards experiential unity.

While the kinesthetic aspect of the body accounts for the manifold way in which the object appears, it is through associative synthesis that consciousness joins the manifold features of the object as an experiential unity. Through associative synthesis, consciousness thus joins experience *p* and experience *q* into temporal continuity while, at the same time, *motivating* the further experience *r* as belonging to the same object. Moreover, although at each moment in the perceptual process only one feature of the object appears, previous experiences are *retained* by consciousness, such that they are constituted as belonging to the same experiential object. Similarly, while the motivated experience *r* does not appear presently, it is an expected experience that is then joined to experiences *p-q* as temporally continuous. The associative process thus involves a *motivating* relation between retained experiences and expected experiences, such that retained experiences inform our expected experiences. Husserl puts this process as follows:

Thus, it is a matter of a necessary motivation: In accordance with what is given to consciousness retentionally, there is “to be expected” something new on its way having a uniform style. Obviously, the expectational presentation is characterized as a presentation of a new kind, specifically, as a presentation of a second level, as the replica of the more original presentation of the past. With respect to the object, what is expected is naturally not like what is perceived, that is, characterized as being in the flesh and as present; likewise, it is not characterized as what is remembered, as just-now, and in the subsequent expectation, what has previously been; but rather, it is characterized as in accordance with what has been, with its primordial image, as what is anticipated or as a projected image or model of being prior to its actual being.³⁸

³⁸ Husserl, 2001 (1966), §40, 236.

The horizontal structure of perceptual temporality implies two things. First, it implies that a present perceptual experience acquires sense *only* within the retention-expectation horizon that Husserl refers to as the retention-protection structure of perceptual experience. Since a punctual experience does not constitute an object, a punctual experience would lack sense. A single strike of the note C, for example, does not constitute a melody and thus it is an isolated note. Similarly, neither the retained experience nor the expected experience would be meaningful without the present experience. The retention-presentation-expectation temporal nexus is the horizon through which the manifold experience of the object becomes meaningfully constituted. Second, the horizontal aspect implies that the past, present, and future are not discrete experiential moments, but that the sense of our previous experiences accumulates or “sediments,” as Husserl puts it, thereby making our present and expected experiences meaningful.³⁹ As such, motivation accounts for the horizontal structure of perceptual experience.

1.2.3.2. Motivation and the Horizontal Structure of Subjective Life:

Since the temporality generated through perceptual experience corresponds to the experience of individual objects, Husserl calls it “objective” temporality. Unlike objective temporality, in “subjective” temporality the referential focus of intentional experience is not an object, but the subject herself throughout her experiential relation to objects.⁴⁰ Husserl captures the difference in intentional focus by distinguishing between

³⁹ Husserl, 1989 (1952), §56, 234.

⁴⁰ In his lectures on *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, Husserl puts this point as follows: “We can only say that this flux is something which we name in conformity with what is constituted, but it is nothing temporally ‘Objective.’ It is absolute subjectivity and has the absolute properties of something to be denoted metaphorically as ‘flux,’ as a point of actuality, primal source point, that from which springs the ‘now,’ and so on. In the lived experience of actuality, we have the primal source-point and a continuity of moments of reverberation [*Nachhallmomenten*]. For all this, names are lacking.” Husserl, 1964 (1928), §37, 100.

what he calls “traversal” and “longitudinal” intentionality.⁴¹ While traversal intentionality corresponds to the constitution of an object, longitudinal intentionality corresponds to the constitution of the subject herself as the bearer of experience. Dan Zahavi explains Husserl’s analysis of longitudinal intentionality as an account of what he calls “pre-reflective self-awareness.”⁴² Zahavi argues that self-awareness should not be taken as “self-transparency,” but as the first-person givenness involved in every experience:

In this view, the subjective or first-person givenness of the experience is not simply a quality added to the experience, a mere varnish as it were. On the contrary, it constitutes the very mode of being of the experience... experiences are essentially characterized by their subjective givenness, by the fact that there is a subjective feel to them... insofar as there is something ‘it is like’ for the subject to have experiences, there must be some awareness of these experiences themselves. In short, there must be some minimal form of self-awareness.⁴³

Longitudinal intentionality thus regards the first-person awareness involved in every experience.⁴⁴ Longitudinal intentionality is important for any experience to be *my* experience. Thus, thanks to the temporal continuity of experiential life constituted through longitudinal intentionality, a subject can retrieve a previous experience through recollection. That is, for recollection to be possible, the experience must correspond to a temporal phase in the subject’s experiential life. The longitudinal constitution of

⁴¹ Ibid, 107.

⁴² Zahavi, 2003, 87.

⁴³ Ibid, 88.

⁴⁴ In *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, Zahavi puts it as follows: “Thus, Husserl from the very start is investigating temporal *self-awareness*. Husserl’s analysis of *Querintentionalität* [traversal intentionality] is constantly taken to be an analysis of the way in which we are (prereflectively) aware of our enduring experiences and intentional acts, whereas his analysis of *Längsintentionalität* [longitudinal intentionality] is an analysis of the self-givenness of the absolute flow. That is, Husserl’s analysis of the shining of the absolute flow is taken to be an analysis of an additional, deeper, and more basic form of self-manifestation.” Dan Zahavi (1999), *Self-Awareness and Alterity: A Phenomenological Investigation*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 71.

experiential life as a temporal continuum thus makes it possible for a subject to recognize a past experience as belonging to her experiential life.

Moreover, the experiential life of the subject is constituted through the same associative and motivating processes involved in the constitution of perceptual objects. To be sure, the temporal syntheses involved in traversal and longitudinal intentionality obeys the same “laws,” and only differs in terms of their corresponding referential “focus.” Husserl calls the retentive process involved in longitudinal intentionality “retentions of retentions.”⁴⁵ That is, while at the level of traversal intentionality association joins experiences *p* and *q* while also motivating the experience *r* as belonging to *the same object*, at the level of longitudinal intentionality association joins experiences *p-q-r* and *s-t-u* as belonging to *the same subject* while, at the same time, motivating future experiences of the same kind. Husserl links the motivating aspect of the subject’s temporal life to her position-takings in the following way:

The identity of the pure Ego does not only reside in the fact that I (*sc.* the pure Ego), with regard to each and every cogito, can grasp myself as the identical Ego of the cogito; rather, I am even therein and apriori the same Ego, insofar as I, in taking a position, necessarily exercise consistency in a determinate sense: each “new” position-taking institutes a persistent “opinion” or a thema (a thema of experience, of judgment, of enjoyment, of will, etc.) so that, from now on, as often as I grasp myself as the same as I used to be or as the same as I now am and earlier was, I also retain my themata, assume them as active themata, just as I had posited them previously... My thesis, my position-taking, my deciding from motives (the null-point included) is something I have a stake in. As long as I am the one I am, then the position-taking cannot but “persist,” and I cannot but persist in it.⁴⁶

This means that the subject’s experiential life is not constituted only in terms of temporal continuity, as the identical subject across time, but as the accumulation of her meaningful

⁴⁵ Husserl, 1964 (1928), §39, 106.

⁴⁶ Husserl, 1989 (1952), §29, 119.

experiential relations which inform her future experiential relations. Particularly, the subject's position-takings towards objects accumulate, thereby informing her future experiential relations towards similar objects. For example, my valuative relation towards a three-legged chair as *useless* motivates similar valuative relations towards other three-legged chairs. Of course, I can change my valuative relation towards a three-legged chair if I learn that it belonged to Rosa Parks, in which case the object acquires *historical significance*. Husserl's aim, however, is to account for the continuity of our meaningful experiential relations across our temporal lives. The horizontal structure of subjective temporality thus implies that the subject's valuative relations towards objects *motivate* future valuative relations towards similar objects. In this sense, the subject is not only constituted as the identical subject throughout her experiential life, but as the accumulation of her meaningful experiences, which inform her future experiences.

In the programmatic schema of intentional experience, Husserl characterizes consciousness as "consciousness *of* something." By characterizing consciousness in relational terms, Husserl dislodges both consciousness and the world of any *substantial* import. This means that the world is not a pre-determined substance beyond the meaningful subject-world experiential relation. As I show in this section, the temporality, spatiality, and the significance of objects are experientially constituted. Moreover, Husserl's characterization of consciousness in relational terms also implies that the subject is not a pre-determined substance and thus that the individual subject is not who she is prior to her meaningful subject-world experiential relation. Rather, the individual subject's identity is temporally constituted throughout her experiential relations with the world. As I show in this section, the experiential life of the subject is temporally

constituted as the accumulation of her meaningful experiences which inform her future experiences. The horizontal structure of experiential life, where the sense of our previous experiences accumulates, thereby informing our future experiences is the basic structure of historical consciousness. Thanks to this horizontal-temporal structure, the individual subject not only *has* a history, but she *is* her history. More precisely, the motivating relation between experiences accounts for the way in which subjective temporality is not only lived as temporal continuity but has a horizontal structure. In this sense, motivation accounts for the horizontal-temporal structure of experiential life and thus for the basic structure of historical consciousness.

1.3. *Schutz on Intergenerational Experience and Historical Consciousness:*

Although the notion of motivation is gaining prominence in the English-speaking Husserlian literature as a central principle of temporal genesis, and there is enough evidence supporting the claims of the foregoing section, the importance of motivation at the intersubjective level remains largely unexplored.⁴⁷ Part of the reason for this is the charge that transcendental phenomenology leads to a solipsism which reduces the experiential lives of other subjects to the experiential contents of the individual subject. Important on these two fronts is the work of Alfred Schutz. On the one hand, Schutz offers the most important critique of Husserl's account of "empathy" as the way in which

⁴⁷ Particularly relevant in this sense is the work of Walsh who, in a later essay, argues that motivation explains the *horizontal structure* of intentional experience. Phillip J. Walsh (2017), "Motivation and Horizon: Phenomenal Intentionality in Husserl," *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 94: 411. Similarly, Alice Pugliese draws from *Ideas II* to argue that motivation is not a psychological and thus causal feature of experience, but a transcendental one regarding the *constitutive activity* of consciousness. Alice Pugliese (2018), "Motivational Analysis in Husserl's Genetic Phenomenology," *Studia Phaenomenologica*, XVIII: 95. Lastly, Matt Bower takes motivation as a "reconstructive principle" of subjective life, through which he derives a competing account of personal identity to the Lockean account of psychological continuity. Matt Bower (2014), "Husserl's Motivation and Method for Phenomenological Reconstruction," *Continental Philosophy Review*, 47: 137.

we experience other subjects as having an experiential life independently of our own. On the other hand, Schutz abandons transcendental phenomenology but draws from Husserl's analyses of subjective temporality and the "lifeworld" to circumscribe the realm of social action. Schutz circumscribes the realm of social action by accounting for two motivating structures, namely, for the *biographical* life of the individual subject and for the structure of the world that Schutz calls the "stock of knowledge." The "stock of knowledge" is the *knowing-how* structure of the world that we share with other subjects both at one point in time and across time. Across time or diachronically, Schutz establishes relations between "predecessors," "contemporaries," and "successors." While Schutz does not develop these intersubjective-temporal categories further, they are developed in Paul Ricoeur's and David Carr's accounts of historical consciousness. I show the way in which Ricoeur and Carr employ Schutz's intersubjective-temporal categories to account for experiential relations between subjects across time. This analysis serves as a foil to show that, whereas Schutz's, Ricoeur's, and Carr's account of historical consciousness regard particular experiences, Husserl's regards the *sense* of the subject-world experiential relation itself, within which particular experiences become meaningful. I expand on Husserl's account of the temporal structure of the lifeworld in the last section of this chapter.

In this section, I show that while Schutz abandons Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, he draws from Husserl's analyses of subjective temporality and of the "lifeworld" to account for intergenerational experience. Particularly important is the motivating structure that Schutz calls the "stock of knowledge," or the *knowing-how* structure of the world that we share with other subjects. I show that Schutz derives the

“stock of knowledge” from the structure of the “lifeworld” that Husserl calls “typicality.” For Schutz, intergenerational experience between “predecessors,” “contemporaries,” and “successors” thus corresponds to the “stock of knowledge” shared across time. I show that this account of intergenerational experience is central to Ricoeur’s and Carr’s accounts of historical consciousness. Lastly, I argue that while these accounts are important, Husserl’s account of historical consciousness regards the subject-world experiential relation itself, through which particular experiences and knowledge formations become meaningful.

1.3.1. Schutz’s Phenomenology of the Social World:

Broadly, the problem of intersubjectivity for transcendental phenomenology regards the status of other subjects and therefore of the objective world. Since the central thesis of transcendental phenomenology is that meaning in the world is subjectively dependent, Husserl would reduce other subjects and the objective world to the experiential contents of the individual subject. In this sense, as Husserl admits, transcendental phenomenology would lead to a solipsism that would be unable to account for the *objective* world.⁴⁸ In the Fifth of his *Cartesian Meditations* (1929), Husserl offers an account of “empathy” as the way in which we experience other subjects as having an experiential life independent of our own. Briefly, empathy is an *associative* synthesis between the *kinesthetic* aspect of my body and the body of another, whereby I immediately yield the sense “other subject.”⁴⁹ The spontaneous movement of another body perceptually points to another subject, much like I relate to my own body in an agential way.⁵⁰ Schutz, however, argues

⁴⁸ Edmund Husserl (1969 [1931]), *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, §42, 89.

⁴⁹ Ibid, §51, 112.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

that the associative synthesis fails because I relate to other bodies in a way that is radically different from my own. Whereas I relate to my body as the organ of movement rather than as a perceptual object, I relate to another body as a perceptual object rather than as an organ of *my* movement.⁵¹ The impossibility of accounting for other subjects leads Schutz to abandon Husserl's transcendental phenomenology in *Phenomenology of the Social World* (1932), and thus assumes the existence of other subjects as *factual*. As Schutz writes:

The object we shall be studying, therefore, is the human being who is looking at the world from within the natural attitude. Born into a social world, he comes upon his fellow men and takes their existence for granted without question, just as he takes for granted the existence of the natural objects he encounters.⁵²

I will not discuss Schutz's challenge of Husserl's account of empathy in detail. Most important for my purposes is that Schutz's rejection of transcendental phenomenology represents not only a methodological move. Rather, in assuming the existence of others as *factual*, Schutz also assumes the *ontological* structure of the world as *factual* and thus he assumes that the world *is* a certain way. As we shall see, for this reason, Schutz interprets the structure of the world in epistemic terms, whereas for Husserl, the structure of the world corresponds to the ontological level.

Yet, Schutz draws from Husserl's analyses of subjective temporality and the "lifeworld" to circumscribe the world of social action. Schutz's work is particularly important for my purposes because he accounts for the *motivating* structures of the social

⁵¹ Alfred Schutz (1966 [1957]), "The Problem of Transcendental Intersubjectivity in Husserl," in Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers, III: Studies in Phenomenological Philosophy*, edited by Ilse Schutz, The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 63.

⁵² Alfred Schutz (1967 [1932]), *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, translated by George Walsh and Frederick Lehnert, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, §19, 98.

world both at the subjective and at the intersubjective levels. At the subjective level, Schutz derives the meaning of an action from the individual subject's *biographical* life by drawing from Husserl's analyses of traversal and longitudinal intentionality.⁵³ To capture this distinction, Schutz differentiates between an "action" and an "act."⁵⁴ That is, the meaning of an action corresponds to the individual subject's projected act, which in turn corresponds to the individual subject's *biographical* experiences. Thus, for example, the action of writing this dissertation corresponds to my projected act of becoming a PhD, and the act of becoming a PhD corresponds to my biographical life. Moreover, Schutz distinguishes between two motivating structures, which correspond to traversal and longitudinal intentionality. These are what Schutz calls the "in-order-to" motive and the "because" motive. Whereas the "in-order-to" motive explains the meaning of an action in terms of the projected act of consciousness, the "because" motive explains the projected act in terms of the individual subject's biographical experiences.⁵⁵

The in-order-to motive is important because it corresponds to the motivating structure of the "lifeworld" that Husserl calls "typicality." For Schutz, an action involves a motivating structure in the sense that it is the step-by-step carrying out of the projected act.⁵⁶ In the case of becoming a PhD, I know that there are a series of actions which fulfill my projected act, like passing exams and writing a dissertation. The step-by-step structure of my action thus maps onto my *knowledge of how* things work in the "world" of academia. This *knowing-how* structure of the world, is what Schutz calls "the stock of

⁵³ Ibid, §7, 46. As we saw in the foregoing section, "traversal" intentionality refers to the directional relation between consciousness and objects, and "longitudinal" intentionality refers to the experiential life of consciousness itself.

⁵⁴ Ibid, §14, 75.

⁵⁵ Ibid, §18, 91.

⁵⁶ Ibid, §17, 88.

knowledge.” For Schutz, “the stock of knowledge” refers to a series of sedimented experiences “involving the successful realization of certain ends by the use of certain means.”⁵⁷ Schutz derives the stock of knowledge from the structure of the “lifeworld” that Husserl calls “typicality.” Schutz formulates Husserl’s “typicality” as follows:

As Husserl has shown, our thinking stands under the idealities of the “and so forth” and “I can do it again.” The first leads to the assumption that what has proved valid thus far in our experience will remain valid in the future; *the later to the expectancy that what thus far I have been able to accomplish in the world by acting upon it I shall be able to accomplish again and again in the future.*⁵⁸

Schutz’s stock of knowledge thus corresponds to the motivating structure of the “lifeworld” that Husserl calls “typicality.” Moreover, two aspects about the stock of knowledge are important for Schutz’s account of the social world. The first is that the stock of knowledge is circumscribed to the “contexts of meaning,” within which the individual subject finds herself given her biographical interests.⁵⁹ Thus, for example, my stock of knowledge in the world of academia might not apply to other contexts of meaning like the world of sports. The second important aspect has to do with the *public* structure of the world. Since Schutz assumes the existence of other subjects and of the world as *factual*, he can also assume that the experiences of other subjects correspond to the *same* world. In this way, Schutz ensures that, despite biographical differences, the stock of knowledge of other subjects will roughly correspond to mine in similar context of meaning.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 90.

⁵⁸ Alfred Schutz (1966), “Some Structures of the Life-World,” translated by Aron Gurwitsch, in Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers, Volume III: Studies in Phenomenological Philosophy*, edited by I. Schutz, Netherlands: The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 116. See also, Alfred Schutz (1966 [1959]), “Type and Eidos in Husserl’s Late Philosophy,” in Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers, Volume III: Studies in Phenomenological Philosophy*, edited by I. Schutz, Netherlands: The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 92-115.

⁵⁹ Schutz, 1967 (1932), §18, 96.

The public aspect of the stock of knowledge allows Schutz to account for intersubjective life in two ways. On the one hand, Schutz accounts for the way in which we interpret the actions of others as projecting onto them our in-order-to motives in similar contexts of meaning. I can thus interpret the other person across the library who is writing her dissertation as fulfilling the act of becoming a PhD, just like me. On the other hand, Schutz accounts for *social action* proper. Social action, for Schutz, is one which is directed to another subject with the purpose of eliciting an experience in the other.⁶⁰ In this case, the context of meaning is not only intersubjective but *social*, in the sense that my stock of knowledge regards the kind of response that an action might elicit from another. Schutz circumscribes the *social context* along spatio-temporal lines in three ways. The first social context involves “I-thou” relations, which are defined by spatio-temporal proximity and which might grow more or less intimate across time, as in the case of friendships.⁶¹ The second social context regards relations between what Schutz calls “contemporaries,” which do not require spatial proximity, but are defined in terms of experiential simultaneity.⁶² Our stock of knowledge about contemporaries, Schutz calls knowledge of “ideal types” because we relate to them only in terms of the social function they serve.⁶³ These are, for example, the police officer or the state entity. Lastly, Schutz accounts for relations between “predecessors,” “contemporaries,” and “successors.” By definition, our “predecessors” and “successors” are those with whom we do not share spatio-temporal dimensions and thus with whom we do not share a social world.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Schutz, 1967 (1932), §30, 144.

⁶¹ Ibid, §33, 167.

⁶² Ibid, §37, 181.

⁶³ Ibid, 184-185.

⁶⁴ Ibid, §41, 207.

Nevertheless, these intersubjective-temporal categories account for the *historical world* in the sense that the passing of generations ensures the experiential continuity of the social world.

Before showing how Ricoeur and Carr build on Schutz's intersubjective-temporal categories, I would like to offer an example and discuss the difference between Schutz's stock of knowledge and Husserl's structure of "typicality." The stock of knowledge is a motivating structure because my previous knowing-how experiences inform the step-by-step fulfillment of an action. In the case of social relations, the stock of knowledge allows me to predict the kind of experience that an action might elicit in another subject under different contexts. Thus, if I am a person of color, I might expect a certain treatment by the police, which might also predispose me to act in certain ways towards the individual officer. Moreover, Schutz's intersubjective-temporal categories refer to the stock of knowledge shared across time. "The talk" between African American fathers and their male children thus corresponds to the stock of knowledge shared across time. In this way, Schutz accounts for the way in which the experiences of past subjects inform our present context of social action. Regarding the difference between the stock of knowledge and the structure of "typicality," while the first is an *epistemic* structure, the latter is an *ontological* one. Above, we saw that Schutz's analyses assume the *factual* existence of others and of the world. In this sense, Schutz assumes the *ontological* structure of the world and thus that the world *is* a certain way. It is for this reason that the stock of knowledge is an *epistemic* structure which is superimposed, so to speak, onto the *ontological* structure of the world. This means that while for Schutz the structure of the

world regards particular knowledge formations, for Husserl, the structure of “typicality” regards our conception of the subject-world experiential relation itself.

1.3.2. Two Variations on Historical Consciousness:

1.3.2.1. Ricoeur's Time and Narrative:

While Schutz does not develop on his intersubjective-temporal categories, they inform other accounts of historical consciousness like those of Ricoeur and Carr. Although in different ways, these thinkers account for the way in which the experiences of past subjects inform our present and future experiential lives. In the three volumes of *Time and Narrative* (1983, 84, 85), Ricoeur establishes a hermeneutic circle between time and narrative, where narrative not only captures the temporal structure of experiential life, but also informs experiential life in *normative* ways.⁶⁵ For Ricoeur then the relation between time and narrative is both ontological and moral. Regarding the ontological relation, Ricoeur argues that narrative organizes temporal experience in chronological ways, in terms of before and after, and as a temporal *unity*.⁶⁶ Ricoeur calls this *synthetic* structure “concordance-discordance” and it corresponds, at the level of narrative, to the motivating structure of experiential life.⁶⁷ This means that, for Ricoeur, *temporal identity* is accomplished at the level of narrative rather than at the experiential level.⁶⁸ Regarding the moral relation between time and narrative, Ricoeur argues that narrative captures the *normative* content of experience in the sense that we interpret actions and events as “rule-governed behavior.”⁶⁹ The transfer of this normative content is twofold, namely, from

⁶⁵ Paul Ricoeur (1984 [1983]), *Time and Narrative, Volume 1*, translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ For an extended account of personal identity, see chapters 5 and 6 in Paul Ricoeur (1992 [1990]), *Oneself as Another*, translated by Kathleen Blamey, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 113-16.

⁶⁹ Ricoeur, 1984 (1983), 58.

experience to narrative and from narrative to experience. Thanks to this twofold transfer, narratives are not only intelligible in the sense that they resemble the realm of *praxis*, but we can also derive moral lessons from the narratives of others.⁷⁰

For Ricoeur then *historical* narratives serve these ontological and moral functions but at the intersubjective rather than at the individual level. To account for intersubjective experiential life, Ricoeur draws from Schutz's relations between predecessors, contemporaries, and successors. For Ricoeur, this "chain of memories is, on the scale of the world of predecessors, what the retention of retentions is on the scale of individual memory."⁷¹ That is, Schutz's intersubjective-temporal categories provide the temporal ground that historical narratives capture. Moreover, since we do not have immediate access to past events, Ricoeur turns to the notion of "the trace," like documents and monuments, which account for the temporal "marks," so to speak, left by the actions of past subjects.⁷² It is at the level of narrative, however, that we organize past events in a chronological way, in terms of how one event led to another, and as a temporal unity. Importantly, the temporal unity that *historical* narratives synthesize is the intersubjective "we" as the bearer of past events. In this sense, Ricoeur writes that historical narratives synthesize those events "which are said to be 'epoch-making,' [and which] draw their specific meaning from their capacity to found or reinforce the community's consciousness of its identity, its narrative identity, as well as the identity of its members."⁷³ For Ricoeur then the ontological function of historical narratives is that they

⁷⁰ Ricoeur thus writes that, in this sense, "we owe a large part of the enlarging of our horizon of existence to poetic works." Ibid, 80.

⁷¹ Paul Ricoeur (1988 [1985]), *Time and Narrative, Volume 3*, translated by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 99.

⁷² Ibid, 117-19.

⁷³ Ibid, 187.

synthesize intersubjective temporal identity. Not only that but, for Ricoeur, historical narratives also serve a twofold moral function regarding the crimes of the past. From experience to narrative, we have a duty to remember the victims of the past, and from narrative to experience, historical narratives might “prevent these crimes from ever occurring again.”⁷⁴ In this way then historical narratives mediate the informative relation between our past and future experiences.

1.3.2.2. Carr’s Experience and History:

While in *Time, Narrative, and History* (1986), Carr follows Ricoeur’s narrative approach to historical consciousness, in *Experience and History* (2014), Carr turns from narrative to historical *experience*.⁷⁵ For later Carr, the problem with representational approaches to history is that they open a gap between experience and our knowledge of experience, which philosophers of history then aim to bridge.⁷⁶ By returning to historical experience, Carr thus aims to close the gap between experience and knowledge. For this, Carr distinguishes between two senses of experience that are prevalent throughout the history of modern philosophy. The first sense, which Carr derives mainly from Locke and Husserl, is “lived experience.”⁷⁷ The notion of lived experience thus allows Carr to account for an “event” as a *meaningful* spatio-temporal experience.⁷⁸ The second sense, which Carr derives mainly from Hegel and Hume, is “cumulative” in the sense that it relates past and present experiences.⁷⁹ The cumulative sense of experience is thus what

⁷⁴ Ibid, 189.

⁷⁵ See, David Carr (1986), *Time, Narrative, and History*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

⁷⁶ David Carr (2014), *Experience and History: Phenomenological Perspectives on the Historical World*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 4-5.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 32.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 42-3.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 32-3.

Husserl calls motivation. Regarding the relation between the two senses of experience, Carr writes as follows:

On this account, *sense one* of experience, for all its immediacy and directness, is only possible against the extended, retentional background which *is* experience in *sense two*. The two kinds of experience are not merely additive, not merely cumulative in the sense of an increasing collection of individual units; rather, they are intimately connected and interwoven. No *Erlebnis* is possible without its temporal “surroundings” of both past *and* future.⁸⁰

That is, for Carr, the meaning of past events opens a horizon of what we might expect to happen, such that an unexpected event acquires significance within the temporal horizon of previous and expected events. Hence, in the case of unexpected catastrophes like pandemics, we immediately experience them as historically significant prior to their narrative representation. In this way, Carr aims to close the gap between historical experience and our knowledge of experience.

Moreover, Carr employs Schutz’s intersubjective-temporal categories to account for historical experience proper. Three aspects of Carr’s account are important. The first regards the “subject” or the bearer proper of historical experience. For Carr, the subject proper of historical experience is the collective “we” in the sense that individuals relate to the collective as a “we,” like when we say that something happened to *us*.⁸¹ This aspect thus corresponds to pre-reflective self-awareness, but at the intersubjective level. The second aspect regards the temporality of the historical subject. Carr uses Schutz’s categories of predecessors, contemporaries, and successors to capture both the *simultaneity* of experience and the *overlapping* of temporal experience.⁸² Important for

⁸⁰ Ibid, 37.

⁸¹ Ibid, 50.

⁸² Ibid, 53.

Carr is not only that these intersubjective categories capture the continuity of temporal experience, but also that the “we” subject is constituted across historical experience. Hence, Carr writes that historical reality “enters directly into our lived experience and becomes part of our identity.”⁸³ Lastly, the third aspect of Carr’s account regards the horizontal structure of intersubjective experience. This means that the historical experiences of past subjects inform the horizon of what we might expect to happen, such that we immediately experience certain events as historically significant. As in the case of 9/11, for example, the *shock* of the event can be explained only within the horizon of past and future experiences.⁸⁴ Thus, while we might not know the full consequences of an event, it is thanks to the horizontal-temporal structure of intersubjective life that, Carr argues, we immediately experience certain events as historically significant.

Schutz’s, Ricoeur’s, and Carr’s accounts of historical consciousness are important on their own right because, at different levels, they capture the way in which the experiences of past subjects inform our present and future experiential horizons. Thus, Schutz establishes the continuity of social experience across time, which informs our present social relations; Ricoeur accounts for the way in which we can derive moral lessons from historical narratives, so that we might prevent the atrocities of the past from occurring again; and Carr captures the way in which historical events are immediately significant at the experiential level. More generally, I aimed to show that these accounts rely on the *knowing-how* structure of the world that Schutz calls the stock of knowledge, and which he derives from Husserl’s structure of “typicality.” The main difference between the stock of knowledge and “typicality” is that the first is an *epistemic* structure

⁸³ Ibid, 55.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 63.

and the second is an *ontological* one. I showed that since Schutz abandons transcendental phenomenology, he assumes the ontological structure of the world as *factual*. For this reason, I find the transcendental account of the “lifeworld” important. As Sebastian Luft puts it:

I and world are merely two poles of a correlation, of the tango, where any notion of a pure I or a pure world (a world in itself) are abstractions. In truth, all worldliness is Egoic, and all egoity is worldly, but in such a way that they stand in a (co-)relation of mutual constitution... This explains Husserl’s only seemingly contradictory statements—statements that are used to criticize him for an emphasis on either side—to the effect that either the Ego or the World are “apodictic.” They are both *moments of the One Structure*, transcendently interpreted and phenomenologically described. World and Ego each bear the respective mark of the other.⁸⁵

That is, by abandoning transcendental phenomenology, Schutz assumes that the world *is* a certain way, whereas Husserl accounts for the constitution of the subject-world experiential *sense*, or the “One Structure,” as Luft calls it. This means that while Schutz’s, Ricoeur’s, and Carr’s accounts of historical consciousness regard particular events and meaning formations, Husserl accounts for the meaningful subject-world experiential relation itself, through which particular events and meaning formations become meaningful. Differently put, Husserl accounts for the way in which we *conceive* of the subject-world experiential relation and thus for the way in which we conceive of both the world and ourselves as subjects in the world. The following section thus shows that Husserl’s account of historical consciousness regards the *sense* of the subject-world experiential relation, whereby we constitute the “lifeworld” as a historical horizon of *possible* experience.

⁸⁵ Sebastian Luft (2011), *Subjectivity and Lifeworld in Transcendental Phenomenology*, Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press, 16.

1.4. *Motivation and the Horizontal-Temporal Structure of the Lifeworld:*

So far then, I have offered an account of the way in which motivation accounts for the horizontal structure of subjective temporality, and I have shown that, although later phenomenologists such as Schutz draw from Husserl's work, they account for particular experiences rather than for the way in which we conceive of the subject-world experiential relation itself. I now return to Husserl to show the way in which he accounts for historical consciousness at the intersubjective level. This analysis aims to show that motivation accounts for the relations of sense between subjects across time, and therefore for the horizontal structure of the lifeworld.

Throughout Husserl's work, we can distinguish three moments in the thematic development of the notion of the "world" generally and of the "lifeworld" particularly. The notion of the "world" first appears in *Ideas I* under the heading of the "world of the natural attitude,"⁸⁶ which Husserl formulates as an ontological proposition of the form "there is."⁸⁷ Every act of willing or doing involves affirming the basic thesis that the experiential object *exists*, or the basic *thereness* of something. In *Ideas I*, Husserl introduces the Cartesian methodological skepticism which he calls the "epoché" to show that, since we can *modify* our natural *attitude*, the basic thereness implicit in our world-experience is not a given, but a subjective accomplishment.⁸⁸ Moreover, the notion of the "lifeworld" appears in a footnote in the last chapter of *Ideas II* entitled "The Ontological Priority of the Spiritual World over the *Naturalistic*."⁸⁹ There, the "naturalistic world"

⁸⁶ Husserl, 2014 (1913), §24-30, 48-52.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, §30-31, 52-53.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, §32, 55.

⁸⁹ Husserl, 1989 (1952), §63, 301-2, fn. 1, my emphasis. According to Don Welton, the first appearance of the notion of the lifeworld in Husserl's writing is in the 1920. As Welton puts it, "Husserl had introduced the notion of the life-world into his writings in the early 1920s and had devoted several studies to it well

refers to a particular way of conceiving the *thereness* of objects, namely, in the *empirical* terms of the natural sciences. In *Ideas II*, Husserl shows that the naturalistic conception requires an intersubjective attitude of the form “Us and what is actual,” whereby the empirical object of the natural sciences is a *noematic* correlate within a nexus of intersubjective experience.⁹⁰ Lastly, in *The Crisis of the European Sciences* (1954), Husserl traces the empirical object of the natural sciences to its *historical* origin.⁹¹ Husserl does not only trace the empirical object to its *contingent* historical origin, but also accounts for the way in which we take the naturalistic conception of the world *for granted*. Throughout this thematic development, Husserl thus derives the ontological and historical structures of the world from the structures of subjective and intersubjective life.

In this section, I situate my analysis of motivation within Husserl’s account of the “lifeworld.” I argue that motivation accounts for the relations of sense between the experiences of different subjects, through which we share the “lifeworld” as a common experiential horizon both at one point in time and across time. At one point in time, I interpret Husserl’s account of the “normalization” of experience as an account of social practices, and I argue that motivation accounts for the *typical normativity* implicit in social practices. Across time, I argue that motivation accounts for the relations of sense between subjects, throughout which we constitute the “lifeworld” as a historical horizon of possible experience. For this, I first sketch the horizontal structure of the lifeworld. I then interpret Husserl’s account of the “normalization” of experience as an account of

before he had Heidegger’s *Being and Time* in hand.” Don Welton (2000), *The Other Husserl: The Horizons of Transcendental Phenomenology*, Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 120.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 302.

⁹¹ Edmund Husserl (1970b [1954]), *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, translated by David Carr, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, §91, 57-59.

social practices. Lastly, I show the way in which the historical sense of the subject-world experiential relation informs our future horizon of possible experience.

1.4.1. The Horizontal Structure of the Lifeworld:

In Husserl's later works, the notion of the "lifeworld" serves both a critical and a grounding function. Husserl uses the notion of the "lifeworld" to criticize the empirical and, particularly, *causal* way in which the natural sciences characterize the spatio-temporal *regularity* of our world-experience.⁹² This causal characterization entails that the spatio-temporal structures of the world and, as such, the world itself is a subjectively independent object. Even the lay person, Husserl writes, who has no interest in the natural sciences assumes that "the space and of our world and the time in which what exists is encountered and in which our own experience is situated are precisely *the* space and *the* time."⁹³ In this way, the natural sciences move beyond subjective experience and ensure the *objectivity* of our world-experience. For Husserl, however, the world itself is not an object, but the total set of spatio-temporal relations through which individual subjects relate to objects. In this sense, Husserl argues that the *one*, objective world is an abstraction to which no individual subject has experiential access.⁹⁴ Although, Husserl further argues, our world-experience has the spatio-temporal regularity that the natural sciences conceive in causal terms, this spatio-temporal regularity is, as he calls it, "subjective-relative."⁹⁵ In this sense, the notion of the "lifeworld" also serves a grounding function. For Husserl, the lifeworld refers to the *subjective* structures that make *objective*

⁹² Husserl, 1973 (1939), §10, 43.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Husserl, 1970b (1954), §34b, 126.

meaning possible.⁹⁶ Paradoxically, this means that, for Husserl, objectivity is subjectively dependent. Throughout this section, we shall see the many levels through which objectivity is subjectively and intersubjectively constituted. In what follows, I introduce the basic elements of the horizontal structure of the lifeworld.

Husserl conceives the structure of our world-experience in terms of “typicality,” rather than in causal terms. “Typicality” is a *motivating* structure that Husserl formulates in terms of a twofold, concentric horizon.⁹⁷ This twofold, concentric horizon corresponds to the founding and founded levels of constitution. Thus, the “inner” horizon, as Husserl calls it, corresponds to the constitution of the individual object. Husserl formulates this motivating structure in terms of experiential “validity.”⁹⁸ In Husserl’s view, however, validity is not a relation of correspondence between consciousness and the extended qualities of an object, but a relation between experiences. Schematically put, this means that a present experience *q* validates the previous experience *p* which motivated it, thereby also motivating a future set of expected experiences *r, s, t*. Of course, a present experience might also *invalidate* the previous experience which motivated it. In this case, however, the present experience does not *annul* the flow of our previous experiences, but gives them a *new sense*, thereby also motivating a new set of expected experiences. That is what occurs, for example, when we realize that the dog which we had originally perceived was simply an ornamental statue. Important for Husserl is that the validating relation across *p, q*, and *r* experiences generates a horizon of *belief* or a “*doxastic*

⁹⁶ Ibid, §34f, 133.

⁹⁷ Husserl, 1973 (1939), §8, 31.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 34.

attitude,” as he calls it, that the experiential object *is* such and such.⁹⁹ Husserl thus writes that “*consciousness of the world is consciousness in the mode of certainty of belief*.”¹⁰⁰

The “external” horizon regards the *practical* field of objects within which we relate to the individual object.¹⁰¹ The external horizon corresponds to the founded level of constitution. Recall that founded constitution involves a *valuative* relation towards the extended qualities of an object, whereby the object acquires experiential *significance* according to the purposeful interests of the subject. Much like the inner horizon, the external horizon involves a validating relation between our valuative relations towards objects. This means, for example, that my present valuative relation towards a knife as a cooking utensil motivates future valuative relations towards other objects within my practical field as useful for the same cooking purposes. For this reason, Husserl argues that we relate to objects as *types*, rather than as mere existents.¹⁰² The outer horizon thus refers to the different contexts of experiential significance, like kitchens and libraries, into which we organize our world-experiences. *The* world, however, is not reducible to any one individual context of experiential significance, but it refers to the *infinite* “totality of typification.”¹⁰³

1.4.2. *The Normalization of Experience and the Shared World:*

Above, we saw that Schutz *assumes* that the experiences of other subjects correspond to the *same* world, which ensures the *public* aspect of the stock of knowledge. Since Husserl derives the *objectivity* of the lifeworld from the structures of subjective experience, he

⁹⁹ Ibid, §7, 30.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, §8, 33.

¹⁰² Ibid, 36.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

cannot assume that different subjects share the *same* lifeworld as a common experiential horizon. Instead, Husserl accounts for the *shared* world through a process that he calls the “normalization” of experience. As we shall see in more detail below, the normalization of experience consists in a *validating* process between the experiences of different subjects, whereby we come to share a common experiential horizon.¹⁰⁴ To clarify the importance of Husserl’s position, I compare it with two contemporary accounts of social ontology. The first is the contractual account. John Searle (1932-), offers a contractual account of social ontology where “speech acts” not only *represent* reality, but also *create* reality by committing us to *norms* for future action.¹⁰⁵ The problem with this account is that it assumes rational and independent subjects who then commit to social norms. In this sense, the account of social practices represents an alternative. The second contemporary account is that of social practices. Social practices not only account for the *normative* status of social objects, but also for the way in which individuals become *social subjects* in the first place. In the following, I interpret Husserl’s account of the normalization of experience as an account of social practices by drawing from Sally Haslanger’s (1955-) recent account. I argue that motivation accounts for the *typical normativity* of social practices.

1.4.2.1. The Normalization of Experience and Objective Nature:

Husserl accounts for the shared world at the founding and founded levels of constitution. At the founding level, Husserl derives the shared spatio-temporal structures of the world from the *embodied* relation between different subjects and a common perceptual object.

¹⁰⁴ Husserl, 1989 (1952), §52, 217.

¹⁰⁵ John Searle (2010), *Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

That is, given the perspectival aspect of perceptual experience, other subjects can perceive features of the object which are not currently present from my embodied location. Even if I move to another subject's location, thereby perceiving features of the object from her previous perspective, it is *impossible* for me to occupy another subject's embodied location. This means that the object is not reducible to my embodied location and thus that my perspectival location is *relative* to that of other subjects. In this sense, Husserl argues that the object acquires "world-space" within a relation of relative locations.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, consciousness synthesizes the object as an experiential unity within a horizon of previous, present, and expected experiences. Intersubjective constitution entails that my experiential horizon "overlaps," as Husserl says, with the experiential horizon of other subjects.¹⁰⁷ This means that by moving to another subject's perspectival location, my present experiences would roughly correspond to her previous experiences, whereby we relate to the *same* object as a *common* experiential horizon. As such, Husserl argues that the object acquires "world-time" within a *contemporaneous* horizon of intersubjective experience.¹⁰⁸

Generally, the normalization of experience is Husserl's account of the way in which discrepant experiences become harmonious. In Husserl's analyses of the body, for example, the normalization of experience accounts for the way in which discrepant tactual and visual experiences yield a unified object.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, in the case of the lifeworld, the normalization of experience involves a *validating* process between the

¹⁰⁶ Husserl, 1989 (1952), §49b, 187; §52, 213.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, §52, 216.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 213.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, §18c, 70-80.

experiences of different subjects, through which we share a common experiential horizon. Husserl puts it as follows:

In this communalization too, there constantly occurs an alteration of validity through reciprocal correction. In reciprocal understanding, my experiences and experiential acquisitions enter into contact with those of others... and here again, for the most part, intersubjective harmony of validity occurs, [establishing what is] ‘normal’ in respect to particular details, and thus an intersubjective validity also comes about in the multiplicity of validities and of what is valid through them... All this takes place in such a way that in the consciousness of each individual, and in the overarching community consciousness which has grown up through [social] contact, one and the same world achieves and continuously maintains constant validity as the world which is in part already experienced and in part the open horizon of possible experience for all.¹¹⁰

That is, from their perspectival location, other subjects might validate or invalidate my perceptual experiences. Thus, for example, other subjects might invalidate my experience of a barn as corresponding simply to a façade. In this way, the experiences of other subjects give a *new sense* to my previous experiences, thereby also motivating a new set of expected experiences. Two things are important about the process of intersubjective validation. The first regards the *transcendent* structure of the world. The process of validation entails that *the* world is not reducible to my perspectival experience and thus that, from each individual perspective, the world remains an *open* horizon of experience. That is because the experiences of others represent an *open* horizon of what is, in principle, *experientable* for the individual subject. Second, the validation process generates a *shared belief* that the object *is* such and such independently of our subjective lives, whereby we relate to the object as an *objective* unity of experience. Husserl thus writes that the *objective* nature of the natural sciences is “an Objectivity constituted in the

¹¹⁰ Husserl, 1970b (1954), §47, 163-64.

context of the personal world, that is, harmoniously experienced in communal experience as being identically the same.”¹¹¹

1.4.2.2. The Normalization of Experience as Social Practice:

Husserl’s account of the normalization of experience is not restricted to the founding level of constitution, but also applies to the founded level. In *Ideas II*, Husserl writes that this kind of normalization regards the “demands of morality, of custom, of tradition, of the spiritual milieu: ‘one’ judges in this way, ‘one’ has to hold his fork like this, and so on—i.e., demands of the social group, of the class, etc.”¹¹² Drawing from Husserl’s manuscripts on intersubjectivity, Zahavi refers to this kind of normalization as “conventionality,” and it regards our purposeful relations to objects.¹¹³ This means that other subjects might validate or invalidate our *valuative* relations towards an object, whereby the object becomes *useful* for such and such purposes and not for others. Take the case of the little mermaid as an example. While the little mermaid relates to a fork in a purposeful way, whereby the fork acquires experiential significance as an *object of beauty*, her valutive relation becomes normalized relative to the way that others relate to the fork as an *eating utensil*. This means that, through the validation process, the extended qualities of objects become *valuable* in practical, theoretical, and aesthetic ways *for* the individual subject. It is for this reason that we relate to the usefulness, objectivity, and beauty of objects as subjectively independent features of the empirical world. More generally, through the validation process other subjects circumscribe the horizon of

¹¹¹ Husserl, 1989 (1952), §53, 220.

¹¹² Ibid, §60c, 282.

¹¹³ Zahavi, 2003, 134.

possibilities within which each individual subject organizes her purposeful, that is, practical, theoretical, and aesthetic life.

The normalization of experience is Husserl's account of the way that, although subjectively dependent, we relate to the *sense* of objects as subjectively independent. In contemporary terms, this means that the normalization of experience is an account of social ontology.¹¹⁴ As Searle puts it, social reality is *epistemically objective* because it is not reducible to the experiential life of the individual subject, and it is *ontologically subjective* because it is subjectively constituted.¹¹⁵ Husserl's account of social reality, however, is not contractual. Rather, I would like to interpret the normalization of experience as an account of social practices. In her recent account (2018), Haslanger highlights three main aspects of social practices. These are: a) that social practices involve a process of *socialization* through which individual subjects acquire *social meanings*, b) that social meanings account for the *regularity* of social behavior regarding the allocation of objects taken to have value, and c) that, in this sense, social meanings serve a "thin" *normative* function. Haslanger writes as follows:

Social practices are patterns of behavior, but need not be guided by rules or intentionally performed. They are not mere regularities of behavior, either, for they are the product of social learning and evolve through responsiveness both to each other's performances and the parts of the world we have an interest in collectively managing. This responsiveness is mediated by social meanings—information carried in a semiotic net—that enable us to communicate, coordinate, and manage the things taken to have value.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Although contemporary research in social ontology is taking place in analytic philosophy, early phenomenologists like Husserl are not outsiders to the field. As Thomas Szanto and Dermot Moran argue, not only is contemporary analytic research in social ontology re-branding some of the problems and notions of early phenomenologists, but it was Husserl who first coined the term "social ontology." Thomas Szanto and Dermot Moran (2016), "Introduction: Phenomenological Discoveries Concerning the 'We': Mapping the Terrain," in Thomas Szanto and Dermot Moran (eds.) *Phenomenology of Sociality: Discovering the 'We'*, New York, NY: Routledge, 3.

¹¹⁵ Searle, 2010, 18.

¹¹⁶ Sally Haslanger (2018), "What is a Social Practice?," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 8: 15.

For Haslanger, social practices are neither mere patterns of behavior, nor are they structured by explicit rule following. Haslanger argues that social meanings serve a “thin” normative function in the sense that they consist in patterns of *expectations* and *responses* to the behavior of others. In this sense, Haslanger argues that social meanings serve as “vectors” which enable individual action while, at the same time, constrain it.¹¹⁷

My claim here is that the *motivating* structure of *shared typicality* serves the “thin” normative function that Haslanger attributes to social practices. Thus, for example, once I acquire the sense “fork as an eating utensil,” I will not only relate to other *fork* instances in the same way, but I will also *expect* other subjects to relate to other *fork* instances in the same way. As such, social practices not only account for the way in which I acquire social meanings, but also for the way in which I *sanction* social meanings. In this sense, Haslanger writes that “practices shape us as we shape them.”¹¹⁸

1.4.3. *Motivation and the Historical Structure of the Lifeworld:*

Husserl’s account of the normalization of experience is important because it shows that the lifeworld is not only the world in which we live *among* others, but the world in which we live *through* the meanings of others. This means that being a subject within a cultural domain entails taking up, so to speak, the meanings of others. In the case of the natural sciences, for example, Husserl’s point is that *becoming* a natural scientist involves a process of normalization through which one both takes up and *sanctions* the empirical way of relating to objects. For this reason, Husserl writes that “subjectivity is what it is—an ego functioning constitutively—only within intersubjectivity.”¹¹⁹ Moreover, since the

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 11.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 1.

¹¹⁹ Husserl, 1970b (1954), §31, 117-18.

original source of shared meanings cannot be traced, through reflection, to the experiential lives of individual subjects, Husserl argues that our world-experience also involves an element of anonymity or, as he calls it, a “hidden subjectivity.”¹²⁰ By “hidden subjectivity,” Husserl means that shared meanings have a subjective, historical origin, even when we might not always recognize it. It is through its historical sense that our world-experience has a *determinate* horizon of possibilities. In the following, I argue that, in Husserl’s account of historical consciousness, motivating relations between subjects across time regard the *sense* of the subject-world experiential relation itself, which informs our future horizon of possible experience. I support my argument in two ways. I first offer a systematic analysis of the historical structure of the life world. Second, I supplement the systematic analysis with the more concrete analysis of the phenomenon that Husserl calls the “mathematization of nature.” I aim to show that, for Husserl, the temporal structure of the lifeworld regards not only relations between particular experiences, but the way in which we conceive of the subject-world experiential relation itself.

1.4.3.1. A History of Sense: Original Formation, Sedimentation, and Teleology:

In *The Origin of Geometry* (1939), where he offers a historical account of meaning formations, Husserl argues that, transcendently considered, “history is from the start nothing other than the vital moment of the coexistence and the interweaving of original formations and sedimentations of meaning.”¹²¹ Husserl’s account of history thus regards intersubjective relations of *sense* across time. Particularly, for Husserl, the historical

¹²⁰ Husserl, 1973 (1939), §11, 48.

¹²¹ Edmund Husserl, (1970a [1939]), *The Origin of Geometry*, in Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, translated by David Carr, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, Appendix VI, 371.

development of meaning involves two moments, which he calls “original formation” and “sedimentation.” Regarding “original formation,” since meaning is subjectively dependent, Husserl argues that the meanings through which we organize our experiential lives have a subjective, either individual or collective, historical origin. However, Husserl traces “original formation” neither to the psychological dispositions nor to the particular beliefs of historical subjects. Rather, “original formation” refers to the articulation of the subject-world experiential *sense* as “it appeared in history for the first time—in which it had to appear, even though we know nothing of the first creators and are not even asking after them.”¹²² That is, original formation does not refer to the particular *intentions* of historical subjects but to the articulation of the *intentional* subject-world experiential sense. As such, original formation refers to the way in which we *conceive* the subject-world experiential relation and thus to the way in which we conceive both of the world and of ourselves as subjects in the world. Original formation then is important because it determines the way in which we conceive of our *purposeful* lives and, concomitantly, it determines the *significance* that objects acquire for us. Thus, the meaning of *work*, of *science*, of *aesthetic* pleasure determines how we conceive of ourselves as subjects and our relations to objects within these domains.

Throughout this chapter, we have seen that motivation consists in a relation of sense, such that the sense of our previous experiences accumulates or *sediments*, thereby informing the sense of our future experiences. What Husserl means by *sedimentation* is a process of habituation through which we come to take the meaning of objects *for granted*. This means both that we do not question the meaning of objects and thus that we

¹²² Ibid, 354.

immediately relate to objects as having a determinate sense. James Dodd (2004) explains the process of sedimentation as follows:

What is established in sedimentation is nothing assigned, nothing that could be present as a task or a vocation; if anything is being “fixed” here, it is that something is being “taken for...”—taken for granted, taken as a given in a passive intentionality of conscious life. This passivity is not secondary but originary; the sedimented is a given in the sense of something to which we need not pay attention, as if it has already been decided long ago, a decision that need not be made in order to be. This is what Husserl calls *pre-given* (*vorgegeben*): the pre-given is a given that never broaches on the questionable, thus which remains within the circle of the familiar, as its center of gravity.¹²³

For Husserl, what we take for granted throughout our experiential relations with objects is the *historical sense* of the subject-world experiential relation. This means that our present experiential relations both *assume* and *validate* the experiential sense of past subjects, thereby also generating a future experiential horizon. The future horizon, however, does not refer to what we might expect to *causally* occur, but to the way in which we might conceive of the subject-world experiential relation. Thus, the problems we find relevant, our cultural achievements, and our future projects are circumscribed within the historical horizon of the subject-world experiential relation. Thanks to the process of sedimentation, the lifeworld is not an open horizon of *indeterminate* possibilities, but the determinate, *historical* horizon of possible experience.

Lastly, Husserl’s account of historical consciousness is *teleological* in the sense that original formation and sedimentation establish a temporal unity of *sense*. Particularly, the teleological relation between original formation and sedimentation regards the constitution of intersubjective temporality and the temporality of the

¹²³ James Dodd (2004), *Crisis and Reflection: An Essay on Husserl’s Crisis of the European Sciences*, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 69.

lifeworld. First, much like the life of the individual subject is temporally constituted as the accumulation of her meaningful experiences which inform her future experiences, for Husserl, intersubjective life is temporally constituted as the accumulation of our subject-world experiential relations, which inform our future experiential horizon. This means that, for Husserl, the sense of the subject-world experiential relation is the *telos* running across generations, and which gives a *unified sense* to intersubjective temporality.

Second, the teleological relation between original formation and sedimentation also regards the temporality of the lifeworld. For Husserl, the temporality of the lifeworld refers to the *unfolding* of possibilities between original formation and sedimentation.

Much like, for Aristotle, the tree is *in potentia* contained, so to speak, within the seed, for Husserl, the possibilities of the present and the future are contained within the original articulation of the subject-world experiential sense.¹²⁴ The historical structure of the lifeworld thus regards the unfolding of the possibilities opened by the articulation of the subject-world experiential sense which informs our present and future experiential horizons. Yet, unlike Aristotle, who conceives of teleology in *substantial* terms, for Husserl, the possibilities of the present are *historically contingent*. That is because the historical sense of the subject-world experiential relation is subjectively dependent, which means that it could have been *otherwise*. Differently put, since Husserl does not posit a necessary *telos* over and above the experiential lives of individual subjects, his

¹²⁴ As Dodd writes: "...one of the tasks of historical reflection is to grasp the historical indeterminacy of the present in its being projected by the past in light of its *productive capacity*, that is, the capacity to shape the surrounding world. What has come before does not fashion the present... but it does fashion the possibility of the present, above all of the inner sense in which the present 'has' possibilities. This is the genuine goal of the historical-teleological reflections in the *Crisis*: it is not to explain the present, to demonstrate the origins of what now exists, but to reveal what the present *could be* in light of the history to which its potential can be traced to its origin." Dodd, 2004, 81.

account of historical consciousness leads to the paradoxical result that while *some* historical present is *necessary*, *all* historical present is *contingent*.

1.4.3.2. Husserl's Account of the Mathematization of Nature:

Important for Husserl is the articulation of the *empirical* subject-world experiential sense that he attributes to Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) and that he calls the “mathematization of nature.”¹²⁵ However, Husserl is not interested in Galileo’s particular *intentions*, but in the articulation of the *intentional* subject-world experiential sense.¹²⁶ In this sense, Husserl methodologically proceeds in a “zig-zag” way, that is, he clarifies what we take *for granted* about our world-experience by clarifying what Galileo took for granted.¹²⁷

Husserl argues that from the Euclidean geometrical tradition Galileo drew the “ideality” of geometrical shapes and the “art of measuring.”¹²⁸ This means not only that Galileo came to conceive of bodily objects as ideal geometrical shapes, but that he also came to conceive of the relations between geometrical shapes as *measurable*. Thus, Galileo conceived of *space* in terms of geometrical shapes and of spatial *relations* in terms of measurable *succession*. For Husserl, the consequences of Galileo’s mathematization of nature are twofold. First, the mathematization of nature means that Galileo articulated the regularity of the spatio-temporal world in *causal* terms which can be measurable and

¹²⁵ Husserl, 1970b (1954), §9, 23.

¹²⁶ Husserl puts it as follows: “For our concern is to achieve complete clarity on the idea and task of a physics which in its Galilean form originally determined modern philosophy, [to understand it] as it appeared to Galileo’s own motivation, and to understand what followed into this motivation from what was traditionally taken for granted and thus remained an unclarified presupposition of meaning, as well as what was later added as seemingly obvious, but which changed its actual meaning.” Ibid, §9b, 32. See also Jacques Derrida (1989 [1962]), *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, translated by John P. Leavay Jr., Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 35.

¹²⁷ Husserl, 1970b (1954), §9l, 58.

¹²⁸ Ibid, §9b, 28-29.

predicted.¹²⁹ Second, and most important, is that the mathematization of nature resulted in the *split* between the *objective* qualities of objects and our *subjective* experience. This split corresponds to the distinction between the primary qualities of objects, like *extension, motion, and number*, and their secondary qualities, like *color, taste, and smell*.¹³⁰ Husserl's point is that not only did the relations between extended objects come to be explained in *causal* terms, but also that subjective experience itself came to be explained as the *causal effect* of the objective relations between objects.¹³¹ This means that to a causal change in the world there corresponds a *causal effect* in experience. Thus, Husserl's point is that the mathematization of nature resulted in a new way of conceiving the sense of our subject-world experiential relation, namely, in the *empirical* terms of the natural sciences.

Husserl's analysis of Galileo's mathematization of nature thus corresponds to the moment of original formation. In *The Origin of Geometry*, Husserl describes the process of sedimentation of modern geometry as a process of validation across generations in the following way:

Clearly, then, geometry must have arisen out of a *first* acquisition, out of first creative activities. We understand its persisting manner of being: it is not only a mobile forward process from one set of acquisitions to another but a continuous synthesis in which all acquisitions maintain their validity, the total acquisition is, so to speak, the total premise for the acquisitions of the new level. Geometry necessarily has this mobility and has a horizon of geometrical future in precisely this style: this is its meanings for every geometer who has the consciousness (the constant implicit knowledge) of existing within a forward development understood in the progress of

¹²⁹ As Dodd argues, although Galileo did not invent *causality*, he *transformed* our conception of causality in terms of cause and effect: "Also the very idea of causality itself and its description (thus the very ideal of a 'physical event') had to be freed from the once perfectly acceptable notion of causality as 'the reason why something happened,' in order, ironically, for it to play a lesser role in physical description, thereby giving a certain precedence to effects rather than causes. The mathematization of nature, Galileo's great project, slowly transforms physics from a science of causes into a science of effects and the prediction of effects." Dodd, 91.

¹³⁰ Husserl, 1970b (1954), §9b, 30, fn.

¹³¹ Ibid, §9c, 35.

knowledge being built into the horizon. The same thing is true of every science. Also, every science is related to an open chain of the generations of those who work for and with one another, researchers either known or unknown to one another who are the accomplishing subjectivity of the whole science.¹³²

Here, Husserl is describing the validation process of meaning across generations, which not only depends on the meaningful accomplishments of previous subjects, but which also opens a future horizon of meaningful accomplishments. Yet, for Husserl, the mathematization of nature is not a phenomenon confined to the field of geometry, but it is a cultural phenomenon regarding the meaning of modern science generally. Husserl argues, for example, that the subjective-objective split that resulted from the mathematization of nature gave rise to sciences like psychology, which became the *causal* science of the *spiritual*.¹³³ Moreover, Husserl reads the historical development of modern philosophy as the opposition between “psychologistic objectivism and transcendental subjectivism.”¹³⁴ That is, Descartes distinction between *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, and Kant’s distinction between the *noumenal* and the *phenomenal* correspond to the subjective-objective split that resulted from the mathematization of nature.¹³⁵ For Husserl then the subjective-objective split is the subject-world experiential sense driving the historical development of modern science.

In this section, I aimed to show that Husserl’s account of historical consciousness regards not only particular meanings or knowledge formations, but the subject-world experiential sense itself, through which particular meanings and knowledge formations become meaningful. Particularly, Husserl’s account of the mathematization of nature

¹³² Husserl, 1970a (1939), 355-56.

¹³³ Husserl 1970b (1954), §10, 63.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 20.

¹³⁵ See *ibid*, §§16-27, 73-100.

regards the *empirical* way of conceiving our world-experience. As he puts it in

Experience and Judgment:

If, therefore, we wish to return to experience in the ultimate original sense which is the object of our inquiry, then it can only be to the original experience of the life-world, an experience still unacquainted with any of these idealizations but whose necessary foundation it is. And this retrogression to the original life-world is not one which simply takes for granted the world of our experience as it is given to us but rather traces the historicity already deposited in it to its source—it is in this historicity that the sense of a world as existing “in itself” and objectively determinable first accrues to the world on the basis of original experience and intuition.¹³⁶

Husserl’s analysis of the mathematization of nature thus shows two things. First, Husserl traces the *empirical* object of the natural sciences to its *contingent* historical origin. This means that the empirical way of conceiving our subject-world experiential relation is subjectively dependent and thus that it could have been *otherwise*. Nevertheless, second, Husserl shows that, while historically contingent, the empirical way of conceiving our subject-world experiential relation is *necessary* for our *present* scientific purposes. That is because our present scientific achievements depend on the chain of validity across intersubjective relations. Thus, Husserl shows that while the present is historically *contingent*, its history is also *necessary* for our present subjective lives. In this sense, motivation accounts for the relations of sense whereby *contingency* becomes *necessity*.

1.5. Conclusion:

The forgoing chapter offers an account of historical consciousness in Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology. This account of historical consciousness regards the way in which temporality is subjectively and intersubjectively lived in a horizonal way, such that the *sense* of our previous experiences informs the *sense* of our present and future

¹³⁶ Husserl, 1973 (1939), §10, 45-46.

experiences. I drew from Husserl's notion of *motivation* to account for the relations of sense between experiences both at the subjective and intersubjective levels. At the subjective level, I showed that the experiential life of the individual subject is temporally constituted not in terms of numerical identity, as the *same* subject across time, but as the accumulation of her subject-world experiential relations which inform her future experiences. At the intersubjective level, I showed that motivation accounts for the relations of sense between subjects across time, whereby we constitute the lifeworld as the historical horizon of possible experience. I showed that the *historical sense* of the subject-world experiential relation is the *telos* which accounts for the temporal identity both of intersubjective life and of the lifeworld. In this sense, the lifeworld is temporally constituted not in terms of numerical identity, as the *same* world across time, but as the *unfolding* of possibilities regarding the *historical sense* of the subject-world experiential relation. This means that our present and future possibilities correspond to the possibilities made possible by the past. In this sense, motivation accounts for the *teleological inertia*, so to speak, whereby *contingent* meaning formations become *necessary*.

Part of the reason for focusing on the subject-world experiential sense is that, while Husserl's is a history of *sense*, it is not simply a history of *ideas*—that is, if by *ideas* we understand abstract mental constructs. Rather, I aimed to stress that, for Husserl, historical consciousness regards the *sense* of our experiential *contact* with the world. This means both the way in which we conceive of the world and of ourselves as subjects in the world. While throughout this chapter, I emphasized the *agential* aspect of our subjective lives, for Husserl, we are not only *agents* in the formation of meaning, but also *objects* of

meaning. The sense of being both subjects and objects in the world, Husserl calls the “paradox of subjectivity.”¹³⁷ Particularly, for Husserl, it is through the *embodied* aspect of our experiential relations that we are *objects* in the world. In his analyses of the body in *Ideas II*, for example, Husserl argues that in touching my own hand I am the *touching* subject and, at the same time, the *touched* object.¹³⁸ Similarly, in *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, Husserl argues that it is through the body that we become the *objects* of “alien perception.”¹³⁹ This means that it is through the *embodied* aspect of our experiential life that we are both *agents* of meaning formation and, at the same time, *objects* of meaning. Differently put, it is through the perception of others that we *embody* the historical sense of the subject-world experiential relation. That is what, following Maurice Merleau-Ponty, we might call the “historical body schema.”¹⁴⁰ Rather than focusing on Merleau-Ponty, however, I would like to end this chapter by briefly discussing the way in which historical *gender* and *racial* meanings are lived in an embodied way.

The phenomenological analysis regarding embodiment has provided a fruitful way of thinking about *gender* and *race* as historical meanings rather than in substantial terms. Thus, for example, Judith Butler (1988) draws from Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir, and argues that rather than a natural fact, gender is a “historical idea” or a “historical situation.”¹⁴¹ Butler turns to the notion of “performativity” to capture the way in which gender is embodied in a twofold sense. That is, gender is embodied in the sense

¹³⁷ Husserl, 1970b (1954), §53, 178-79.

¹³⁸ Husserl, 1989 (1952), §36, 152.

¹³⁹ Husserl, 1970b (1954), §54b, 185.

¹⁴⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, (2002 [1945]), *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Colin Smith, New York, NY: Routledge, 112-15.

¹⁴¹ Judith Butler (1988), “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theater Journal*, 40:4, 520.

that it is *bodily enacted* and in the sense that *perceptual expectations* determine the possibilities for the enactment of gender.¹⁴² Butler thus captures the sense in which, although a historical *meaning*, gender is *materially reproduced* through the body. Along a similar line of argument, Iris Marion Young (1980) argues that the historical situation of gender articulates the very *spatiality* of male and female embodiment. Young argues that while the male body is culturally articulated in terms of spatial *openness*, the female body is culturally articulated in terms of spatial *closedness*.¹⁴³ This means that the spatial possibilities of projecting *outwardly*, towards the world, are articulated differently for the male and for the female body. Lastly, Frantz Fanon (1952) describes “blackness” as a “historical-racial schema.”¹⁴⁴ The “white gaze,” as Fanon calls it, *reduces* the black body to its historical meanings, thereby rendering the individual person *ontologically shallow*.¹⁴⁵ In this sense, Fanon argues that instead of relating to her body from the first-person perspective, as an organ of *movement*, the black person relates to her body as an *object* that takes up space.¹⁴⁶ Thus, although Husserl’s is a history of sense, it is not simply a history of *ideas* in the abstract sense. Rather, as the cases of *gender* and *race* show, we live the *historical sense* of the subject-world experiential relation in an *embodied* way. This analysis will become relevant in Chapter 5, where I analyze the concrete ways in which we inhabit racial, gendered, and sexual meanings at the embodied level.

¹⁴² Ibid, 524.

¹⁴³ Iris Marion Young (2005 [1980]), “Throwing like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality,” in Iris Marion Young, *On Female Bodily Experience: “Throwing Like a Girl” And Other Essays*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 39-42.

¹⁴⁴ Frantz Fanon (2008 [1952]), *Black Skin, White Marks*, translated by Richard Philcox, New York, NY: Grove Press, 91.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 90.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 92.

Chapter 2: The Historical *A Priori*: Cultural Critique and the Ideal of Humanity

2.1. Introduction:

The account of historical consciousness that I offered in the previous chapter is *descriptive* because it regards what it means to live time historically. I argued that temporality is subjectively and intersubjectively lived not only in terms of temporal continuity, either as the *same* subject or as the *same* world across time, but that experiential life has a *horizontal-temporal* structure. The horizontal-temporal structure of experiential life entails that the *sense* of our previous experiences *accumulates*, thereby informing the *sense* of our present and future experiences. This cumulative relation thus accounts both for the *temporal identity* of experiential life as a unity of sense and, to use a spatial metaphor, for the historical *orientation* of our world-horizon. I characterized the two aspects of the cumulative relation as the *teleological inertia* regarding the historical subject-world experiential sense. The present chapter considers two *normative* issues that arise from *teleological* accounts of history. Broadly following Amy Allen (2016), I characterize these two issues in terms of the “prospective” and the “retrospective” views of historical teleology. The prospective view regards whether history obeys rational, emancipatory goals, whereby historical unfolding acquires *moral* value despite our individual shortcomings. The retrospective view of historical teleology regards the *moral* status of the present vis-à-vis the past. If history obeys rational, emancipatory goals, then historical unfolding would entail that our present practices and institutions are *morally better* relative to the past. These two views of historical teleology thus regard whether historical unfolding necessarily entails *moral progress*.

I address the normative issues that arise from teleological accounts of history by contrasting Edmund Husserl's and Michel Foucault's (1926-1984) conceptions of the "historical *a priori*." While for Husserl and Foucault the "historical *a priori*" regards the history of the present, they offer a *teleological* and an *anti-teleological* account of history respectively, which also informs their accounts of *cultural critique*. Retrospectively, Foucault argues against the notion of historical teleology because it serves as a unity of interpretation whereby the past and the present acquire *necessity* along a *progressive* historical unfolding. Allen argues that the retrospective view that she calls "progress as a fact" not only *legitimizes* our present social norms as the product of a process of historical learning, but it also legitimizes colonial enterprises by considering non-European peoples as historically relegated. Thus, instead of *explaining* the present along a historical progression, Foucault *circumscribes* the present through the "regimes of truth" that inform our subjective lives. In Foucault's view then the "historical *a priori*" refers to the historical *contingency* of our present "regimes of truth." Moreover, Allen argues that rejecting the retrospective view of "progress as a fact" does not necessarily entail rejecting the prospective view of "progress as an imperative." Thus, prospectively, Foucault traces the liminal spaces of our "regimes of truth," from which we might conceive of the present *otherwise*. However, while Allen frames Foucault's account of *cultural critique* as fulfilling the Enlightenment ideal of *freedom*, his account of cultural critique is not normative because Foucault rejects positing *ideals* that would guide our social efforts. Rather, Foucault argues that cultural critique involves a constant struggle to conceive of ourselves otherwise than our present "regimes of truth."

In contrast to Foucault, Husserl offers a normative and *teleological* account of the “historical *a priori*.” For Husserl, the “historical *a priori*” means that *ideals*, both as non-empirical and as normative, are historically constituted. Husserl thus conceives of *ideality* in historical terms and, conversely, he conceives of history in normative, *teleological* terms. Retrospectively, this means that Husserl traces the history of the present to the *ideals* that mark its teleological orientation. However, while Husserl allows for the progressive refinement of meaning formations, this does not necessarily translate into *moral progress*. Rather, Husserl argues that *cultural crisis* consists in a process of *forgetting*, whereby the original ideals that guide our communal endeavors cease to inform our subjective lives in *normative* ways. Particularly, in the case of the natural sciences, Husserl interprets the subjective-objective split that resulted from the mathematization of nature not only in *epistemological* terms, regarding the *factual* objectivity of the world, but in *normative* terms, regarding the meaning of *human* life. That is, since the natural sciences cannot inform our subjective lives in normative ways, their technological advancements do not necessarily translate into *moral progress*. Prospectively, Husserl’s account of *cultural critique* consists in criticizing our present practices and institutions according to the *humanistic* ideals they are meant to serve. This entails the *projection* of renewed *ideals* which can reorient our world-horizon. In this sense, for Husserl, historical unfolding involves a continuous process of *forgetting* and *renewal* of the ideals which mark the teleological orientation of our world-horizon.

My argument in this chapter is twofold and it regards the *ideal* of *humanity* in Husserl’s and Foucault’s accounts of the historical *a priori*. First, although I find Foucault’s rejection of the retrospective view of progress as a fact important because it

serves to legitimize both our present institutions and colonial enterprises, I argue that Foucault's prospective view of cultural critique fails to capture the struggles of oppressed peoples. Since Foucault assumes the Enlightenment view of a free subject, he can afford to reject the *ideal of humanity*, whereas struggles for liberation are struggles whereby oppressed peoples *affirm* their humanity. I aim to provide a teleological account of humanity that can capture the historical unfolding of our liberatory struggles. This critique will later serve to capture the historical-liberatory project of *mestizaje* as an identity project in Latin America. Second, Husserl's account of cultural critique involves the positing of an *ideal of humanity* which emerges from the historical unfolding of the cultural community, and which serves to *reorient* our communal endeavors. However, Husserl follows the project of the Renaissance, which traces the ideal of a "universal" humanity to ancient Greece and collapses "universal" to European humanity. Against, the Renaissance project, I argue that not only did the ideal of a "universal" humanity emerge during the colonization of the Americas, but that it also corresponds to a *colonial* historical project. As we shall see, it is precisely this colonial historical project that I refer to as the structure of the "coloniality of history." Thus, while I reject the notion of "universal" humanity as the colonial *universalization* of the provincial, I aim to account for an *ideal of humanity* which emerges from and guides the historical struggles of oppressed peoples.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section offers an analysis of Foucault's anti-teleological account of the historical *a priori*. Drawing from Allen's distinction, I show that, retrospectively, Foucault rejects teleological accounts both because they obscure the historical *contingency* of the present and because they *legitimize*

the present as resulting from a process of historical learning. Prospectively, I argue that Foucault's account of cultural critique assumes the Enlightenment view of a free subject and thus that he can afford to reject the notion of humanity. Different from the Enlightenment view, I argue that rather than assuming a free subject, struggles for liberation are struggles *for* freedom. The second section turns to Husserl's teleological account of the historical *a priori*. I argue that while, retrospectively, Husserl accounts for the history of the present as guided by teleological *ideals*, his is not a *justificatory* but a *critical* account, which I characterize as motivated by a crisis of *values*. Prospectively, I argue that Husserl's account of cultural critique posits an *ideal of humanity* which emerges from and *reorients* the historical unfolding of a cultural community. The third section discusses the Renaissance project, which traces the *ideal* of a "universal" humanity to ancient Greece and which collapses "universal" to European humanity. I argue that not only did the ideal of "universal" humanity emerged through the colonization of the Americas, but that it also corresponds to a *colonizing* historical project. I conclude by drawing a series of lessons from this analysis of the "universal" ideal of humanity, and which will also help in characterizing *liberatory projects* in the following chapters.

2.2.Foucault on the Historical A Priori and Cultural Critique:

Foucault first introduces the notion of the "historical *a priori*" in his "Preface" to *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (1966). In the "Preface," Foucault includes a brief reflection about the "archeological" method that he employs in his earlier works on *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1961) and in *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception* (1963). In

the earlier works, Foucault analyzes the kinds of *experiences*, like “rationality” and “irrationality,” that scientific discourses made possible during the 17th and 19th centuries. The historical “order” or the internal laws of these discourses is what, in *The Order of Things*, Foucault calls the “historical *a priori*”:

The present study is an attempt to analyze that experience... Quite obviously, such an analysis does not belong to the history of ideas or of science; it is rather an inquiry whose aim is to rediscover on what basis knowledge and theory became possible; within what space of order knowledge was constituted; on the basis of what historical *a priori*, and in the element of what positivity, ideas could appear, sciences be established... I am not concerned, therefore, to describe the progress of knowledge towards an objectivity in which today’s science can finally be recognized; what I am attempting to bring to light is the epistemological field, the *episteme* in which knowledge, envisaged apart from all criteria having reference to its rational value or to its objective forms, grounds its positivity and thereby manifests a history which is not that of its growing perfection, but rather that of its conditions of possibility... Such an enterprise is not so much a history, in the traditional meaning of the word, as an ‘archeology.’¹⁴⁷

Two things are important to highlight from this passage. The first is that Foucault distinguishes his archeological method from what he calls the “history of ideas.” The “history of ideas” is the view Foucault attributes to Husserl, and which consists in interpreting the historical unfolding of the sciences as obeying a rational value like the *truth*.¹⁴⁸ In Foucault’s view, the result is that the history of ideas *legitimizes* our present “regimes of truth” along a *progressive* development. Second, in contrast to the history of ideas, Foucault’s archeology breaks with this teleological linearity and, instead, searches for the *contingent* historical conditions which give rise to certain discursive “orders” or,

¹⁴⁷ Michel Foucault (1973 [1966]), *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, translated by Alan Sheridan, New York, NY: Vintage Books, xxi-xxi.

¹⁴⁸ See, for example, Michel Foucault (2010 [1977]), “Truth and Power,” in Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader*, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 59; and Michel Foucault (1972 [1969]), *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, translated by A. M. Sheridan, New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 203.

as he also refers to them, “epistemes.” In this way, Foucault aims to free thought so as “to discover that these orders are perhaps not the only possible ones or even the best ones” and thus such that we might conceive of ourselves *otherwise*.¹⁴⁹

In this section, I provide an analysis of Foucault’s anti-teleological account of the historical *a priori*. I show that Foucault aims to capture the historical *contingency* of our present “regimes of truth” so that we might conceive of ourselves *otherwise*. However, I argue that Foucault’s account of cultural critique fails to capture the historical struggles of oppressed peoples because he adopts the Enlightenment assumption of a free subject, whereas struggles for liberation are struggles *for* freedom. For this, I first show that, *methodologically*, Foucault rejects teleological accounts of the present because they explain away its historical *contingency*. I then draw from Allen’s distinction between the retrospective view of “progress as a fact” and the prospective view of “progress as an imperative” to analyze the *normative* implications of Foucault’s anti-teleological view. Lastly, I juxtapose the *emancipatory* project of the Enlightenment and the project of *liberation*, and I show that while the emancipatory project of the Enlightenment begins from the assumption of freedom, liberatory struggles are struggles *for* freedom.

2.2.1. Foucault’s Anti-Teleological Conception of the Historical A Priori:

Central to Foucault’s account of the historical *a priori* is the methodological rejection of the notion of *the subject*.¹⁵⁰ For Foucault, the notion of the subject serves a twofold function in the history of ideas, namely, an empirical and a transcendental function.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Foucault, 1973 (1966), xx.

¹⁵⁰ Foucault, 1972 (1969), 21.

¹⁵¹ Although Foucault’s extended methodological exposition comes in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, in my view, Foucault’s analyses in *The Order of Things* provide the ground for his extended archeological and, later, genealogical methods. Foucault, 1973 (1966), 248; 325.

Empirically, the notion of the subject serves to establish the identity of the contents of knowledge across time in terms of “repetition.”¹⁵² The empirical function of the subject refers to the *finitude* of our temporal lives.¹⁵³ Thus, it is thanks to the handing-down from one generation to the next that we refer to the *same* concept. Transcendentally, the notion of the subject refers to the *constitutive activity* across time.¹⁵⁴ At this level, subjectivity does not refer to any one individual subject, but to the *thematic* subject-object relation that we can trace across generations. It is thanks to the transcendental function that we can interpret the constitutive activity of individual subjects as obeying a general purpose or a rational value. Take, for example, the case of institutions. Although institutions require individual subjects to carry out specific tasks, the history of the institution is not reducible to any one individual subject, but it is *thematically* traced across the activity of individual subjects. For this reason, we can interpret the history of an institution as serving the value of the *truth*, for example, despite the shortcomings of individual subjects. However, Foucault argues that by interpreting the action of individual subjects as following a rational value, the history of ideas generates a chain of *explanatory necessities*.¹⁵⁵ Thus, the history of ideas explains the present in terms of the past, such that both the past and the present acquire *necessity* along a teleological movement.

The methodological problem that Foucault sees with the history of ideas is that it *explains away*, so to speak, the *contingency* of historical events.¹⁵⁶ To capture the contingency of historical events, Foucault rejects the twofold function that the notion of

¹⁵² Ibid, 315.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 316-17.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 318-19.

¹⁵⁵ Foucault, 1972 (1969), 9.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 9-10.

the subject serves in the history of ideas. Rather than *explaining* historical events by establishing necessary relations between them, Foucault *circumscribes* events by analyzing the “discursive formations” which they make possible.¹⁵⁷ This involves, on the one hand, tracing the temporal “discontinuities,” as Foucault calls them, between “discursive formations.”¹⁵⁸ Foucault traces these temporal discontinuities to the differences in subjective *practices* that concepts like “education” and “punishment,” for example, involve. On the other hand, circumscribing historical events also requires clarifying the “internal laws” which make it possible for disparate concepts such as “life” and “economy,” for example, to be juxtaposed to create a discursive object.¹⁵⁹ Again, in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault uses the notion of the “historical *a priori*” to characterize his method:

...this *a priori* must take account of statements in their dispersion, in all the flaws opened up by their non-coherence, in their overlapping and mutual replacement, in their simultaneity, which is not unifiable, and in their succession, which is not deducible; in short, it has to take account of the fact that discourse has not only a meaning or a truth, but a history and a specific history that does not refer back to the laws of an alien development... Moreover, this *a priori* does not elude historicity: it does not constitute, above events, and in an unmoving heaven, an atemporal structure; it is defined as a group of rules that characterize a discursive practice: but these rules are not imposed from the outside on the elements that they relate together; they are caught up in the very things that they connect.¹⁶⁰

The notion of the “historical *a priori*” is contradictory because historical knowledge refers to what has already happened, which means that historical knowledge is *a posteriori*. Foucault’s notion of the “historical *a priori*,” however, does not correspond to the first order of knowledge, or to what counts as true or false at a certain time. Rather,

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 107.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 4.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 107.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 127.

the “historical *a priori*” corresponds to the second order of knowledge, or to what we might call “knowledge formations,” and within which certain statements count as either true or false. Foucault’s point by employing this notion is that the laws of knowledge or discursive formations are not *transhistorical*, but that they are made possible by certain historical conditions. Thus, instead of positing transhistorical unities of interpretation like *the subject* or *the truth*, Foucault’s analyses aim to capture the historical *contingency* of the rules of discourse that allow for subject and truth formation.

The historical *a priori* belongs to Foucault’s archeological phase and, as far as I am aware, it does not appear in his “genealogical” works like *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) or *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (1976).

Nevertheless, Foucault’s later works maintain the basic theses of the archeological method, with the caveat that he adds the element of *power* to his analyses of subject and truth formation.¹⁶¹ In his “genealogical” works then Foucault shifts from a neutral description of “discursive formations” to the power laden one of “regimes of truth.” Here is how Foucault describes a “regime of truth”:

It is a question of what *governs* statements, and the way in which they *govern* each other so as to constitute a set of propositions which are scientifically acceptable, and hence capable of being verified or falsified by scientific procedures. In short, there is a problem of the regime, the politics of the scientific statement. At this level, it’s not so much a matter of knowing what external power imposes itself on science, as of what effects of power circulate among scientific statements, what constitutes, as it were, their internal regime of power, and how and why at certain moments that regime undergoes a global modification.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ However, in a later interview, Foucault says that while his earlier works do not make the analysis of power explicit, those are the kind of relations he sees himself as capturing: “When I think back now, I ask myself what else it was that I was talking about, in *Madness and Civilization* or *The Birth of the Clinic*, but power? Yet, I’m perfectly aware that I scarcely ever used the word and even had such a field of analyses at my disposal.” Foucault, 2010 (1977), 57.

¹⁶² Ibid, 55.

A regime of truth refers to the power relations involved in subject and truth formation. Two things are particularly important about Foucault's account of regimes of truth. The first is that, for Foucault, power relations are not vertical, from the sovereign to the subject, but lateral, or between subjects. Foucault argues that discourses afford certain kinds of subjective relations whereby we relate to each other both as *subjects* of discourse and as *subjected* to discourse.¹⁶³ For example, in the case of "health," we relate to each other both as "health-authorities" and as "healthy-subjects." In this way, discourses of "health" allow for the formation of a certain *kind* of subject. The second aspect is that discourses define their *object* by implementing certain kinds of subjective *practices*. Presently, in the case of "health," these practices range from washing one's hands every so often, for example, to the kinds of thoughts one entertains. Who counts as "healthy" or "unhealthy" then is defined by the practices to which we *subject* ourselves. Thus, for Foucault, different regimes of truth involve different forms of *subjection* in the twofold sense that we are subjects of discourse and that we are subjected to discourse.¹⁶⁴

In *The History of Sexuality*, for example, Foucault traces the discontinuities in the discursive formations about sexuality between the 17th and the 19th centuries. Particularly, Foucault argues against the "repressive hypothesis" according to which there is a social mandate to silence talk about sexuality and, instead, traces the proliferation of these discourses to their proper *locus*.¹⁶⁵ Foucault argues that whereas during the 17th century

¹⁶³ Ibid, 59.

¹⁶⁴ Since regimes of truth allow for subject and truth formation, Foucault argues that power is not merely repressive, but productive. Foucault famously puts this point as follows: "What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than a negative instance whose function is repression." Ibid, 61.

¹⁶⁵ Michel Foucault (1978 [1976]), *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 8-10.

discourse about sexuality was relegated to the *confessional* domain, during the 19th century it shifted to the *medical* domain.¹⁶⁶ Central to Foucault's analysis is the refinement in the *object* of confession from the sexual act to *desire*, or to tracing the "meeting line between the body and the soul."¹⁶⁷ As a result, confessional practices not only produced the *sexual subject* as what one *is* rather than as what one *does*, but also a sense of detachment, so that sexuality became something to be mastered through the "blissful suffering from feeling in one's body the pangs of temptation and the love that resists it."¹⁶⁸ Foucault further argues that between the 17th and 18th centuries discursive practices shifted to making sexuality a *biological* object, and one which was central to the reproduction of the *population*.¹⁶⁹ This meant not only a shift in discursive practices from confession to *examination* and *surveillance*, but the sexual subject was also defined in terms of her *reproductive* function.¹⁷⁰ As a result, monogamy and heterosexuality became the social norm, and non-reproductive practices like homosexuality and onanism were pathologized.¹⁷¹ Thus, by juxtaposing the confessional and the medical regimes of truth about sexuality, Foucault aims to show the kind of *subjection* that each involves and, by breaking with a teleological interpretation, he aims to show that these regimes are not *necessary* and that they can be *otherwise*.

2.2.2. Allen on The End of Progress and Cultural Critique:

Methodologically then Foucault opposes the history of ideas because it interprets the history of the present along a chain of explanatory *necessities*, which obscures the

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 41.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 20.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 23.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 25.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 29-31.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 38-39.

historical *contingency* of our present regimes of truth. By capturing their historical contingency, Foucault wants to show that our present regimes of truth are not necessary, but they can be *otherwise*. To consider the *normative* implications of Foucault's account of the historical *a priori*, I now turn to Allen's recent work on *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (2016). In *The End of Progress*, Allen draws from Foucault to offer a *normative* critique of the notion of historical progress, particularly as it appears in the work of Frankfurt School thinkers like Axel Honneth and Jurgen Habermas. Allen argues that the notion of historical progress serves critical theory to avoid two pitfalls about the foundations of our social norms. On the one hand, critical theory aims to avoid *foundationalism*, or the view which derives our social norms from metaphysical principles. That is because if social norms are dependent on metaphysical principles, then there is no possibility for critique. Thus, as Allen writes, the "attempt to avoid foundationalism gives rise to the resolution to ground the normative perspective of critical theory immanently, within the existing social world."¹⁷² On the other hand, however, critical theory must also avoid *conventionalism*, or the view which reduces the validity of our social norms to their space and time. Conventionalism would also make critique impossible because then there would be no normative standard for cultural critique. As Allen writes, critical theory thus faces the problem of "how can we *justify* the normative standards that critical theory finds in existing social reality without recourse to foundationalist premises?"¹⁷³

¹⁷² Amy Allen (2016), *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 13.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 13, my emphasis.

Allen argues that the notion of historical *progress* serves in critical theory the normative function of *justifying* the “goodness” of our present social norms. Particularly, Allen distinguishes between the “retrospective” and the “prospective” views of historical progress. Retrospectively, Allen argues that the notion of historical progress serves to justify our social norms by considering them the product of a process of historical learning. That is, the retrospective view which Allen calls “progress as a fact” consists in interpreting the history of the present as a process of social *improvement*, such that our present social norms are *better* relative to the past.¹⁷⁴ However, Allen argues that the retrospective view of progress as a fact commits critical theorists to two problems. The first is that, in a self-complacent way, the view of progress as a fact serves to *legitimize* our present social norms and institutions.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, Foucault opposes the history of ideas not only on methodological grounds, as explaining away the historical contingency of the present, but also on *normative* grounds, as *legitimizing* our present regimes of truth by considering them *morally* better relative to the past.¹⁷⁶ For this reason, Foucault aims to show that different regimes of truth involve different kinds of power relations and thus different forms of subjection. The second problem that results from adopting the view of progress as a fact is that it *legitimizes* colonial enterprises by considering non-European peoples as historically relegated. As Allen writes, “this developmental reading of history was based on what I call a kind of normative decisionism by means of which Native Americans were *first* judged to be inferior to... Europeans and then, in a second step, that inferiority was explained by means of a developmental or stadial theory of history.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 12.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 19.

¹⁷⁶ Foucault, 1972 (1969), 8.

¹⁷⁷ Allen, 2016, 20.

Allen thus argues that “decolonizing” critical theory requires rejecting the view of progress as a fact.

Moreover, Allen argues that doing away with the retrospective view of progress as a fact does not necessarily entail rejecting the *prospective* view that she calls “progress as an imperative.”¹⁷⁸ By “progress as an imperative,” Allen means “a normative goal that we are striving to achieve, a goal that can be captured under the idea of the good or at least a more just society.”¹⁷⁹ Although in the work of critical theorists the retrospective view also serves the prospective function of guiding our social efforts, Allen argues that it need not be. Instead, Allen proposes a “negativistic” view, as she calls it, of progress as an imperative.¹⁸⁰ That is, rather than positing an end goal or an ideal which would guide our social efforts, the negativistic view of progress as an imperative consists in “minimizing relationships of domination and transforming them into non-dominating, mobile, reversible, and unstable power relations.”¹⁸¹ The negativistic view of progress as an imperative is Allen’s way of fulfilling the *critical* task of critical theory without adopting the retrospective view of progress as a fact. Particularly, Allen draws from two aspects of Foucault’s account of the historical *a priori* for her negativistic view of cultural critique. The first is the *contingency* of our present regimes of truth, which allows us to see that the present need not be this way and thus that it could be *otherwise*.¹⁸² The second is that Foucault’s analyses of regimes of truth trace the liminal spaces or, as Allen calls them, “the lines of fragility and fracture in our historical *a priori*,” from which we

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 12.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 175.

¹⁸¹ Amy Allen, Rachel Jaeggi, and Eva von Redecker (2016), “Progress, Normativity, and the Dynamics of Social Change: An Exchange between Rachel Jaeggi and Amy Allen,” in *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, Philosophy and History, The New School for Social Research, 37:2, 249.

¹⁸² Allen, 2016, 178.

can conceive of ourselves differently.¹⁸³ The liminal spaces in Foucault's analyses refer to the forms of subjectivity which our current domains of truth consider *abnormal* and which we relegate to the realm of *unreason*. It is from these liminal spaces that, Allen argues, we can reflect on the "limits that make thinking, being, and doing possible for us."¹⁸⁴

Against charges of crypto normativity, according to which Foucault criticizes the present on normative grounds without himself adopting a normative standard, Allen characterizes Foucault's genealogical critique as one which *problematizes* our historical *a priori*.¹⁸⁵ More precisely, Allen situates Foucault's genealogical critique between a "subversive" genealogy, which questions the history of our values to expose their lack of value, and a "vindicatory" genealogy, which justifies our values through their historical development.¹⁸⁶ Rather, Allen argues that Foucault's genealogy aims to question our very relation to the present by showing that our values are neither historically necessary nor morally justified.¹⁸⁷ In this sense, Allen argues that Foucault's genealogy is rooted in the critical tradition of the Enlightenment, and aims to fulfill the ideal of *freedom*:

Foucault situates his own problematizing critical method within the philosophical ethos of critique that forms the positive normative inheritance of the Enlightenment—an inheritance that demands fidelity not to its doctrinal elements but rather to its critical attitude, an inheritance that involves reaffirming the legacy of the Enlightenment in and through its radical transformation.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 181.

¹⁸⁵ Allen, 2016, 190.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 190-191.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 191.

In a recent debate (2016), Allen writes that, “my view and the Foucauldian view hang onto some kinds of first-order Kantian normative commitments, such as freedom as autonomy.”¹⁸⁹ However, although Foucault aims to fulfill the Enlightenment ideal of freedom generally, his genealogical account of cultural critique is not normative in the sense that he does not posit a normative ideal which would guide our social efforts. Thus, in his essay on “What is the Enlightenment?” (1984), Foucault characterizes the Enlightenment as a *critical ethos* towards the present, one that allows for a continuous movement of *self-transformation*.¹⁹⁰ This requires avoiding the “black mail of the Enlightenment” according to which we must either adopt *humanistic* values to guide our social efforts or *irrationalism*.¹⁹¹ Instead, Foucault argues that criticizing the present requires turning *necessary* limitations into *possible* transgressions.¹⁹² That is, rather than appealing to humanistic values to guide our social efforts, Foucault’s account of cultural critique involves a continuous effort to imagine ourselves *otherwise* than our present regimes of truth.

2.2.3. *Emancipation, Liberation, and the Ideal of Humanity:*

While I find Foucault’s and Allen’s critique of the retrospective view of historical progress important because it legitimizes both our present norms and institutions, and colonial enterprises by considering non-European peoples as historically relegated, their prospective view of cultural critique follows the “emancipatory” framework of the

¹⁸⁹ Amy Allen, Rachel Jaeggi, and Eva von Redecker, 2016, 232.

¹⁹⁰ Foucault describes the Enlightenment ethos as follows: “This ironic heroization of the present, this transfiguring play of freedom with reality, this aesthetic elaboration of the self—Baudelaire does not imagine that these have any place in society itself, or in the body politic. They can only be produced in another, a different place, which Baudelaire calls art.” Michel Foucault (1984 [2010]), “What is the Enlightenment?,” translated by Catherine Porter, in Paul Rabinow (ed.) *The Foucault Reader*, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 42.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 43.

¹⁹² Ibid, 45.

Enlightenment. I find this “emancipatory” framework lacking to address the *liberatory* struggles of colonized peoples for two interrelated reasons that have to do with the normative ideal of *humanity*. The first reason is that the kind of *subjection* with which the “emancipatory” framework is concerned is *self-imposed*, as Immanuel Kant famously put it.¹⁹³ That is why in Foucault’s account of regimes of truth individuals are both *subjects* of power and *subjected* to power. The second reason why the “emancipatory” framework fails to address liberatory struggles is that, as Grant Silva argues (2018), Enlightenment thinkers begin from the assumption of autonomy as freedom, whereas liberatory struggles are struggles *for* freedom.¹⁹⁴ Thus, Enlightenment thinkers like Foucault and Allen not only frame power relations according to the parent-child model, where individuals are invested in their own subjection, but they also assume an autonomous subject, one who navigates power relations. In my view, since Foucault and Allen presuppose an autonomous subject, they can also afford to reject positing the normative *ideal* of *humanity* as guiding our social efforts. In contrast, liberatory struggles require that oppressed peoples *affirm* their humanity, which also requires positing an *ideal* of *humanity* that can guide the liberatory struggles of oppressed peoples.

In her essay “Emancipation without Utopia: Subjection, Modernity, and the Normative Claims of Feminist Critical Theory” (2015), Allen expands on the negativistic account of cultural critique by contrasting it with the liberatory approach. For Allen, the liberatory approach assumes a view of *human nature* that is free from power relations,

¹⁹³ Immanuel Kant (1983 [1784]), “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” in Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, translated by Ted Humphrey, Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 33.

¹⁹⁴ Grant Silva (2018), “‘The Americas Seek Not Enlightenment but Liberation’: On the Philosophical Significance of Liberation for Philosophy in the Americas,” *The Pluralist*, 13:2, 3.

and which it then posits as the utopian ideal of a society free from power.¹⁹⁵ Allen, however, argues that the liberatory approach either turns into an illusion or it itself serves as a fundamentalist tool for subordination.¹⁹⁶ In contrast, Allen argues that her negativistic account does not posit a utopian ideal. That is because in Foucault's account of regimes of truth, subjectivity is the product of power relations, which means that there cannot be an outside of power.¹⁹⁷ As such, instead of positing a utopian ideal of a society free of power, Allen's negativistic account of cultural critique promotes what she calls "practices of freedom."¹⁹⁸ That is, Allen argues that in Foucault's view "freedom is understood in terms of practices of self-transformative resistance, experimentation, and counter-conduct *within* relations of power."¹⁹⁹ The problem with Allen's account of practices of freedom, however, is that they presuppose "a certain degree of liberation or emancipation."²⁰⁰ In this sense, Allen quotes Foucault when he writes that, "power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free."²⁰¹ Although Allen considers the case of domination, where power relations are asymmetrical and there is a limited margin for practices of freedom, she argues that we should aim to turn domination into "mobile, reversible, and unstable power relations," rather than towards a future free of power.²⁰² Allen does not explain, however, how a framework meant for free subjects can address the historical struggles of oppressed peoples who aim *for* freedom.

¹⁹⁵ Amy Allen (2015), "Emancipation without Utopia: Subjection, Modernity, and the Normative Claims of Feminist Critical Theory," *Hypatia*, 30:3, 516-17.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 514.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 515.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 517.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 516.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 517.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 518.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 517.

In contrast to the negativistic approach to emancipation, in his essay “‘The Americas Seek Not Enlightenment but Liberation’: On the Philosophical Significance of Liberation for Philosophy in the Americas” (2018), Silva offers an account of *liberation* as a utopic *ideal* which can guide the historical struggles of oppressed peoples. Unlike the Enlightenment view of emancipation, which begins from the presupposition of freedom, for Silva, liberation begins from the assumption of a *lack* of freedom. In this sense, he distinguishes between “*philosophy for freedom* (liberation) and *philosophy from freedom* (enlightenment).”²⁰³ Two aspects of Silva’s characterization of liberation are particularly important for my purposes. The first is that while Silva conceives of liberation as a utopic *ideal*, it is not a state of being which we can achieve once and for all. Rather, for Silva, liberation is a *historical process* through which individuals become *subjects* in the first place. In the case of anti-racist struggles, Silva follows Derrick Bell, for whom, “in light of the permanence of racism, anti-racist advocates should find fulfillment or ‘salvation’ in the struggle itself.”²⁰⁴ As such, Silva does not posit liberation as the utopian ideal of a power-free society, but as a *historical ideal* which guides the struggles of oppressed peoples. The second aspect regards the *content* of the ideal of liberation. Different from Foucault’s view of a self-imposed subjection, for Silva, the process of liberation regards an *other-imposed dehumanization*.²⁰⁵ That is, if oppression involves the systematic negation of a people’s humanity, liberation is the negation of the negation and thus the process through which oppressed peoples *affirm* their humanity.²⁰⁶ Notice that Silva does not appeal to a power-free notion of human nature. Rather, the *liberatory ideal of*

²⁰³ Silva, 2018, 3.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 7.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 13.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 16-17.

humanity is “born of struggle,” as Silva writes, which means that it emerges through the historical process whereby oppressed peoples *negate* their *dehumanization* and thus *affirm* their humanity.²⁰⁷

To conclude this section, Foucault offers an anti-teleological account of the historical *a priori* both regarding the retrospective view of the history of the present and regarding the prospective view of cultural critique. Retrospectively, I find Foucault’s and Allen’s critique of progress as a fact important both because it serves to legitimize the *status quo* and colonial enterprises against non-European peoples. I will return to the way that the notion of historical progress legitimizes colonial enterprises in the next chapter. Regarding the *status quo*, the retrospective view serves a self-justificatory function for our present institutions. For example, the notion of progress as a fact serves democratic institutions to justify non-democratic practices as an exception along a process of historical learning. The result is that, in this way, democratic institutions not only justify non-democratic practices, but also justify themselves as *necessary* for the present state of democracy. Prospectively, however, I find Foucault’s and Allen’s negativistic and anti-teleological account of cultural critique lacking to address the struggles of oppressed peoples. That is because they begin from the Enlightenment assumption of a free subject and thus fail to capture liberatory struggles *for* freedom. Against Foucault’s and Allen’s negativistic view of cultural critique, I argued for a conception of liberation as a *historical process* through which oppressed peoples *become* subjects in the first place. As such, the liberatory ideal of humanity emerges from the historical struggles whereby oppressed peoples negate their dehumanization and thus *affirm* their *humanity*.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 15.

2.3. Husserl on the Historical A Priori: Cultural Crisis and the Ideal of Humanity:

Husserl's and Foucault's accounts of the historical *a priori* share two aspects, namely, that their analyses of the present correspond to the second order of knowledge formations, and that for both the present is historically contingent, so that it can be *otherwise*. In the previous chapter, we saw that Husserl traces the history of modern science to the historical phenomenon which he calls the "mathematization of nature." By tracing the empirical object of the natural sciences to its historical origin, Husserl aims not only to establish the temporal identity of our world-experience, but to delineate the horizon of possibilities within which we organize our purposeful lives. Thus, in *Experience and Judgement: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic* (1939), Husserl refers to the historical *a priori* as a "horizon-prescription":

The world in which we live and in which we carry out activities of cognition and judgement, out of which everything which becomes the substrate of a possible judgment affects us, is always already pre-given to us as impregnated by the precipitate... of logical operations. The world is never given to us as other than the world in which we or others, whose store of experience we take over by communication, education, and tradition, have already been logically active, in judgment and cognition. And this refers not only to the typically determined sense according to which every object stands before us as a familiar object within a horizon of typical familiarity, but also to the horizon-prescription... the sense within which it is pre-given to us as the object of possible cognition, as an object determinable in general.²⁰⁸

Moreover, in the previous chapter, we also saw that, since Husserl traces the historical sense of our world-experience to its *subjective* origin, the present is historically *contingent*, which means that it could have been otherwise. Thus, since Husserl does not posit a necessary *telos* over and above the experiential lives of individual subjects, his

²⁰⁸ Edmund Husserl (1973 [1939]), *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, edited by Ludwig Landgrebe, translated by James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 42.

account of history leads to the paradoxical conclusion that while *some* historical present is necessary, *all* historical present is contingent. In contrast to Foucault's anti-teleological account, however, Husserl offers a *teleological* account of the historical *a priori*.

Retrospectively, this means that Husserl interprets our historical horizon as regulated by *normative ideals* like *science* or *truth* generally. Husserl's retrospective account of the present, however, is not *justificatory*, but it is motivated by the situation of cultural crisis, whereby ideals like *science* and *truth* cease to have normative meaning for *human* life. In this sense, cultural crisis for Husserl is a crisis of *values*. Prospectively, Husserl's account of cultural critique involves a process of *renewal* of the *humanistic ideals* that guide our communal lives. As such, Husserl's account of cultural critique involves a *reorientation* of our world-horizon.

In this section, I focus on the methodological and normative aspects of Husserl's account of the historical *a priori*. I argue that, methodologically, Husserl's account of the historical *a priori* regards the constitution of *ideal* objects generally and that, normatively, his account of cultural crisis and critique regards the *ideal* of *humanity*. For this, I first show the way in which Husserl accounts for the historical constitution of *ideal* objects. I then interpret Husserl's account of the crisis of the modern sciences and of World War I as a crisis of values. Lastly, I draw from his communitarian ethics to clarify Husserl's account of the ideal of *humanity*.

2.3.1. *The Historical A Priori and the Constitution of Ideality:*

In his dissertation entitled *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Philosophy* (1990), Jacques Derrida situates Husserl's historical account of ideal objects like *truth* and *justice*

between formal logicism and empirical psychologism.²⁰⁹ What distinguishes ideal objects is that they are *non-empirical* in the sense that their *validity* transcends spatio-temporal dimensions, and that they are *normative* in the sense that they regulate what *ought* to count, for example, as *true* or *just*. The problem, for Husserl, is that while logicism accounts for the non-empirical and thus *ideal* aspect of ideal objects, it reduces them to formal structures devoid of semantic content. In *Experience and Judgment*, for example, Husserl argues that while formal logic derives a system of deductive validities from the propositional form “*S* is *P*,” it cannot account for the subjective experience of “something in general.”²¹⁰ Similarly, while empirical psychologism can account for the semantic content of ideal objects, it reduces their *ideality* and *normativity* to psychophysical and thus to *causal* processes.²¹¹ This means that psychologism not only reduces the *validity* of ideal objects to their spatio-temporal dimensions, but it also reduces *normativity* to *fact*, such that how things *are* is how they *ought* to be. That is why, in *Philosophy as Rigorous Science* (1910), Husserl criticizes *historicism*, namely, because it reduces *validity* and *normativity* to the *causal* concatenation of historical events.²¹² Derrida thus writes that the problem is “how, while safeguarding the originality of lived experience, could we avoid psychologist empiricism and grasp the genesis of an objective logic when starting from concrete experiences?”²¹³ That is, the purpose of Husserl’s transcendental account of history is to ground the *ideality* of ideal objects in subjective experience.

²⁰⁹ Jacques Derrida (2003 [1990]), *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl’s Philosophy*, translated by Marian Hobson, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 10.

²¹⁰ Husserl, 1973 (1939), §§1-3, 11-18.

²¹¹ Derrida, 2003 (1990), 36-37.

²¹² Edmund Husserl (1965 [1910]), *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*, in Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, translated by Quentin Lauer, New York, NY: Harper Torch books, 141.

²¹³ Derrida, 2003 (1990), 13.

Husserl's transcendental-historical account of ideal objects involves two aspects. First, in the previous chapter, we saw that a central thesis of *transcendental* phenomenology is that meaning in the world is subjectively dependent. The most radical expression of this thesis is the skeptical attitude which Husserl calls the epoché, whereby we can *modify* our basic belief in the *thereness* of objects. This transcendental aspect allows Husserl to derive the semantic content of objects from subjective experience without reducing it to *causal*, either psychophysical or historical, effects. The second aspect regards the horizontal-temporal structure of experiential life. In the previous chapter, we saw that Husserl characterizes this structure as a *validation* process, where our past and present experiences open a horizon of future validities. Husserl explains the *ideality* of geometrical objects, for example, through this validation process as follows:

Clearly, then, geometry must have arisen out of a *first* acquisition, out of first creative activities. We understand its persisting manner of being: it is not only a mobile forward process from one set of acquisitions to another but a continuous synthesis in which all acquisitions maintain their validity, all make up a totality such that, at every present stage, the total acquisition is, so to speak, the total premise for the acquisitions of the new level. Geometry necessarily has this mobility and has a horizon of geometrical future in precisely this style: this is its meaning for every geometer who has the consciousness (the constant implicit knowledge) of existing within a forward development understood as the progress of knowledge being built into the horizon.²¹⁴

Husserl refers to the validation process as a *repetitive* structure of the form “again and again.”²¹⁵ This means that, through the process of repetition, the validity of sense ceases to refer to individual objects and thus transcends their spatio-temporal dimensions. For

²¹⁴ Edmund Husserl (1970a [1939]), *The Origin of Geometry*, in Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, translated by David Carr, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, Appendix VI, 355.

²¹⁵ Edmund Husserl (1970c [1963?]), *Objectivity and the World of Experience*, in Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, translated by David Carr, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, Appendix V, 346.

example, through the process of repetition, I relate to the sense “fork as an eating utensil” as valid not only for the individual object, but also for other objects of the same kind. Moreover, since *ideality* transcends the temporal life of the individual subject, ideal validity is intersubjectively constituted through the handing down of experiential sense from generation to generation. In this way then ideal objects transcend the temporal life of the individual subject and thus acquire validity across time.

Since, for Husserl, *ideality* is constituted throughout the lives of individual subjects, but it is not reducible to the temporal life of any one individual subject, his historical account generates a twofold horizontal-temporal structure. Husserl calls this twofold temporal structure the “finite” temporal life of the individual subject and the “infinite” temporality of ideal objects.²¹⁶ Important about this twofold temporal structure is that it constitutes a *normative* feedback loop, such that ideal objects acquire *normative* content from the experiential life of individual subjects, while, at the same time, ideal objects *regulate* the experiential life of individual subjects. Recall that the experiential life of the individual subject is temporally constituted in a horizontal way, where her previous *valuative* relations inform her future *valuative* relations. Although the valuative life of the individual subject gives *normative* content to ideal objects, her *future* projects are restricted to her temporal life and thus they are *finite*. Similarly, ideal objects are temporally constituted in a horizontal way, through the valuative relations handed down from generation to generation. The difference, however, is that ideal objects serve as what Husserl calls “regulative ideas,” by which he not only means that ideal objects inform our experiential lives in *normative* ways, but also that they are not achievable

²¹⁶ Husserl, 1970c (1963?), 347.

once and for all.²¹⁷ That is, while ideal objects inform what we experience as *beautiful*, *true*, and *just*, for example, *beauty*, *truth*, and *justice* themselves cannot be reduced to any one of their historical instantiations. As such, ideal objects open an *infinite* rather than a *finite* horizon or a *historical project* which can be pursued by *future* generations.

Husserl's account of ideal objects thus entails that history is an *a priori* structure of meaning in a twofold sense. On the one hand, history is an *a priori* structure because it is the constitutive ground, so to speak, of ideal objects. That is, although ideal objects transcend the temporal lives of individual subjects, they are *normatively* constituted and *temporally* sustained throughout the intergenerational handing down of historical aspirations. In this sense, Derrida argues that rather than placing *ideality* in Plato's *topos ouranios*, as pre-existing subjective experience, in Husserl's account, ideal objects are historical both because they emerge from subjective experience and are sustained by subjective experience.²¹⁸ On the other hand, history is an *a priori* structure because it is within the *infinite* horizon of ideal objects that we organize our purposeful lives. That is, since our constitutive activity is inscribed within the handing down of historical

²¹⁷ Husserl refers to "regulative ideals" as "ideas in the Kantian sense." Husserl employs the notion of "ideas in the Kantian sense" on two levels, which correspond to the subjective and intersubjective levels of constitution. At the subjective level, Husserl employs the notion of "idea in the Kantian sense" in perceptual experience. Since perception is a perspectival process, the object does not appear all at once, but it is constituted throughout our perceptual experiences. This means that the object is an "idea" constituted across our individual experiences, and it remains open to an *infinite* number of future perspectives. See, for example, Edmund Husserl (2014 [1913]), *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, translated by Daniel O. Dahlstrom, Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, §143, 284-285. At the intersubjective level, "ideas in the Kantian sense" serve a similar function. That is, for Husserl, *ideals* serve the function of synthesizing intersubjective constitution across time, and, at the same time, they open an *infinite* horizon of future experience because they are not achievable once and for all. See, for example, Husserl, 1970c (1936?), 346.

²¹⁸ Derrida writes as follows: "if, on the other hand, the *eidos* and the ideal object do not preexist every subjective act, as in a [conventional] Platonism; if then they have a history, they must be related to, i.e., they must be primordially grounded in, the protoidealizations based on the substrate of an actually perceived real world. But they must do this through the element of an original history." Derrida, 1989 (1962), 45.

aspirations, and these historical aspirations constitute intergenerational *projections* towards *ideals*, then the *ideals* that guide our historical movement inform our individual projects in *normative* ways, regarding what we find *worth* pursuing. In this sense, Husserl argues not only that historical unfolding follows a *teleological* orientation, but also that this teleological orientation informs individual instances of what we pursue, for example, as *true* or *just*.²¹⁹ Thus, for Husserl, history is an *a priori* structure both in the sense that *ideals* are historically constituted and in the sense that historical unfolding follows a *normative*, teleological orientation. As we shall see in the following, it is for this reason that Husserl interprets the history of the present as guided by *teleological ideals*.

2.3.2. Husserl's Account of Cultural Crisis as a Crisis of Values:

Methodologically then Husserl offers a *teleological* account of the historical *a priori*, both in the sense that *ideality* is historically constituted and in the sense that historical unfolding obeys a *normative*, teleological orientation. Retrospectively, this means that Husserl interprets the history of the present as guided by regulative ideals like *truth* or *justice*. In this sense, Husserl's account of the present consists in what he calls a "historical reflection" into the *original ideals* that guide our historical orientation and thus within which we organize our purposeful lives.²²⁰ To be clear, while Husserl frames his "historical reflection" as concerned with *origins* or *beginnings* and, more particularly, with the "*origin of the modern spirit*,"²²¹ he does not aim to establish the actual, historical

²¹⁹ In *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, Husserl argues that individual subjects are the bearers of the *telos* of modern conception of science: "Our task is to make comprehensive the *teleology* in the historical becoming of philosophy, especially modern philosophy, and at the same time to achieve clarity about ourselves, who are the bearers of this teleology, who take part in carrying it out through our personal intentions." Edmund Husserl, (1970b [1954]), *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, translated by David Carr, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, §15, 70.

²²⁰ Husserl, 1970b (1954), §91, 57; §15, 70.

²²¹ Ibid, §91, 57.

origin of *ideals*, but the *originary sense* of the present. Moreover, in the previous chapter, we saw that Husserl traces the original sense of the natural sciences to the historical phenomenon that he calls the “mathematization of nature.” We also saw that, for Husserl, the mathematization of nature consists in the *subjective-objective* split implicit in the *empirical* conception of the object of science. This means that the subjective-objective split is the *originary sense* guiding both the historical unfolding of the modern sciences and, more generally, our *modern* world-horizon. Here, I show that Husserl’s historical account of *ideality* is motivated not only by methodological concerns, regarding the *ideality* of ideal objects generally, but also by *normative* ones, regarding whether the modern sciences can inform *human life* about what is *worth pursuing*. In this sense, I interpret Husserl’s account of *cultural crisis* as a crisis of *values*.

In his last work entitled *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* (1954), Husserl introduces the necessity of a historical reflection as motivated by the situation of *crisis* in which the European sciences and, more generally, European humanity find themselves.²²² While Husserl makes the notion of *crisis* into a theme of philosophical reflection, however, the notion is not exclusive to Husserl. Rather, the sense of a social, political, and economic crisis was widespread in Europe after World War I (WWI), at the time when Husserl is writing the manuscripts that conform his last work.²²³ What is distinctive

²²² Thus, Part I of the *Crisis of the European Sciences* is entitled “The Crisis of the Sciences as Expression of the Radical Life-Crisis of European Humanity.” Husserl, 1970b (1954), 2.

²²³ Timo Miettinen, for example, argues that the sense of crisis in post-war Europe was common, and he describes the situation of Europe at the time as follows: “The devastation that the First World War had produced was indeed something never before experienced: 18 million dead, almost 7 million of them civilians; and 23 million people left wounded. As if this had not been enough, the Spanish influenza pandemic raged globally between 1918 and 1920, killing approximately 3 million Europeans. Between the years 1914 and 1918, Germany lost approximately 15 percent of its male population, and by the time of 1923, the heavy war indemnities had driven the nation into a severe economic crisis that was followed by a

to Husserl's approach, nonetheless, is that he interprets the *crisis* of Europe as regarding the "scientific character" of the modern sciences.²²⁴ By this, Husserl understands the *meaning* that modern science has *for* human life. Husserl puts it as follows:

The exclusiveness with which the total world view of modern man, in the second half of the nineteenth century, let itself be determined by the positive sciences and be blinded by the prosperity they produced, meant an indifferent turning-away from the questions which are decisive for a genuine humanity. Merely fact-minded sciences make merely fact-minded people. In our vital need—so we are told—this science has nothing to say to us. It excludes in principle precisely the questions which man, given over in our unhappy times to the most portentous upheavals, finds the most burning: questions of the meaning or meaninglessness of the whole of this human existence.²²⁵

That is, for Husserl, *crisis* refers not so much to the *historical situation* in which Europe finds itself, but to the inability of the modern sciences to inform human life *meaningfully*. James Dodd (2004) offers three possible interpretations of Husserl's sense of *crisis* in the modern sciences. On the first interpretation, *crisis* refers to an *extraordinary* event which manifests itself in the form of *skepticism*, or the "suspicion that reason has nothing to do with life, that its project has nothing to do with who we are, and where this suspicion has spread to the culture as a whole."²²⁶ On the second interpretation, *crisis* refers to an event *intrinsic* to the life of science, such that *crisis* is the *norm* rather than the exception. This means that skepticism is not so much a distant possibility, but that it must be confronted at every turn.²²⁷ Lastly, on Dodd's own interpretation, *crisis* refers to the "questionableness" implicit in the pursuit of science.²²⁸ That is, the pursuit of science

massive hyperinflation." Timo Miettinen (2020), *Husserl and the Idea of Europe*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 31.

²²⁴ Husserl, 1970b (1954), §1, 3.

²²⁵ Ibid, §2, 5-6.

²²⁶ James Dodd (2004), *Crisis and Reflection: An Essay on Husserl's Crisis of the European Sciences*, Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 46.

²²⁷ Ibid, 49.

²²⁸ Ibid, 51-52.

demands a constant questioning by the individual scientist about the meaning of science itself.

My view is closer to Dodd's first interpretation. This means that the crisis of modern science refers to a specific case of the *normative* ways in which the *ideals* we pursue inform our subjective lives. By "normative" here, I mean whether the *ideals* we pursue are *worth* pursuing *relative to* our subjective lives. In this sense, I interpret Husserl's account of cultural crisis as regarding the *valuableness* of what we find worth pursuing and thus as a crisis of *values*. Since, for Husserl, objects acquire *value* relative to our purposeful interests, the objects we pursue as *beautiful*, *true*, and *just* are such relative to our purposeful lives. A crisis of values thus entails that the objects we find worth pursuing are *valuable* independently of our subjective lives. This means, for example, that what we value as *just* ceases to serve our subjective purpose of *justice*. Similarly, in the case of the modern *ideal* of *science*, Husserl's point is that although it structures our present world-horizon, it has ceased to serve our subjective lives. It is in this sense that Husserl interprets the subjective-objective split not only in *epistemological* terms, as regarding the factual objectivity of the world, but in *normative* terms, as regarding whether what we find worth pursuing ought to serve our subjective lives. As such, cultural crisis is a crisis of *normative meaning* in the sense that modern science cannot inform us about what is *valuable* and thus worth pursuing.

Moreover, the crisis of modern science is particularly important because Husserl understands science generally as concerned with *normative* rather than *factual* questions. This means that, for Husserl, the task of science is not to determine whether the world *is* a certain way, but whether what we find worth pursuing in our world-experience serves

our subjective lives.²²⁹ Thus, when Husserl argues that European humanity is sick and there is no science that can cure it, he means that modern science cannot offer a *normative* orientation to European humanity:

The word *life*... signifies purposeful life accomplishing spiritual products: in the broadest sense, creating culture in the unity of a historical development... Now clearly there exists the distinction between energetic thriving and atrophy, that is, one can also say, between health and sickness, even in communities, peoples, states. Accordingly, the question is not far removed: How does it happen that no scientific medicine has ever developed in this sphere, a medicine for nations and supranational communities? The European nations are sick; Europe itself, it is said, is in crisis. We are by no means lacking something like nature doctors. Indeed, we are practically inundated by a flood of naïve and excessive suggestions of reform. But why do the so richly developed humanistic disciplines fail to perform the service here that is so admirably performed by the natural sciences in their sphere?²³⁰

Husserl's argument is that modern science, including the natural and human sciences, has become *factual* and that, for this reason, it cannot offer a *normative* orientation which can guide our purposeful life. In this sense, Husserl's historical reflection serves a twofold purpose. On the one hand, Husserl traces the *originary sense* of modern science to the subjective-objective split which emerged from the mathematization of nature to *diagnose*, to use the medical metaphor, the present cultural crisis as regarding what we find worth pursuing. Thus, although Husserl does not deny the technological advancements of modern science, his point is that these advancements do not necessarily constitute *moral progress* if they do not serve our subjective lives. Simone de Beauvoir (1947) captures this reasoning when she writes that, "the more widespread their [human beings'] mastery

²²⁹ Husserl puts it as follows: "Reason is the explicit theme in the disciplines concerning knowledge (i.e., the true and genuine, rational knowledge), of true and genuine valuation (genuine values as values of reason), of ethical action (truly good acting, acting from practical reason)." Husserl, 1970b (1954), §3, 9.

²³⁰ Edmund Husserl (1970 [1935]), *The Vienna Lecture: Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity*, in Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, translated by David Carr, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, Appendix I, 270.

of the world, the more they find themselves crushed by uncontrollable forces. Though they are masters of the atomic bomb, yet it is created only to destroy them.”²³¹ On the other hand, Husserl’s historical reflection traces the originary sense of the present to its *subjective* and thus historically *contingent* origin to show that it can be *otherwise*. Thus, while Husserl offers a teleological account of the present, his historical reflection does not aim to *legitimize* the present but, as he writes, to allow for the “possibilities for a complete reorientation.”²³²

2.3.3. *Husserl’s Communitarian Ethics and the Ideal of Humanity:*

Retrospectively then Husserl’s account of the historical *a priori* involves a historical reflection that traces the *ideals* which structure our present world-horizon and within which we organize our purposeful lives. Although Husserl focuses particularly on the modern ideal of science, for him, cultural crisis is a more general phenomenon about our relation to values or what we find worth pursuing. Husserl calls this phenomenon “forgetting,” by which he means that through the process of repetition we not only constitute the *ideality* of ideal objects, but we also come to take ideals for granted.²³³ This is in the sense that we lose grasp, so to speak, of the subjective purposes from which ideals emerged and, in this way, the process of repetition becomes *meaningless*. That is the case, for example, of the bureaucratization of institutions, where the process of

²³¹ Simone de Beauvoir (2018 [1947]), *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, translated by Bernard Frechtman, New York, NY: Open Road Integrated Media Inc., 7. Other thinkers of the phenomenological-existential tradition have followed this line of critique of the natural sciences. See, for example, Martin Heidegger (1977 [1962]), *The Question Concerning Technology*, in Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt, New York, NY: Harper Books, 3-36; Karl Jaspers (1997 [1949]), *Reason and Existenz*, translated by William Earle, Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press; and José Ortega y Gasset (1962 [1935]), *History as a System*, in José Ortega y Gasset, *History as a System and Other Essays*, New York, NY: The Norton Library, 165-233.

²³² Husserl, 1970b (1954), §7, 18.

²³³ Husserl, 1970a (1939), 362.

repetition becomes its own end, thereby losing grasp of the subjective purposes the institution aims to serve. Thus, Husserl's historical reflection not only aims to "reawaken," as he says, the original purpose from which ideals emerge but, by doing so, he also aims to allow for the *reorientation* of our world-horizon.²³⁴ The *prospective* moment of cultural critique that Husserl calls "renewal" thus consists in the projection of *humanistic ideals* which might reorient our communal lives. Particularly, for Husserl, the *ideal of humanity* serves as an ethical principle for cultural critique. That is not only because we can hold values accountable to the *human* purposes they are meant to serve, but also because, for Husserl, ethical life is communitarian, which means that the human purposes which values serve are not individual but communal. In the following, I clarify these two aspects of the *ideal of humanity* by drawing from Husserl's communitarian ethics.

Husserl outlines the main aspects of his communitarian ethics in a series of articles which he published between 1923-24 in a Japanese journal named *Kaizo*, or *renewal* in English.²³⁵ In these articles, Husserl sketches what he calls a "science of the human," which he understands as *ethics*, or the "science of practical reason."²³⁶ By the "science of practical reason," Husserl particularly means *normative judgements* regarding what we find valuable and thus worth pursuing. That is, while *practical* life consists in pursuing *values*, the *rational* moment consists in a *self-reflection*, whereby we judge

²³⁴ Ibid, 361.

²³⁵ I will draw from the third and fourth of Husserl's *Kaizo* articles, particularly from the unpublished translation by R. Philip Buckley, which was made available to me by Sebastian Luft for the purposes of this dissertation.

²³⁶ Husserl writes as follows: "Ethics must necessarily be taken as the entire active life of a reasonable subjectivity from the viewpoint of reason which regulates this entire life uniformly... The title 'reason' must thus be taken completely generally, so that ethics and science of practical reason become concepts of equal value." Edmund Husserl (1924), "Renewal as Individual-Ethical Problem," Third Article for *The Kaizo*, translated by R. Philip Buckley, Hua. XXVII, p. 21.

whether the values we pursue serve our subjective lives.²³⁷ Central to Husserl's view is that self-reflection involves a *normative* principle according to which we might judge our practical lives. That is the function that the *ideal of humanity* serves in Husserl's ethics. There are two main aspects regarding the normative function of the *ideal of humanity*. The first is that the *ideal of humanity* serves as an ethical principle because it is only relative to our human purposes that objects become *valuable*. This means that we can judge whether something is worth pursuing only according to our human purposes. The second main aspect regarding the *ideal of humanity* is that it is not an abstract principle, but it corresponds to the *personal* life of the individual subject. This means that the *ideal of humanity* acquires *normative* content across the purposeful relations of the individual subject. As such, for Husserl, self-reflection consists in projecting an *ideal* of the *human* being we aim to become, which emerges from our practical life, and which also serves as an ethical principle to judge our practical life.²³⁸ In this sense, the *ideal of humanity* functions as a *regulative ideal* that *norms* what we find *worth* pursuing relative to our subjective lives.

Moreover, Husserl establishes an analogy between the ethical life of the individual subject and the ethical life of the community. Important in this sense is that,

²³⁷ Husserl writes as follows: "As a point of departure we take the essential capability of human beings of self-consciousness in the precise sense of personal self-reflection (*inspection sui*) and the capability grounded therein of reflectively taking positions vis-à-vis oneself and one's life, that is, the capability of personal acts: of self-knowledge, self-evaluation, and of practical self-determination (self-willing and self-formation). In self-evaluation, one judges oneself as good and bad, as valuable or non-valuable. Thereby, one evaluates one's acts, motives, means and goals, right through to end-goals." Ibid, p. 23.

²³⁸ Husserl puts it as follows: "In this manner arises the *form of life of 'genuine humanity,'* and for human beings who judge themselves, live their lives, their possible effects, also the necessary *idea of 'genuine and true' people or of rational, human beings...* The human being strives for practical reason in itself purely for the sake of its practical value, and consequently, strives to recognize as well as possible the practically true or good as the best within one's present practical sphere and thereafter is devoted to its actualization." Ibid, 33.

for Husserl, the community also has a *personal* life, much like the personal life of the individual subject. That is for two reasons. The first reason is that Husserl understands the community as the *realm* of values.²³⁹ This does not mean, however, that the community refers simply to those with whom I share values, but that the community *affords* what individuals find valuable and thus worth pursuing. The second reason Husserl establishes an analogy between the ethical life of the individual subject and the ethical life of the community is that the community is constituted throughout the purposeful relations of its individual subjects across time. For this reason, Husserl refers to the community of values as a “unity of ethical life.”²⁴⁰ Moreover, analogous to the case of the individual subject, Husserl argues that the community can also judge its practical life through *self-reflection*.²⁴¹ This requires the community to *project* an *ideal* of *humanity* that acquires normative content through its practical life across time, and which also serves as an ethical principle through which we might judge the practical life of the community. Thus, just like in the case of the individual subject, self-reflection involves

²³⁹ Husserl writes that: “The belonging of every human being to a human community, that is, the fact that the individual’s life is integrated within a communal life has consequences which determine the ethical relationship from the outset... Just as the surrounding-world of nature, so too the multiplicity of ‘neighbors’ belongs to human beings’ surrounding-world, to their sphere of praxis, to their sphere of possible goods.” Edmund Husserl (1924a), “Renewal and Science,” Fourth Article for *The Kaizo*, translated by R. Philip Buckley, Hua. XXVII, p. 45.

²⁴⁰ Husserl puts it as follows: “Accordingly, the active life of a community, of an entire people is also able—even if it did not come forth in any historical actuality—to take the uniform shape of practical reason, the form of an ‘ethical life.’ This is to be understood, however, in true analogy to individual ethical life. In the same way as individual life, this communal life would therefore be one of ‘renewal,’ born out of its own will, forming itself to a genuine humanity in the sense of practical reason, thus forming its culture into a truly human one.” Husserl, 1924, 22.

²⁴¹ Husserl writes that, “A community as community has a consciousness, but as community it can also have self-consciousness in the concise sense of the word. The community can have self-valuation and a will directed towards this, a will of self-formation. All acts of the community are founded in the acts of the individuals which form the community. Therein lies the possibility that a community is able to become an ethical subject, just as the individual subject reflecting upon itself in a valuing and willing manner.” Husserl, 1924a, 49.

projecting an ideal of humanity which corresponds to the historical life of the community, and which can *norm* what the community finds worth pursuing.

Husserl's account of the *ideal of humanity* as an ethical principle is thus historical in a twofold sense. First, the ideal of humanity is historical in the sense that it acquires *normative* content from the purposeful life of the community across generations. This means that the ideal of humanity the community projects must correspond to its *personal* character across time. That is because, just like projecting an ideal of humanity which does not correspond to my personal character entails aiming to be someone other than myself and thus renouncing my personal character, projecting an ideal of humanity which does not correspond to the personal character of the community implies aiming for the community to become other than itself and thus renouncing its personal character. Second, the ideal of humanity is historical because it serves as a *historical project* regarding the kind of community we aim to become. That is, the ideal of humanity serves as a regulative ideal both because it cannot be achieved once and for all and because it guides the historical orientation of our communal endeavors. As such, what Husserl calls "authenticity" consists in the historical projection of an ideal of humanity which emerges from the historical unfolding of the community, and which serves to orient our communal endeavors.²⁴² Thus, Husserl's account of cultural critique consists in the *reorientation* of

²⁴² Husserl puts it as follows: "At any rate, just as the individual person as ethical is so only in becoming, and becomes so only in the continual struggle and in ethical progress, so too an ethical community is essentially one of becoming and progress. In both cases, however, the form of ethical humankind is presupposed as one in which ethical self-consciousness is awake and the goal-idea of genuine humankind for a self-education and self-formation which is constituted in this self-consciousness is determinative. This absolute form of value then determines the further forms of value, that of ethical development as elevation (form of development with a positive value), the downward slide as form of development with a negative value." Husserl, 1924a, 58.

our world-horizon through the projection of an ideal of humanity which norms what we find worth pursuing and serves as a historical project.

2.4. The Idea of Europe and the “Discovery of the Openness of the World”:

Although I find Husserl’s account of the *ideal of humanity* important to capture the historical struggles of oppressed peoples, Husserl adopts a Eurocentric point of view in his analysis of the ideal of European humanity. Two aspects of Husserl’s analysis of the ideal of Europe are central in this regard. The first is that Husserl traces the ideal of European humanity to the philosophical tradition of ancient Greece. In this sense, Derrida is correct when he argues that Husserl turns a philosophy of history into a history of philosophy.²⁴³ The second aspect of Husserl’s analysis of the ideal of Europe regards the characterization of philosophy in “universal” terms. That is, for Husserl, the breakthrough of Greek philosophy consisted in articulating a “universal” *ideal of truth* as valid not only for the individual and her community, but as valid for everyone. This means not only that Husserl reduces the history of philosophy to the history of *European* philosophy, but also that he collapses “universal” to *European* humanity. In this sense, Husserl’s projection of Europe as an ideal of “universal” humanity corresponds to the project of the Renaissance. As decolonial thinker Walter Mignolo (2002) argues, the idea of European modernity is articulated along spatio-temporal dimensions. Mignolo thus argues that, spatially, the “conquest and colonization of the New World became the blueprint for the European organization of space.”²⁴⁴ Temporally, Mignolo argues that the project of the Renaissance entails that “the invention of the Middle Ages and antiquity became the blueprint for the

²⁴³ Derrida, 2003 (1990), 1.

²⁴⁴ Walter Mignolo (2000), *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, xiii.

European idea of a universal historical chronology.”²⁴⁵ As such, Husserl’s projection of Europe as a “universal” ideal of humanity not only corresponds to the project of the Renaissance, but it also corresponds to a *colonizing* historical project.

In this section, I offer an analysis of Husserl’s projection of the ideal of Europe as “universal” humanity. Unlike Husserl’s Renaissance project which traces the ideal of “universal” humanity to ancient Greece and collapses “universal” to European humanity, I argue that the ideal of “universal” humanity not only emerged from the colonization of the Americas, but that it also corresponds to a colonizing historical project. For this, I first show that Husserl traces the ideal of “universal” humanity to the philosophical articulation of the ideal of “universal” truth in ancient Greece. I then trace this Greek breakthrough to the phenomenological “discovery of the world.” Lastly, I argue that the ideal of “universal” humanity emerged from the colonization of the Americas and that it corresponds to a *colonizing* historical project.

2.4.1. *The Ideal of Europe and the Greek Discovery of “Universal” Truth:*

In *The Vienna Lecture* (1935), which he meant as part of *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, Husserl offers an analysis of “the philosophical-historical idea (or the teleological sense) of European humanity.”²⁴⁶ Husserl’s analysis of the ideal of Europe corresponds to his analysis of cultural crisis and aims to provide a historical account of the *originary sense* of Europe to then *project* an *ideal of humanity* which can *reorient* Europe’s world-horizon. For this, Husserl must account both for Europe as a communal unity and for what, in his view, distinguishes Europe from other communities. Husserl’s characterization of Europe as a community is instructive:

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Husserl, 1970 (1935), 269.

How is the spiritual shape of Europe to be characterized? Thus we refer to Europe not as it is understood geographically, as on a map, as if thereby the group of people who live together in this territory would define European humanity. In the spiritual sense the English Dominions, the United States, etc., clearly belong to Europe, whereas the Eskimos or Indians presented as curiosities at fairs, or the Gypsies, who constantly wander about Europe, do not. Here the title “Europe” clearly refers to the unity of a spiritual life, activity, creation, with all its ends, interests, cares, and endeavors, with its products of purposeful activity, institutions, organizations. Here individual men act in many societies of different levels: in families, in tribes, in nations, all being internally, spiritually bound together, and, as I said, in the unity of a spiritual shape. In this way a character is given to the persons, associations of persons, and all their cultural accomplishments which binds them all together.²⁴⁷

Husserl’s characterization of Europe as a community is instructive because, while Husserl follows the *racial* distinctions prevalent in his time, he does not characterize these distinctions in *natural* or *biological* terms. It is for this reason that Husserl not only rejects geography as a principle for the unity of a community, but he further writes that, “there is, for essential reasons, no zoology of peoples.”²⁴⁸ Instead, Husserl characterizes Europe and the distinction between Europe and other communities in terms of a common culture. This aspect is important because it entails that Husserl does not deny that non-European communities have a common culture and thus that we also share a common *ideal of humanity*. Rather, Husserl’s view is that whereas the ideal of humanity of non-European peoples is restricted to our specific communities, the European ideal of humanity is not restricted to a specific community but that it is a “universal” ideal.

Husserl traces the “spiritual birthplace,” as he says, of Europe to the emergence of *philosophy* in ancient Greece during the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.²⁴⁹ Important for Husserl, however, is not the actual historical origin of Europe, but the *originary sense* of

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 273-74.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, 275.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 276.

its historical unfolding. Husserl formulates the *originary sense* of Europe in terms of a new *attitude* towards the world, or a new way of relating to the world.²⁵⁰ Husserl particularly distinguishes three attitudes or ways of relating to the world. The first attitude, which Husserl calls the “natural attitude,” consists in the *unquestioned* belief not only that the objects to which we relate in our practical lives but also that the world itself *are* a certain way.²⁵¹ The second attitude Husserl calls “religious-mythical,” and it consists in the *thematization* of the world for the sake of practical interests.²⁵² This means that whereas the natural attitude consists in practically relating to objects without questioning the sense of our world-horizon, the religious-mythical attitude entails making a community’s world-horizon into an object of interpretation for the sake of individuals’ practical lives. The difference between the natural and the religious-mythical attitudes is thus that whereas the first takes the world for granted, the latter *thematizes* the world. Lastly, what Husserl refers to as the “theoretical attitude” consists in *thematizing* our world-horizon without practical interests.²⁵³ For this reason, Husserl argues that the theoretical attitude requires adopting the view of a “nonparticipating spectator.”²⁵⁴ For Husserl then the difference between the religious-mythical and the theoretical attitudes is that whereas the first thematizes the world-horizon from the practical perspective of a

²⁵⁰ Husserl describes an “attitude” in general as follows: “Attitude, generally speaking, means a habitually fixed style of willing life comprising directions of the will or interests that are prescribed by this style, comprising the ultimate ends, the cultural accomplishments whose total style is thereby determined.” Ibid, 280.

²⁵¹ Husserl describes the “natural attitude” as follows: “Now natural life can be characterized as a life naïvely, straightforwardly directed at the world, the world being always in a certain sense consciously present as a universal horizon, without, however, being thematic as such.” Ibid, 281.

²⁵² Husserl describes the “religious-mythical attitude” as follows: “But in so far as the whole world is seen as thoroughly dominated by mythical powers, so that man’s fate depends mediately or immediately upon the way in which they hold sway, a universal-mythical world view is possibly incited by praxis and then itself becomes a practically interested world-view.” Ibid, 283.

²⁵³ Ibid, 285.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

community, the latter considers *the world* beyond practical interests. In this way, Husserl argues that the theoretical attitude considers not simply a “world-representation” but the “actual world.”²⁵⁵

Husserl further argues that since the theoretical attitude considers *the world* beyond practical interests, the ideal of truth which guides it does not belong to any one individual or community, but it is “universal” because it is valid for everyone. In this sense, Husserl distinguishes between two ideals of truth, which he calls *doxa* and *episteme*. *Doxa*, or unquestioned belief, corresponds to the natural attitude, and it refers to the series of validities that emerge from an individual’s or a community’s practical activity.²⁵⁶ Important for Husserl is that since the doxastic ideal of truth is restricted to serving the practical lives of the individual or the community, the historical horizon it opens is also restricted to the individual and the community. For this reason, Husserl writes that, “here, there are no infinite tasks, no ideal acquisitions whose infinity is itself the field of work, and specifically in such a way that it consciously has, for those who work in it, the manner of being of such an infinite field of tasks.”²⁵⁷ *Episteme*, or scientific knowledge, corresponds to the theoretical attitude, and it refers to the series of validities which emerge from considering not a “world-representation,” but the “actual world.” Important for Husserl is that since the *epistemic* ideal of truth is not bound to the practical purposes of a specific individual or community, it also opens a “universal” historical horizon for the community of subjects who pursue it. Husserl thus writes that, “in this way there arises a new type of communalization and a new form of enduring

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 286.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 285.

²⁵⁷ Ibid, 279.

community whose spiritual life... bears within itself the future-horizon of infinity.”²⁵⁸

Thus, for Husserl, whereas the *doxastic* ideal of truth opens a *particular* or *local* historical horizon, the *epistemic* ideal of truth opens a “universal” historical horizon.

From his analysis of the theoretical attitude then Husserl derives a “universal” ideal of truth which accounts for the *originary sense* of Europe’s historical unfolding. That is, since Husserl conceives of ideals as *historical projects*, the birth of the “universal” ideal of truth also entails the birth of a historical project to be pursued by a community. Husserl’s view then is both that Europe was born with the ideal of “universal” truth and that the ideal of “universal” truth is the *telos* that guides the historical unfolding of Europe.²⁵⁹ This means that while the history of Europe obeys a “universal” project, the history of non-European peoples corresponds to *local* historical projects. What Husserl calls the “Europeanization” of non-European peoples thus means that while non-European peoples would join in the historical project of Europe, the opposite is not the case:

There is something unique here that is recognized in us by all other human groups, too, something that, quite apart from all considerations of utility, becomes a motive for them to Europeanize themselves even in their unbroken will to spiritual self-preservation; whereas we, if we understand ourselves properly, would never Indianize ourselves, for example.²⁶⁰

However, Husserl’s account of the ideal of Europe as “universal” humanity is Eurocentric because it reduces “universality” to the local perspective of Europe. Particularly important in this sense is Husserl’s account of the theoretical attitude towards the world. The problem is that if, as we saw in the previous chapter, the world is not an

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 277.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, 273.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 275.

object, but the total set of our spatio-temporal relations towards objects, then *the world* cannot be apprehended from one perspective, but it refers to the *infinite* number of ways of relating to objects. This means that either Husserl's nonparticipating spectator corresponds to an omnipresent perspective or Husserl reduces *the world* to a particular perspective, namely, that of Europe. In the latter case, Husserl would thus collapse "universality" to the European perspective. As we shall see in the following, rather than the "universalization" of a local perspective, Husserl's account of the theoretical attitude should lead to the conclusion that, relative to *the world*, the European world-horizon is but a local perspective.

2.4.2. *The "Discovery of the Openness of the World" and "Universality":*

In the previous chapter, we saw that Husserl accounts for the one, *objective* world through a process of intersubjective validation, where the experiences of others can validate or invalidate my perspectival experiences. What is significant about the validation process is that it entails that *the world* is not reducible to my perspectival experiences but that, in fact, *the world* remains an open horizon of possible experiences. This means that it is relative to the experiences of others that I can realize the particularity of my own perspective and thereby the structural *openness* of the world. In their recent analyses of Husserl's account about the *ideal* of Europe, Klaus Held (2002, 2012) and Timo Miettinen (2020) incorporate the structural *openness* of the world to offer an account of "universality." This means that, in Held's and Miettinen's analyses, it is through the experiences of others that I come to realize the particularity of my world-horizon and thus also the structural openness of the world. Held and Miettinen thus argue that rather than the "universalization" of a particular perspective, "universality" involves

the “*de-absolutization of all particularisms*,” to use Miettinen’s terms.²⁶¹ Moreover, Held and Miettinen focus on the case of the political world and, more precisely, on democracy as an example of the project of “universality.” In the following, I analyze Held’s and Miettinen’s accounts of “universality.” Although I find their accounts about the structural openness of the world important, I argue that their accounts of “universality” remain Eurocentric. That is because for both Held and Miettinen “universality” originates and constitutes a European historical project, one to which non-European peoples remain peripheral.

In his essay, “The Origin of Europe with the Greek Discovery of the World” (2002), Held argues that two features characterize European culture, namely, science and democracy.²⁶² These features, Held further argues, emerged from the phenomenon that he calls the “discovery of the world,” which he attributes to Heraclitus.²⁶³ Held formulates Heraclitus’ “discovery of the world” in terms of the mereological relation between the “many worlds” and the “one world.”²⁶⁴ That is, whereas the many worlds correspond to the perspectival lives of individual subjects and their communities, the one world *transcends* the individuality of these perspectives. In this sense, Held and Miettinen situate the project of scientific and political “universality” in terms of the relation between the many worlds, whereby individuals realize the particularity of our perspective and whereby the one world is also constituted. Miettinen, for example, formulates the relation of the many worlds and the one world by drawing from Anthony Steinbock’s

²⁶¹ Miettinen, 133.

²⁶² Klaus Held (2002), “The Origin of Europe with the Greek Discovery of the World,” translated by Sean Kirkland, *Epoché*, 7:1, 81.

²⁶³ Ibid, 82.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 83-84.

analyses of “home” and “alien” worlds.²⁶⁵ For Miettinen, this means that what is proper of a community’s home-world is defined in relation to what is proper of other, alien-worlds. Moreover, Miettinen argues that the *theoretical attitude* emerges from this home-alien relation in ancient Greece. As Miettinen explains, “in the practice of *theōria*, a particular citizen traveled abroad in order to give an account of events and occurrences of a foreign polis that had usually been hitherto unknown.”²⁶⁶ Miettinen thus argues that central to the development of “universal” science was the possibility of the “universal translatability” between home and alien worlds. “Universal translatability,” Held further argues, is the *logos* that “binds all horizons to the one world, common to all human beings.”²⁶⁷

For Held and Miettinen then through the relation between home and alien worlds, individuals both realize the particularity of our world-horizon and the one world is also constituted. Central to this account of the relation between home and alien worlds is the notion of *logos*, or “universal reason.”²⁶⁸ While Miettinen formulates *logos* as “universal translatability” whereby we can make sense of the events of alien worlds, Held formulates *logos* as “giving an account” that both emerges from our private opinions and that appeals to the opinions of others.²⁶⁹ In both cases, as Held argues, *logos* stands for

²⁶⁵ Miettinen thus writes that, “Instead of simply reducing philosophy back to its unfolding in the history of the Greek world, Husserl aimed to understand the cultural and geo-historical conditions of this transformation from the perspective of transcendental description, that is, from the categories of home and alien, familiar and strange, particular and general.” Miettinen, 93.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, 95.

²⁶⁷ Held, 2002, 91.

²⁶⁸ Miettinen, for example, writes that, “This division between the general and the particular was not to be understood solely on the basis of the lifeworld, but on the basis of reason. Alongside what Husserl called the idea of a “national-traditional reason” there emerged a new craving for the idea of ‘pure reason... through which the pure and absolutely objective world is only disclosed.’ In other words, what the praxis of theory had introduced was a novel division or ‘split’ in the concept of reason itself-a split whose genuine character was to become the core question of the philosophical enterprise.” Miettinen, 97.

²⁶⁹ Held, 2002, 83.

the *openness* and thus for the *transcendence* between home-world and alien-world. Held thus writes that, “the thinking of philosophy and science begins with the readiness to open itself to the relation of belonging together, in which all particular worlds stand, and that thinking consists of laying open this relation, this *logos*.”²⁷⁰ Held further argues that the same *openness* towards alien-worlds which gave rise to “universal” science in ancient Greece also gave rise to democracy. Held thus distinguishes between the “private” and “public” domains which correspond to the distinction between home- and alien-worlds.²⁷¹ Particularly, Held argues that democracy emerges through the institutionalization of the openness of the world in the form of a space of public opinion, or *agora*, which transcends the private domain. In this sense, Held writes that democracy emerges from “the historical moment when the city’s community opened an arena, wherein many opinions could step forth openly and publicly against one another. This stepping forth was *agoreuein* and is a way of *logon didonai*.”²⁷² Differently put, in Held’s view, democracy emerges through the institutionalization of an open space wherein our private opinions confront the opinions of others, and through which the common world for all is constituted.²⁷³

In short, in Held’s and Miettinen’s interpretations, the project of “universality” consists in the particularization of individual world-horizons through the relation with other world-horizons, rather than in the “universalization” of a particular world-horizon. Thus, it is through the relation with other world-horizons that both the *theoretical* attitude

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 84.

²⁷¹ Ibid, 93. See also Klaus Held (2012), “Towards a Phenomenology of the Political World,” in Dan Zahavi (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook on Contemporary Phenomenology*, UK: Oxford University Press, 442-459.

²⁷² Ibid, 94.

²⁷³ Ibid.

emerges as an openness towards the one world, and that democracy emerges as the institutionalization of the domain of public opinion. In my view, however, while for both Held and Miettinen “universality” is constituted through the I-other relation, their accounts of “universality” remain Eurocentric. That is because, for both, the project of “universality” is a European historical project, one to which non-European peoples are peripheral. That is, not only do Held and Miettinen trace the project of “universality” to the Greek philosophical tradition and equate it with the birth of European humanity, but they also continue to exclude non-European peoples from the historical project of “universality.” Held, for example, argues that while knowledge in other cultures has surpassed that of the Greeks in certain domains, so long as knowledge serves the practical lives of non-European peoples, “philosophy and science in their original European meaning of these concepts are not in play.”²⁷⁴ Moreover, Held argues that the distinction between the private and the public domains creates hierarchical relations in the structure of non-European families, one which is then transferred into the structure of our political relations.²⁷⁵ In contrast, in the European case, Held writes that, “there emerges with the Greeks for the first time the possibility of interpreting marriage, the core of the family, as the prefiguration of the democratic experience of equality.”²⁷⁶ As such, in the cases of philosophy and democracy the project of “universality” remains an European historical project, one which might be extended to non-European peoples, but to which non-European peoples remain peripheral.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 90.

²⁷⁵ Ibid, 95.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

2.4.3. *The “Discovery” of the Americas and “Universality” as a Colonizing Historical Project:*

In contrast to the Eurocentric interpretation according to which “universality” as a historical project emerges from and belongs to Europe, I would like to offer an alternative interpretation. On this interpretation, the project of “universality” not only emerges from the colonization of the Americas, but it also constitutes a *colonizing* historical project. For this, I draw from the analysis of Mexican historian and philosopher Edmundo O’Gorman regarding *The Invention of America: An Analysis of the Historical Structure of the New World and the Sense of its History* (1958).²⁷⁷ O’Gorman’s central claim is not only that the thesis of the “discovery” of the Americas is logically flawed because it presupposes that Columbus knew of an entity awaiting to be “discovered,” but also that the thesis of the “discovery” depends on the ontological premise that the Americas are an object *in-itself*, such that their history is accidental rather than constitutive to what the Americas became.²⁷⁸ Particularly, three aspects of O’Gorman’s analysis are important for my purposes. The first is that the history of colonization not only constituted what the Americas became, but that it also changed the conception of *the world* from a *closed* one to an *infinite openness*. The second is that the constitutive change in the conception of the world also gave rise to a new form of relating to the world, or a new form of *subjectivity* which conceived itself in “universal” terms. The third is that the Renaissance interpretation of the new form of subjectivity entails that “universality” is a development *intrinsic* to the history of Europe, such that Europe is *destined* to fulfill the project of

²⁷⁷ I will draw primarily from the original Spanish version of O’Gorman’s work. Edmundo O’Gorman (2006 [1958]), *La Invención de América: Investigación Acerca de la Estructura Histórica Del Nuevo Mundo y del Sentido de su Historia*, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 16. For the English version see: Edmundo O’Gorman (1961 [1958]), *The Invention of America: An Inquiry into the Historical Nature of the New World and the Meaning of its History*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

²⁷⁸ O’Gorman, 2006 (1958), 16.

“universality.” Thus, the purpose of my alternative interpretation is to show that not only is the *openness* of the world a phenomenon that emerges from the colonization of the Americas, but also that the project of “universality” corresponds to a *colonizing* historical project.

For the purposes of my argument, I leave aside O’Gorman’s consideration of the logical flaws involved in the thesis of the “discovery” of the Americas to focus on their historical constitution as a “new world.” To clarify the sense in which it became possible to conceive the Americas as a “new world,” O’Gorman begins by offering a description of the conception of the world prior to the colonization of the Americas. O’Gorman argues that, prior to the colonization of the Americas, the world was conceived only in terms of the *inhabitable* part of the land which was surrounded by the *uninhabitable* ocean.²⁷⁹ This means, on the one hand, that the world was conceived as the inhabitable *island* surrounded by the ocean and, on the other hand, that the ocean was conceived as *not* belonging to the inhabitable world. As O’Gorman writes, “the ocean exemplified tangibly and spectacularly the hostility and strangeness of cosmic reality and, as the limit of the Island of the world, it did not belong to the world and, therefore, it was not considered liable as a juridical possession or object to the sovereignty of the king.”²⁸⁰ Significant about O’Gorman’s analysis is that the colonization of the Americas changed the conception of the world at the time. That is not only because the Americas represented another island beyond the confines of the original one, but also because it was an *inhabitable* island—inhabited, that is, by indigenous peoples. As such, since according to the conception prior to the colonization of the Americas, the world consisted

²⁷⁹ Ibid, 94-95.

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 95, my translation.

only in the *inhabitable* portion of land, the existence of another *inhabitable* island entailed the existence of another, “new world.”²⁸¹ Thus, the significance of the “new world” does not lie only in the “new” geographical area, but it refers to the *inhabitants* who do not belong to the “old world.”

Moreover, O’Gorman further argues that the “discovery” of the new world entailed a change in the conception of the world from a *closed* one to an *infinite openness*, and that this also meant a change in the conception of *subjectivity*. Regarding the change in the conception of the world, O’Gorman argues that since the world was conceived as an inhabitable island surrounded by the uninhabitable ocean, subjects related to the world in terms of a *closed* world, one from which they could not escape. As O’Gorman puts it, “human beings thus considered themselves not only prisoners of the world, but prisoners who could not call their prison their own: everything they perceived was made and nothing could be considered their property.”²⁸² The significance of the colonization of the Americas then is that it changes the conception of the world from a closed one into an *infinite openness*. That is both because the new inhabitable world came to represent an openness to be “discovered” and because the ocean came to be conceived as a medium through which subjects could reach the new world. Thus, O’Gorman writes that, “the world ceased to be conceived as a reality constitutively strange and alien to human beings to become an infinite field of conquest as was allowed not by divine providence, but by the audacity and efficiency of the former tenant who had become the master [of the world].”²⁸³ The consequence of the change in the conception of the world

²⁸¹ Ibid, 155-56.

²⁸² Ibid, 96, my translation.

²⁸³ Ibid, 179, my translation.

then regards not so much its geographical organization, but primarily a change in the conception of subjectivity itself. Thus, to the conception of the world as an infinite field to be “discovered” and conquered, there corresponds a form of subjectivity who “claims, for the first time, the sovereignty of human beings over universal reality.”²⁸⁴

In contrast to the Eurocentric interpretation then which traces the “discovery of the openness of the world” to ancient Greece, O’Gorman’s analysis shows that the openness of the world is a phenomenon which emerges from the colonization of the Americas and thus through the I-other relation. Not only that, but what Held calls the “universal *logos*” or “universal reason” and that consists in an openness to the opinions or the reasons of others, in O’Gorman’s interpretation it is but a *colonizing* historical project. That is because, through the colonization of the Americas, the European subject came to conceive herself as the master of “universal” reality in relation to her indigenous other. O’Gorman writes that, whereas European humanity came to consider itself “true” humanity, indigenous cultures were considered “as lacking in ‘true’ historical meaning and they were reduced to the mere possibility of receiving the values of European culture; to the mere possibility, in a word, of realizing in America another Europe.”²⁸⁵ Differently put, the project of the “Europeanization” of the world consists not so much in the scientific and democratic projects, but in the expansion of a European historical project over other, non-European cultures. As such, Husserl’s Renaissance project consists in interpreting “universality” as *intrinsic* to the historical unfolding of Europe and thus to interpret Europe as *destined* to fulfill the project of “universality.” This means that Husserl’s Renaissance project entails negating the significance of the colonization of the

²⁸⁴ Ibid, my translation.

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 192, my translation.

Americas to the project of “universality” and that the project of “Europeanizing” the world consists in a colonizing historical project.

2.5. Conclusion:

The foregoing contrasts Husserl’s and Foucault’s conceptions of the historical *a priori*.

The aim of this analysis is to show that, despite their significant differences, for Husserl and Foucault the historical *a priori* refers to the historical horizon within which we

organize our subjective lives, and that for both our present historical *a priori* is

contingent, so that it can be *otherwise*. However, Husserl and Foucault offer a

teleological and anti-teleological account of the historical *a priori* respectively, which

also informs their respective accounts of *cultural critique*. I thus showed that Foucault

rejects the teleological account of the historical *a priori* not only because it obscures the historical *contingency* of the present, but also because it *justifies* the present as the result

of a process of historical improvement, and it also justifies colonial enterprises by

considering non-European peoples as historically relegated. Similarly, I showed that

Foucault’s account of cultural critique rejects positing teleological ideals which might

guide our social efforts. Instead, Foucault offers a negativistic account, whereby we

might conceive of ourselves *otherwise* than our present historical *a priori*. In my view,

however, Foucault’s account of cultural critique fails to capture the historical struggles of

oppressed peoples because he follows the Enlightenment view of a free subject. I thus

argued that, since Foucault assumes a free subject, he can afford to reject the ideal of

humanity, whereas struggles for *liberation* are struggles whereby oppressed peoples

negate their *dehumanization* and thus *affirm* their *humanity*. This means that the project

of liberation does not consist only in learning to navigate power relations, but in the historical struggle through which oppressed peoples become subjects in the first place.

To account for an ideal of humanity which can capture the historical struggles of oppressed peoples, I turned to Husserl's *teleological* account of the historical *a priori*. For Husserl, the historical *a priori* refers to the historical horizon within which we organize our subjective lives, and he conceives of it as historically *contingent*, so that it can be *otherwise*. Husserl's teleological account of the historical *a priori* thus entails that he interprets the history of the present as guided by teleological *ideals* and, similarly, that he conceives of cultural critique as positing teleological ideals which can guide our communal endeavors. However, I argued that Husserl's account of the present is not *justificatory*, such that the present is *morally better* relative to the past. Rather, I argued that Husserl's account is motivated by a crisis of *values*, or whether what we find *valuable* and thus worth pursuing serves our subjective purposes. In the case of the crisis of Europe, Husserl's point is that while the modern sciences structure our world-horizon, they have become *normatively* meaningless because they cannot inform us about what is worth pursuing. Husserl's prospective account of *cultural critique* posits an *ideal* of *humanity* that serves as an ethical principle which can guide our communal endeavors. In my view, Husserl's account regarding the ideal of humanity is important to capture the historical struggles of oppressed peoples because it both emerges from the historical unfolding of the community, and it regulates what we find worth pursuing as a community. As such, we saw that, for Husserl, *authenticity* consist in the historical projection of an ideal of humanity which corresponds to the community's historical identity.

However, although I find Husserl's prospective account of the ideal of humanity important to capture the historical struggles of oppressed peoples, I reject Husserl's projection of a "universal" ideal of humanity. That is because Husserl adopts the Renaissance project which not only traces the development of "universality" to the Greek philosophical tradition, but collapses "universal" to European humanity. I particularly argued that Husserl's account of the *theoretical* attitude is a Eurocentric one because it reduces *the world* to the European perspective. In this sense, Husserl not only reduces the history of philosophy and science to the history of *European philosophy*, but he also reduces "universal" to European humanity. In contrast to Husserl's Eurocentric account, I traced the development of "universality" to what Held calls the discovery of the openness of the world. This means that it is through the experiences of others that I realize the *particularity* of my world-horizon and thus that *the world* is constituted through the I-other relation. While Held and Miettinen account for the I-other relation, however, they continue to exclude the significance of non-European peoples for the development of "universality." Different from Held and Miettinen, who continue to trace "universality" to ancient Greece, I argued that openness of the world emerges from the colonization of the Americas and thus through the I-other relation. On this interpretation, it is through the "discovery" and colonization of the Americas that the European subject comes to conceive of herself as "universal" humanity relative to non-European peoples. Hence, Husserl's Renaissance interpretation which traces "universality" to ancient Greece and collapses "universal" to European humanity serves to exclude non-European peoples from "universal" humanity and, in this sense, it constitutes a colonizing historical project.

To conclude, we can derive three lessons from the foregoing discussion. The first regards the historical *a priori*. Much like for Husserl the empirical conception of our world-experience is the ideal of science which structures our world-horizon, the Eurocentric conception of “universal” humanity is the ideal which structures the modern world-horizon of non-European peoples. Thus, for non-European peoples, the modern historical *a priori* is the Eurocentric ideal of “universal” humanity as a *colonizing* historical project. The second lesson we can derive from the foregoing analysis regards the way in which we might conceive of the present *otherwise*. As we shall see in the following chapters, the *liberatory projects* of non-European peoples consist in formulating an ideal of humanity which corresponds to our historical identity, and which allow us to conceive of the present *otherwise* than the Eurocentric historical *a priori*. The third lesson we can derive from the foregoing analysis regards what Antony Steinbock (1995) refers to as the “*mutually delimited*” relation between home- and alien-worlds.²⁸⁶ Steinbock means that a historical community’s self-conception and its ideal of humanity are defined in relation to the “other-than-oneself.” As we shall see, unlike the Eurocentric view which derives “universality” as a development *intrinsic* to Europe, the historical projects offered by 19th and 20th century thinkers not only characterize Latin America in a dialectical relation to their imperial other, but they also offer an alternative conception of universality, one which emerges from the dialogical self-other relation.

²⁸⁶ Antony J. Steinbock (1995), *Home and Beyond: Generative Phenomenology after Husserl*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 179.

Part II: A Phenomenological Analysis of The *Mestizx* Historical Consciousness

Part I of this Dissertation introduced a phenomenological analysis of history as a horizon of conceivability for subjective and intersubjective life. It shows that, while historically contingent, normative meanings or *ideals* structure our subjective and intersubjective projects. By focusing on the work of Edmund Husserl, in Part I, I show that while the ideal of humanity can serve as principle for normative critique because meanings are subjectively dependent, Husserl's account of the "universal" ideal of humanity is a Eurocentric one. That is because Husserl offers a one-sided account of universality by tracing the discovery of *the world* to the subjective realm of Europe, rather than to the self-other relation which would transcend Europe's subjective life.

Part II extends the analysis of history from Part I to offer an account of what I refer to as the "coloniality of history." Parallel to Husserl's analysis of the "mathematization of nature," which frames our subjective and intersubjective projects, the notion of the "coloniality of history" aims to capture the way in which the Eurocentric ideal of humanity continues to structure the horizon of conceivability of formerly colonized peoples even after achieving political emancipation. The "coloniality of history" thus allows me to analyze liberation projects in Latin America, particularly the mid-20th century liberation project of *mestizaje*. Part II is divided into Chapters 3 and 4, and it focuses primarily on the work of seminal liberation philosopher Leopoldo Zea. In Chapter 3, I introduce the notion of the "coloniality of history" and I analyze the way in which it structures the historical experience of colonized peoples along a Eurocentric ideal of humanity. My account of the "coloniality of history" draws from decolonial

philosophers such as Anibal Quijano, Enrique Dussel, and Sylvia Wynter to show that the Eurocentric conception of history not only relies on a developmentalist conception of history which situates European peoples as historically developed and non-European peoples as historically backwards, thereby justifying colonial enterprises as a necessary good for non-European peoples. Most important for my purposes is that the Eurocentric ideal of humanity also structures the sense that the past, present, and future acquire for formerly colonized peoples. I thus show that the “coloniality of history” situates formerly colonized peoples within a normative double bind, namely, between a *civilized* European future and an *uncivilized* indigenous past. I then analyze the historical experience that emerges from this normative structure by drawing from Zea’s analysis of the sense of “historical inferiority.” I argue that the sense of historical inferiority emerges because Latin American peoples aim to achieve an ideal of humanity which, in principle, is meant to exclude us and therefore that Latin American peoples experience historical development as a continuous movement of progress and failure. I end by characterizing the historical experience of progress and failure as *nepantla*, which is an indigenous concept that captures the existential situation of being in-between worlds of meaning.

Chapter 4 then analyzes Zea’s liberation project of *mestizaje*. Particularly, my analysis of Zea’s project of *mestizaje* aims to accomplish two things. First, I situate 19th and 20th centuries discourses about the formation of a Latin American identity within the geopolitical context in which they emerge, particularly within the context of U.S. rising hegemony across the Americas. The purpose of this analysis is to counter contemporary critics’ argument that the formation of a Latin American identity corresponds to an effort by the Latin American elites to adopt a colonial identity and to replicate colonial forms of

social organization at the local level. By situating 19th and 20th century discourses within the geopolitical context within which they emerge, I aim to highlight the *anti-imperialistic* character of projects of a Latin American identity such as Zea's. Second, I offer a diachronic analysis of the *mestizx* historical consciousness that Zea proposes by analyzing the sense that the past, present, and future acquire for the project of *mestizaje*. Regarding the sense that the *future* acquires for the project of *mestizaje*, I argue that Zea offers a dialogical rather than a monological conception of universality which also de-centers the Eurocentric ideal of humanity. For Zea, universality is thus constituted through the historical projects of concrete peoples, rather than through the universalization of a provincial historical project. Regarding the sense that the *past* acquires for the project of *mestizaje*, I draw from Luis Villoro's analysis of indigeneity to show that, while Zea incorporates indigenous peoples as the past identity of present Latin America, he continues to relegate indigenous peoples as the *past*, rather than considering them the *present* of Latin America. I end by drawing from Sylvia Wynter's "triadic" analysis of colonial relations to argue that, while Zea incorporates indigenous peoples as part of the *mestizx* historical project, his obliviousness regarding Afro-Latinx peoples means that Zea relegates Afro-Latinx peoples as belonging to the natural realm and therefore as unable to be incorporated into a historical liberatory project such as the project of *mestizaje*.

While Chapter 5 focuses on the existential notion of *nepantla* and on *mestizaje* as a liberatory project, I treat the Chapter separately because rather than a historical project, Anzaldúa's account of *mestizaje* constitutes a *poetics* that aims to change our conception of the colonized body. I thus show that Anzaldúa interprets *nepantla*, or the existential

situation of being in-between worlds of meaning, in an embodied way as regarding the meanings that inform the embodied experience of colonized peoples. Moreover, by drawing from contemporary analyses of Anzaldúa's work as well as from the Nahua metaphysical and aesthetic views, I argue that Anzaldúa's *mestizaje* consists in the juxtaposition of historical meanings that aims to re-conceive social identities in a hybrid rather than a homogeneous way. In this sense, I argue that Anzaldúa's formulation of *mestizaje* represents an alternative to Zea's historical project of an authentic Latin American identity.

Chapter 3: Nepantla: From The “Coloniality of History” to The Sense of “Historical Inferiority”

3.1. Introduction:

The purpose of this chapter is to account for the historical experience of colonized peoples that has been captured by magical-realistic novels such as Alejo Carpentier’s *The Kingdom of This World* (1949). The main character in the story is Ti Noel, a black slave in the Caribbean Island of Santo Domingo, or what today are Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Ti Noel lives through several liberation movements spanning some twenty years prior to the French Revolution in 1789 to the Haitian Independence in 1804. The first slave uprising in the novel is led by Mackandal, a black slave who “proclaimed an extermination crusade, chosen as he had been to annihilate the whites and to create a great empire of free black people in Santo Domingo.”²⁸⁷ Mackandal’s uprising is ultimately defeated, but the liberation struggle reemerges adopting the French Revolution’s demand to abolish slavery. Ti Noel “understood that something had occurred in France, and that some influential people had declared that blacks should be granted their freedom, but that the rich masters from Cabo, who were all monarchical bastards, refused to obey.”²⁸⁸ In 1804, the liberation movement achieved the Haitian Independence, and former slave Henri Christophe became its first black monarch in 1811. However, Christophe installed a Napoleonic monarchy that maintained the institution of slavery. For Ti Noel, the splendor of Christophe’s palace Sans-Souci “was the product of a slavery as abominable as the one he had known in Monsieur Lenormand de Mezy’s

²⁸⁷ Alejo Carpentier (1977 [1949]), *The Kingdom of This World*, Barcelona, España: Biblioteca de Bolsillo, 29. The translations in this chapter are mine unless indicated otherwise.

²⁸⁸ Ibid, 52.

hacienda.”²⁸⁹ The unpopular monarch Christophe was overthrown by an uprising of Republican Mulatos in 1818. However, with the rise of the Haitian Republic, Ti Noel “began to despair facing the endless sprouting of chains,” and escaped the kingdom of this world by taking different animal forms.²⁹⁰ Although slavery in Haiti was formally abolished by France in 1793 and by Independent Haiti in 1804, it remained a *de facto* institution until late in the 19th century.²⁹¹

This chapter accounts for two aspects about the historical experience of colonized peoples that Carpentier captures in *The Kingdom of This World*. I refer to these two aspects as the *normative* conception of history and the *existential* experience of history. By the *normative* conception of history, I mean that the Eurocentric ideal of humanity which was introduced during colonization continues to structure the way in which colonized peoples conceive of the past, present, and future even after the achievement of political emancipation. Carpentier captures this aspect, for example, in the character of Henri Christophe, who adopts a Napoleonic form of government and slavery as a form of social organization. I account for this aspect by drawing from Anibal Quijano’s (1928-2018) and Enrique Dussel’s (1934-) seminal analyses of “coloniality” to offer a framework for what I call the “coloniality of history.” In his original formulation of the “coloniality of power,” Quijano argues that the modern organization of power relations along racial categories emerged during the colonization of the Americas, and that this organization was *justified* by appealing to a “developmentalist” conception of history. As

²⁸⁹ Ibid, 95.

²⁹⁰ Ibid, 138.

²⁹¹ Carpentier makes it clear that the institution of slavery continued during the Haitian Republic when he writes that, “Ti Noel learned from a fugitive that farming tasks had become mandatory and that the whip was now in the hands of the Republican Mulatos, [who are] the new masters in the Northern Plains.” Ibid, 137.

Dussel argues, the “developmentalist” conception of history situates Western European peoples as historically developed and non-European peoples as historically backwards, thereby justifying colonial violence as a necessary good for non-European peoples. By the “coloniality of history,” I mean that the “developmentalist” conception of history not only serves a *justificatory* function, but that it also *structures* colonized peoples’ conception of the past, present, and future along a Eurocentric ideal of humanity. I argue that the Eurocentric ideal of humanity generates a historical “chain of being” which situates colonized peoples within a normative double bind, namely, between an *uncivilized* indigenous past and a *civilized* European future. This normative, historical structure thus explains why the historical projects of colonized peoples continue to obey the Eurocentric ideal of humanity.

The second aspect about the historical experience of colonized peoples for which this chapter accounts and which Carpentier’s novel captures is what I call the *existential* experience of history. By “existential,” I mean the way in which our subjective lives both shape and are shaped by the lifeworld as a historical horizon of conceivability. In the case of colonized peoples, the existential aspect refers to the sense that historical experience acquires within the normative structure of the “coloniality of history.” My argument is that since the historical projects of colonized peoples are structured along a Eurocentric ideal of humanity which, in principle, is meant to exclude them, colonized peoples experience history as a continuous movement of progress and failure. Carpentier captures this aspect in the character of Ti Noel, who undergoes several movements of liberation that result in the continuous reemergence of slavery as a form of social organization. To show the existential situation within which the “coloniality of history” places colonized

peoples, I draw from seminal liberation philosopher Leopoldo Zea's (1912-2004) analysis of the Latin American sense of "historical inferiority." Zea's analysis distinguishes between an *existential* notion of humanity, which he calls the "historical circumstance," wherein concrete human beings find themselves, and a *normative* notion of humanity, which he calls the "value of humanity." Zea argues that imposing a Eurocentric ideal of humanity on the Latin American circumstance not only leads to negating our indigenous and colonial past, but also to the sense of "historical inferiority." That is because Latin American peoples blame themselves for failing to achieve an ideal of humanity which, in principle, is meant to exclude them. For this reason, Latin American peoples experience history as a continuous movement of progress and failure. I end the chapter by characterizing the historical movement of progress and failure as *nepantla*, which is an indigenous concept that captures the existential situation of being in-between worlds of meaning.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section accounts for the "coloniality of history" by drawing from Quijano's notion of the "coloniality of power" and from Dussel's analysis of the "developmentalist fallacy." I argue that the "coloniality of history" situates colonized peoples within a normative double bind, namely, between an *uncivilized* indigenous past and a *civilized* European future. The second section draws from Zea's analysis of the Latin American sense of "historical inferiority" to account for the colonized *existential* experience of history within the "coloniality of history." I argue that since the Latin American projects are structured along a Eurocentric ideal of humanity which, in principle, is meant to exclude us, Latin American peoples experience history as a continuous movement of progress and failure. The third section characterizes

the historical experience of progress and failure by employing the indigenous concept of *nepantla*, which captures the existential situation of being in-between worlds of meaning. My account of *nepantla* draws from and engages in critical discussion with the analysis of Mexican philosopher Emilio Uranga (1921-1988). Uranga describes *nepantla* as an “oscillating” movement between the “substantiality” of values and the “accidentality” of human life. Uranga argues that instead of considering our relation to values in terms of “inferiority,” we should understand it in terms of “insufficiency,” or as the human inability to fulfill values in absolute terms. Although I draw from Uranga’s description to capture the “oscillating” movement of progress and failure, I argue that “insufficiency” captures a general feature of our human relation to values, whereas the notion of “inferiority” captures the particularity of the historical experience of colonized peoples.

3.2. The Coloniality of History: A Normative Account of Eurocentrism:

With the formulation of the “coloniality of power” in 1992, Quijano accounts for the systemic imbalance of power between Western European and non-European regions of the world for which dependency theory and world-system theory aim to account since the 1960s. These theories aim to show that a country’s or a world-region’s economic development cannot be explained through elements endogenous to the country or the region, but that it must be explained within a world-system of power relations.²⁹² With the formulation of the “coloniality of power,” Quijano not only places Latin America within the modern world-system, but argues that the modern world-system emerged with the colonization of the Americas, and that it is structured along colonial categories. In the

²⁹² See, for example, Immanuel Wallerstein (1990), “World-Systems Analysis: The Second Phase,” *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, 13:2, 288.

essay “Americanity as a Concept, or the Americas in the Modern World-System” (1992), Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein, the creator of world-system theory, write as follows:

The modern world-system was born in the long sixteenth century. The Americas as a geosocial construct were born in the long sixteenth century. The creation of this geosocial entity, the Americas, was the constitutive act of the modern world-system. The Americas were not incorporated into an already existing capitalist world-economy. There could not have been a capitalist world-economy without the Americas.²⁹³

In this essay, Quijano and Wallerstein focus on the notion of “Americanity” to argue that the colonization of the Americas is central to the constitution of the modern-capitalist world-system. Although the notion of the “coloniality of power” takes a secondary role, as an interstate system of power relations, the central theses of Quijano’s analysis are already present in this essay.²⁹⁴ What Quijano and Wallerstein mean by “Americanity” is not only that the colonization of the Americas afforded the material resources and the global markets that made mercantile capitalism possible. Rather, Quijano and Wallerstein argue that the colonization of the Americas articulated a spatio-temporal world-system wherein Europe came to define itself as *superior* relative to non-European peoples. As we shall see in the following, this process involved three aspects. The first is that the colonization of the Americas gave rise both to Western Europe and to non-Europe as geohistorical entities. Thus, the colonization of the Americas gave rise to identities such as “Western Europe” as well as to “Africa,” “Asia,” and the “Americas.” The second aspect about the constitution of the modern world-system is that the geopolitical organization of these geohistorical identities obeys the direction of capitalist

²⁹³ Anibal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein (1992), “Americanity as a Concept, or the Americas in the Modern World-System,” *International Social Science Journal*, 44:4, 549.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 550.

accumulation from the non-European colonies to the European metropolises. Lastly, the third aspect of the modern world-system is that the hierarchical relations between European and non-European peoples were justified by appealing to a “developmentalist” conception of history. As we shall see, this meant situating non-European identities as historically less developed relative to a Eurocentric ideal of humanity.

In this section, I draw from Quijano’s and Dussel’s seminal analyses of “coloniality” to offer an account for what I call the “coloniality of history.” By the “coloniality of history,” I mean that the colonization of the Americas was justified by appealing to a “developmentalist” conception of history, and that this conception of history also structures colonized peoples’ relation to the past, present, and future in *normative* ways. I particularly argue that the “coloniality of history” situates colonized peoples in a normative double bind, namely, between an *uncivilized* indigenous past and a *civilized* European future. For this, I first present Quijano’s analysis of the “coloniality of power” to show that modern relations of power are hierarchically organized along racial categories, and that this hierarchical organization was justified by appealing to a “developmentalist” conception of history. Second, I present Dussel’s analysis of the “developmentalist fallacy,” which justifies colonization by situating Western European peoples as historically developed and non-European peoples as historically backwards. Lastly, I offer a normative analysis of the “developmentalist” conception of history to show that it generates a historical “chain of being” within which the past, present, and future acquire normative meaning along a Eurocentric ideal of humanity.

3.2.1. *The Spatio-Temporal Dimensions of “Coloniality”:*

The central thesis of Quijano’s “coloniality of power” is that neither modernity nor capitalism are developments intrinsic to Europe, but that the relations of power which emerged through the colonization of the Americas are constitutive of both modernity and capitalism. Quijano argues that the forms of social organization implemented during the colonization of the Americas such as slavery and serfdom gave rise to a conception of subjectivity who understood herself in negative relation to the colonized others. That is, the European colonizer came to conceive of herself as *superior* relative to the *inferiority* of colonized peoples. Moreover, Quijano argues that instead of understanding these relations of superiority and inferiority as the result of a historical organization of power, they were conceived of as *natural* and thus as *objective*. For this reason, Quijano writes that the colonization of the Americas gave rise to a system of power relations according to which relations of superiority and inferiority are conceived of in *racial* terms:

That specific colonial structure of power produced the specific social discriminations which later were codified as ‘racial,’ ‘ethnic,’ ‘anthropological’ or ‘national,’ according to the times, agents, and populations involved. These intersubjective constructions, product of Eurocentered colonial domination were even assumed to be ‘objective,’ ‘scientific,’ categories, then of a historical significance. That is, as natural phenomena, not referring to the history of power. This power structure was, and still is, the framework within which operate the other social relations of classes or states.²⁹⁵

For Quijano then the “coloniality of power” refers to the naturalization of power relations which emerged during the colonization of the Americas in terms of racial categories. Moreover, what is important about Quijano’s analysis is that the codification of power relations in racial terms is not a process restrictive to the Americas and to the historical

²⁹⁵ Anibal Quijano (2007), “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” *Cultural Studies*, 21:2-3, 168.

moment of colonization. Rather, Quijano argues that the naturalization of power relations in racial terms constituted Europe and non-Europe as geohistorical identities. That is, for Quijano, the coloniality of power not only refers to a system of intersubjective relations, but to a geopolitical system as well. In this sense, Quijano argues that “America was constituted as the first space/time of a new model of power of global vocation, and both in this way and by it became the first identity of modernity.”²⁹⁶ As we shall see, the constitution of Europe and non-Europe as geohistorical identities entails the organization of spatio-temporal dimensions according to a modern-Eurocentric model of power.

Quijano derives the racial codification of power relations between Western European and non-European peoples from the organization of labor during the colonization of the Americas. Much like Karl Marx, Quijano argues that in the modern capitalist system, power relations are mediated through the control of labor. However, whereas Marx relegates non-wage forms of labor such as slavery and serfdom as the “pre-history” of modern capitalism, which is organized around wage labor,²⁹⁷ Quijano argues that the colonization of the Americas introduced a “racial distribution of labor,” where wage labor is reserved for Western European peoples and non-wage labor is reserved for non-European peoples.²⁹⁸ This means that the colonization of the Americas introduced a racial articulation of power which cannot be reduced to Marx’s class

²⁹⁶ Anibal Quijano (2000), “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” *Nepantla: Views from the South*, 1:3, 533.

²⁹⁷ Marx argues, for example, that modern capitalism does not exist in the colonies because wage labor is lacking: “in the colonies, property in money, means of subsistence, machines and other means of production does not as yet stamp a man as a capitalist is the essential complement to these things is missing: the wage-labourer, the other man, who is compelled to sell himself of his own free will... capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things.” Karl Marx (1977 [1867]), *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I*, translated by Ben Fowkes, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 932. See also, *ibid*, 874-75.

²⁹⁸ Quijano, 2000, 536.

analysis. As Quijano puts it, “a new technology of domination/exploitation, in this case race/labor, was articulated in such a way that the two elements appeared naturally associated.”²⁹⁹ Equally important for Quijano is that the racial distribution of labor both enabled and modeled the hegemony of Western Europe within mercantile capitalism as a modern world-system. Quijano characterizes the *spatial* organization of power within the modern world-system by employing the categories of “center-periphery” developed by economist Raúl Prebisch, the main proponent of dependency theory.³⁰⁰ Thus, Western Europe became the “center” of accumulation of the value extracted from the colonial “peripheries.” That is, the value derived from non-wage labor such as slavery and serfdom, and the material resources extracted from the colonial peripheries enabled the hegemony of Western Europe in the modern-capitalist world-system.³⁰¹ For Quijano then the *spatial* organization of power refers to the direction of capitalist accumulation, which mirrors the racial organization of labor at the intersubjective level. Quijano thus writes that, “through these measures, Europe and the European constituted themselves as the center of the capitalist world economy.”³⁰²

Quijano further argues that the emergence of Europe and non-Europe as modern geohistorical identities and the racial codification of power were justified along a

²⁹⁹ Ibid, 537. See also, Anibal Quijano (2014), “Colonialidad del Poder y Clasificación Social,” in Anibal Quijano and Danilo Assis Climaco (eds.), *Questiones y Horizontes: De la Dependencia Histórico-Estructural a la Colonialidad-Descolonialidad del Poder*, Buenos Aires, Argentina: CLACSO, 285-326.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, 539.

³⁰¹ Enrique Dussel puts this point as follows: “From the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, American precious metals entered Europe from two directions (1) across the Atlantic from the Caribbean to Seville, and from there to Amsterdam or Central Europe, or from Genoa and Venice to the eastern Mediterranean and, thanks to the Islamic connection, on to Hindustan and China; or (2) across the Pacific, from Peru and Acapulco, Mexico, through the Philippines and China. The ‘old world’ was thus the extreme West of the emerging ‘world-system,’ a secondary region in terms of commodity production: Europe could sell little to China and could only buy with the ‘money’ of Spanish America.” Enrique Dussel (2002), “World-System and ‘Trans’-Modernity,” *Nepantla: Views from the South*, 3:2, 228.

³⁰² Quijano, 2000, 539.

temporal axis, namely, by appealing to a Eurocentric conception of history. This means that historical “development” came to justify the racial codification of power between Western European and non-European peoples. Particularly, Quijano argues that the temporalization of power involved two processes. The first process regards the *modern* conception of history which emerged through the colonization of the Americas.

Distinctive about the modern conception of history is the focus on historical “change” and thus on the future as an open horizon of possibilities. As Quijano puts it:

This is, without doubt, the founding element of the new subjectivity: the perception of historical change. It is this element that unleashed the process of the constitution of a new perspective about time and about history. The perception of change brings about a new idea of the future, since it is the only territory of time where the changes can occur. The future is an open temporal territory. Time can be new, and so not merely an extension of the past. And in this way history can be perceived not only as something that happens, something natural or produced by divine decisions or mysteries as destiny, but also as something that can be produced by the action of people, by their calculations, their intention, their decisions, and therefore, as something that can be designed, and consequently, can have meaning.³⁰³

Indeed, Mexican historian and philosopher Edmundo O’Gorman argues that the significance of the so-called “discovery” of the Americas consists in a perspectival shift regarding both the world and the subject herself. O’Gorman explains that with the colonization of the Americas, Western European subjects shifted from considering the inhabitable world as a closed island surrounded by an uninhabitable ocean to considering the world as an open horizon to be conquered and made.³⁰⁴ Quijano’s point is that this

³⁰³ Ibid, 547.

³⁰⁴ O’Gorman puts this shift as follows: “But on the contrary, if man comes to conceive of himself no longer as definitively made, but as possibility of being, then the universe which he encounters won’t seem as an unsurmountable limit and as an alien reality, but as an infinite field for conquest and for forging his own world, as the product of his effort, of his technique and of his imagination. Far from being an island surrounded by the threatening Ocean, the world will become a solid ground with a permanent horizon to be conquered. It will thus be a world in the making, always as a new world.” Edmundo O’Gorman (2016 [1958]), *La Invención de América: Investigación Acerca de la Estructura Histórica del Nuevo Mundo y del Sentido de su Devenir*, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 96-97.

perspectival shift also informs the modern conception of history, such that modern subjects relate to the past as that which cannot be changed and to the future as an open horizon to be conquered and made.³⁰⁵ Moreover, Quijano argues that Western European subjects identified their colonizing activity as the agent of historical change.³⁰⁶ The result is not only that Western European subjects came to conceive of themselves as the makers of modern history, but also that non-European peoples were relegated as “pre-modern.” Thus, the modern conception of history resembles Western Europe’s spatial hegemony within the capitalist world-system.

The second process involved in the temporalization of power regards what Quijano calls the “colonization of the imagination” of non-European peoples.³⁰⁷ Quijano writes that the colonization of the imagination involves “the colonization of cognitive perspectives, modes of producing and giving meaning, the results of material existence, the imaginary, the universe of intersubjective relations with the world: in short, the culture.”³⁰⁸ The colonization of the imagination involves the cultural erasure, the homogenization of ethnic differences, and the imposition of the Eurocentric conception of history over non-European peoples. Quijano argues that these processes served three main functions. The first is that the erasure of non-European peoples’ cultures served as a

³⁰⁵ Quijano has remained consistent on this issue throughout his work. In an essay prior to the formulation of the colonality of history, for example, he writes that the “discovery of Latin America produced a profound revolution in the European imagination and, consequently, in the imagination of the Europeanized world of domination: *it produced a replacement of the past as the site of a forever-lost golden age with the future as a golden age to achieve or to construct.*” Anibal Quijano (1989), “Paradoxes of Modernity in Latin America,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 3:2, 149.

³⁰⁶ Quijano 2000, 541-542. For an extensive account of this premise, see also Dussel’s account according to which the “*Ego-conquiro*” is the form of subjectivity that antecedes Descartes’ modern formulation of the “*Ego-cogito*.” Enrique Dussel (1995), *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of ‘the Other’ and the Myth of Modernity*, translated by Michael D. Barber, New York, NY: Continuum, 38-45.

³⁰⁷ Quijano, 2007, 169.

³⁰⁸ Quijano, 2000, 541. As we shall see throughout the rest of this dissertation, although as a historical project and as a project of reconceiving social identities respectively, Leopoldo Zea’s and Gloria Anzaldúa’s formulation of “*mestizaje*” precisely aim to break from the “colonization of the imagination.”

means of social control because it prevented the organization of the non-European colonized against the European colonizers.³⁰⁹ The second function is that the homogenization of cultural differences allowed for the creation of new identities among non-European peoples.³¹⁰ In the case of African peoples brought as slaves to the Americas, for example, the erasure of language, religion, and other cultural traits prevented the organization of slave revolts, and the homogenization of their ethnic differences also allowed for the formation of an “African” identity. Lastly, the imposition of the Eurocentric conception of history not only situated non-European identities such as “indigenous,” “African,” or “Oriental” in a position of historical inferiority relative to Western Europe,³¹¹ but it also served to foreclose the possibility of conceiving of a non-Eurocentric future.³¹² The modern conception of history then not only serves to reify Western European and non-European identities, but also their power relations by situating them in positions of historical superiority and inferiority. In what follows, I offer a more detailed analysis of the historical dimension of coloniality.

3.2.2. *Dussel’s Analysis of the “Developmentalist Fallacy”:*

Much like Quijano, Dussel rejects the view that modernity and capitalism are products intrinsic to the historical development of Europe and argues, instead, that they are the

³⁰⁹ Quijano, 2007, 169.

³¹⁰ Ibid, 170.

³¹¹ The invention of new identities among non-European peoples has been analyzed by different thinkers. See, for example, Edward Said (1978), *Orientalism*, New York, NY: Vintage Books; V. Y. Mudimbe (1988), *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press; Walter D. Mignolo (2005), *The Idea of Latin America*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing; SUN Ge (2000), “How does Asia Mean?” *Inter-Asian Studies*, 1:1, 13-47.

³¹² Quijano puts this point as follows: “The Europeans imagine themselves as the exclusive bearers, creators, and protagonists of modernity. What is notable about this is not that the Europeans imagined and thought of themselves and the rest of the species in this way—something not exclusive to Europeans—but the fact that they were capable of spreading and establishing that historical perspective as hegemonic within the new intersubjective universe of the global model of power.” Quijano, 2000, 542-43.

dialectical result of the colonization of the Americas. However, while Quijano focuses on the spatio-temporal relations between Western Europe and non-Europe, in *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of the Other and the Myth of Modernity* (1995), Dussel focuses on the genealogy of the philosophical concept of modernity. For Dussel, the philosophical concept of modernity implies two aspects. On the one hand, Dussel follows Enlightenment thinkers who conceive of modernity in emancipatory terms. On the other hand, Dussel argues that the Enlightenment concept of modernity also implies the irrational myth of Eurocentrism and its concomitant violence. As Dussel puts it:

In its rational nucleus, modernity entails the emancipation of humanity from cultural immaturity. As a world encompassing myth, however, modernity exploits and immolates men and women in the peripheral, colonial world as it first did with the Amerindians. Modernity hides this victimization, though, by claiming that it is the necessary price of modernization.³¹³

Dussel does not deny the emancipatory potential of modernity, but he denies the conflation of modernity with Eurocentrism, and the irrational violence that accompanies it. Dussel's project of offering an alternative, non-Eurocentric genealogy of modernity thus aims to disentangle, so to speak, modernity from Eurocentrism. Dussel particularly confronts the Eurocentric genealogy of modernity offered by Enlightenment thinkers such as Immanuel Kant and G.W.F. Hegel, and by critical thinkers such as Jurgen Habermas. For Dussel, these thinkers conceive of modernity as a historical process whereby Europe acquires a "critical consciousness" relative to the authority of *the past*.³¹⁴ Dussel argues that, from this Eurocentric perspective, Descartes's *ego cogito* becomes the representative *par excellence* of modernity.³¹⁵ The problem is that this

³¹³ Dussel, 1995, 117.

³¹⁴ Ibid, 72.

³¹⁵ Ibid, 43.

Eurocentric genealogy of modernity portrays non-European peoples as in need of modernization. As Hegel infamously puts it in his lectures on *The Philosophy of History*, “we may conclude *slavery* to have been the occasion of the increase of human feeling among the Negroes.”³¹⁶

Unlike Enlightenment thinkers, Dussel argues that the Eurocentric genealogy of modernity emerges from the necessity of justifying Western Europe’s hegemony during colonization and the violence that accompanied it. Most discussions about the philosophical justification for Europe’s right to colonize the Americas focus on the Valladolid Debate (1550-1551) between Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and Bartolomé de las Casas regarding Aristotle’s theory of “natural slavery.” However, in *The Fall of Natural Man* (1982), historian Anthony Pagden shows that the School of Salamanca (c. 1520-1530) articulated the inferiority of indigenous peoples in historical terms.³¹⁷ Pagden shows that, in his *De Indis* (1532), Francisco de Vitoria exposed a contradiction implicit in Aristotle’s theory of “natural slavery.” For Aristotle, a “natural slave” is a human being who has “failed to achieve proper mastery over his passions. Aristotle denies such creatures the power to deliberate but he does allow them some share in the faculty of reason.”³¹⁸ This means that natural slaves are human beings who cannot rule themselves

³¹⁶ G.W.F. Hegel (1956 [1837]), *The Philosophy of History*, translated by J. Sibree, New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 98.

³¹⁷ Pagden describes the School of Salamanca as follows: “The years around 1520-30 mark the beginning of a major change in direction in the intellectual life of Spain. For these were the early years of a new movement in theology, logic, and the law, whose creators have come to be known as the ‘School of Salamanca.’ The members of this ‘School’ from the generation of the Dominicans Francisco de Vitoria (c. 1492-1546), Domingo de Soto (1494-1560) and Melchor Cano (1509-60) to that of the Jesuits Francisco Suárez (1548-1617) and Luis de Molina (1535-1600) were to influence, and in many areas substantially restructure, the theological thinking of Catholic Europe. Their learning was immense and their interests, which ranged from economic theory to the laws of motion, from eschatology to the law of contract, practically unlimited. But it was in theology, jurisprudence and moral philosophy that their achievements were the most far reaching.” Anthony Pagden (1982), *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 60.

³¹⁸ Ibid, 42.

but who can follow orders and thus who can be ruled by others. The problem for de Vitoria is that Aristotle's theory implies that there are human beings who possess reason *in potentia*, but who are incapable of exercising it *in actualitas*. As Pagden writes, "Vitoria's implicit insistence that no *man* can be potentially human without being actually so... touched on the principal factor in their interpretation of the law of nature, its essentiality."³¹⁹ De Vitoria shifted from explaining indigenous peoples' inferiority by appealing to their culture rather than to their psychological nature.³²⁰ This implies that indigenous peoples could be *educated* to exercise their reason, which means that the relation between the European master and indigenous peoples is one of "tutelage," as between a parent and a child. For de Vitoria then "the relationship between the Indian and his master could only be construed as paternalistic."³²¹

By shifting the explanatory focus from psychological nature to their culture, de Vitoria thus articulated the inferiority of indigenous peoples relative to their Western European counterparts in terms of "immaturity" and thus in "developmentalist" terms.³²² The colonization of the Americas was then justified as a necessary process to civilize the indigenous colonized. Dussel refers to this justificatory strategy as the "developmentalist fallacy." The "developmentalist fallacy" entails a tautological argument whereby Europe is superior relative to non-European peoples because it is historically more developed, and it is historically more developed because it is superior relative to non-European peoples. Dussel formulates this argument as follows:

- (1) Europe is more developed; its civilization is superior to others (major premise of Eurocentrism)

³¹⁹ Ibid, 95.

³²⁰ Ibid, 100.

³²¹ Ibid, 104.

³²² Ibid, 106.

- (2) A culture's abandonment of its barbarity and underdevelopment through a civilizing process implies, as a conclusion, progress, development, well-being, and *emancipation* for that culture. According to the *fallacy of development* [developmentalism], the more developed culture has already trod this path of modernization.
- (3) As a first corollary, one defends Europe's domination over other cultures as a *necessary*, pedagogic violence (just war), which produces civilization and modernization. In addition, one justifies the anguish of the other culture as the necessary price of its civilization and expiation for its culpable immaturity.
- (4) As a second corollary, the conquistador appears to be not only *innocent*, but meritorious for inflicting this necessary, pedagogic violence.
- (5) As a third corollary, the conquered victims are culpable for their own violent conquest and for their own victimization. They should have abandoned their barbarity voluntarily instead of obliging the victimizing conquistadores to use force against them. Hence, so-called underdeveloped peoples double their culpability when they irrationally rebel against the emancipatory conquest their culpability deserved in the first place.³²³

Three aspects are important about Dussel's formulation of the developmentalist fallacy.

The first aspect is that the developmentalist fallacy entails that history is a process of moral development, and that Western Europe is in a vanguard position relative to non-European peoples. The second aspect is that to develop morally, non-European peoples must adopt Western European culture. In this sense, colonization is a civilizing process for non-European peoples. The third aspect is that, as civilizing, the power relation between Western European and non-European peoples is one of "tutelage," as between a parent and a child. In this way then the developmentalist fallacy serves to justify colonial violence as necessary for the civilization of non-European peoples.

Dussel's analysis of the developmentalist fallacy accomplishes two things. The first is that Dussel shows that the Eurocentric genealogy of modernity relies on a conception of history which positions Western European and non-European peoples along a historical continuum of moral development or moral progress. Thus, according to

³²³ Dussel, 1995, 66.

the Eurocentric genealogy, whereas Western European peoples are historically developed, non-European peoples are historically “backwards.” In this way, Dussel shows that the Eurocentric genealogy of modernity not only emerges from, but also serves to justify colonial violence as a necessary good for non-European peoples. The second aspect that Dussel’s analysis accomplishes is to show that the Eurocentric conception of history, as it serves to justify colonial violence, leads to the contradiction of the emancipatory potential of modernity. Dussel shows that the Eurocentric genealogy leads from the Enlightenment formulation of modernity as emancipation from “self-imposed tutelage,” as Kant famously puts it, to justifying “another-imposed tutelage.”³²⁴ By offering a non-Eurocentric genealogy, Dussel thus aims to shift the emancipatory potential of modernity from Europe to the victims of European colonization.³²⁵ This means that the emancipatory potential of modernity can only be fulfilled by fulfilling the claim of justice made by colonized peoples. As such, in Quijano’s and Dussel’s accounts, the developmentalist conception of history serves a justificatory function regarding the hegemonic relations between Western Europe and non-Europe which emerged from the colonization of the Americas. In the following, I aim to show that the developmentalist conception of history not only serves a *justificatory* function, but that it also *structures* colonized peoples’ relation to the past, present, and future in normative ways, along a Eurocentric ideal of humanity.

³²⁴ Immanuel Kant (1983 [1784]), “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” in Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, translated by Ted Humphrey, Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 33.

³²⁵ Dussel, 1995, 137.

3.2.3. “*The Coloniality of History*” as a Normative Structure of Historical Consciousness:

Quijano’s and Dussel’s analyses of modernity as the dialectical biproduct of the colonization of the Americas have led to a philosophical school known as “decolonial philosophy.” Decolonial philosophers capture the dialectical relation between modernity and colonization with the dyad of “modernity/coloniality,” by which they mean that modern forms of subjectivity which emerged during colonization continue to reproduce their colonized other.³²⁶ More precisely, thinkers in this tradition aim to expand on Quijano’s and Dussel’s seminal analyses by tracing the expression of the modernity/coloniality dyad in ontological, ethical, epistemic, and sexual terms.³²⁷ Decolonial thinker Walter Mignolo, for example, introduces the notion of the “colonial difference” to capture the modern geopolitical system that universalizes Eurocentered perspectives as knowledge proper while also erasing non-Eurocentered, local perspectives.³²⁸ Similarly, Nelson Maldonado-Torres introduces the notion of the “coloniality of being” to argue that while Emmanuel Levinas criticizes Martin Heidegger’s ontology for failing to account for the ethical self-other relation, the ethical self-other relation relies on the self-not-ethically-relevant relation between Western European and non-European peoples.³²⁹ This means that whereas ethical responsibility

³²⁶ See, for example, Walter D. Mignolo (2007), “Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-Coloniality,” *Cultural Studies*, 21:2-3, 449-514.

³²⁷ Other decolonial analyses include the following: María Lugones (2007), “Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System,” *Hypatia*, 22:1, 186-209; Santiago Castro-Gómez (2007), “The Missing Chapter of Empire: Postmodern Reorganization of Coloniality and Post-Fordist Capitalism,” *Cultural Studies* 21:2-3, 428-448; Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007), “Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges,” *Review*, 30:1, 45-89; and Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012), “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1:1, 1-40. I will return to some of these analysis throughout the following chapters.

³²⁸ Walter D. Mignolo (2002), “The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101:1, 58-61.

³²⁹ Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007), “On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept,” *Cultural Studies*, 21:2-3, 242.

ensues between the self-other, no ethical responsibility ensues in relation to the “sub-ontological” colonized other.³³⁰ In the following, I aim to expand on Quijano’s and Dussel’s seminal analyses of coloniality by offering an analysis of what I call the “coloniality of history.” Above, I showed that the developmentalist conception of history serves to *justify* the hegemonic relations between Western European and non-European subjects. With the notion of the “coloniality of history,” I aim to capture the way in which the developmentalist conception of history also *structures* colonized peoples’ relation to the past, present, and future in normative ways, along a Eurocentric ideal of humanity.

In Part I of this dissertation, I offered an account of the notion of “historical consciousness” in the work of Edmund Husserl. I particularly aimed to show that, for Husserl, the past, present, and future are not discrete experiential moments, but form one experiential structure. The experiential structure between the past, present, and future corresponds to the constitution of *sense* across time, such that the *sense* of our previous experiences informs the *sense* of our future experiences. Two aspects about the Husserlian analysis that I offered in Part I of this dissertation are important for my present purposes. The first regards the constitution of *normative ideals* across time and, most importantly, the constitution of the *normative ideal of humanity*. I showed that, for Husserl, both as non-empirical and as normative, ideals or values such as *truth* or *justice* are historically constituted, which also implies that history obeys a teleological orientation. Important about the Husserlian account of normative ideals is that although they regulate individual instances of *truth* or *justice*, the ideals themselves are not reducible to their historical instantiations. Moreover, for Husserl, the *ideal of humanity*

³³⁰ Ibid, 247; 253-254.

serves as the normative principle of ethical critique because values are valuable for the kind of human being we aim to become. Thus, Husserl argues that the ideal of humanity gives normative, teleological orientation to our individual and intersubjective pursuits.³³¹ The second important aspect of the analysis that I offered in Part I of this dissertation regards the Eurocentric account of the *ideal of universal humanity*. I showed that Husserl traces the ideal of European humanity to the Greek “discovery” of *the world* as a horizon of validity which cannot be reduced to the purposeful activity of individual subjects, but as a horizon of validity of what is, in principle, experientable by any subject. As such, Husserl argues that the history of Europe is the history of universal humanity and thus that whereas non-European peoples would “Europeanize” ourselves, European peoples would not, for example, “Indianize” themselves.³³²

I would like to complement Husserl’s Eurocentric analysis of the ideal of universal humanity by drawing from decolonial thinker Sylvia Wynter’s “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/ Power/ Truth/ Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, its Overrepresentation—An Argument” (2003). As the title of her essay suggests, Wynter’s analysis shows that our historical conceptions of the “human” inform the ways in which we conceive of our epistemic, social, and political relations. In this sense, Wynter’s

³³¹ In the fourth of his *Kaizo* articles, Husserl puts it as follows: “At any rate, just as the individual person as ethical is so only in becoming, and becomes so only in the continual struggle and in ethical progress, so too an ethical community is essentially one of becoming and progress. In both cases, however, the form of ethical humankind is presupposed as one in which ethical self-consciousness is awake and the goal-ideal of genuine humankind for a self-education and self-formation which is constituted in this self-consciousness is determinative. This absolute form of value then determines the further forms of value.” Edmund Husserl (1924), “Renewal and Science,” Fourth Article for *The Kaizo*, translated by R. Philip Buckley, Hua. XXVII, 54. This is an unpublished translation which was made available to me by Sebastian Luft for the purposes of this dissertation.

³³² Edmund Husserl (1970 [1935]), *The Vienna Lecture: Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity*, in Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, translated by David Carr, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, Appendix I, 275.

analysis can help in clarifying the way in which Husserl's Eurocentric account of the ideal of "universal humanity" serves as a historical horizon of conceivability which I referred to in Part I of this dissertation as "the historical *a priori*."³³³ There are four important aspects from Wynter's analysis. The first is that historical descriptions of the human inform our conceptions of what she calls the "*propter nos*," or those whom we consider morally relevant and those whom we consider morally irrelevant.³³⁴ Wynter traces the shift between the Judeo-Christian and the secular conceptions of the human to the debates about the moral justification for the colonization of the Americas.³³⁵ Thus, whereas on the Judeo-Christian conception the relation between colonizers and colonized was conceived in terms of "believers and infidels," on the secular conception the relation was conceived in terms of "rational and irrational."³³⁶ The second aspect important from Wynter's analysis is that to each historical conception of the human there corresponds an *epistemic* way of conceiving our relation to the world. Whereas on the Judeo-Christian

³³³ For an overview of the notion of the "historical *a priori*" as a historical horizon of conceivability, see Andreea Smaranda Aldea and Amy Allen (2016), "History, Critique, and Freedom: The Historical *A Priori* in Husserl and Foucault," *Continental Philosophy Review*, 49:1, 1-11.

³³⁴ Wynter puts it as follows: "although for each human ethnocultural group our narratively inscribed and symbolically induced mode of altruism is normally activated or triggered in response to the imperative of helping *only* those who have been socialized within the same cosmogonic categories as ourselves, and who therefore are a part of the same 'we,' we also normally experience *no such altruism toward, or genuine co-identification with*, those whom our founding origin narratives have defined as the oppositionally meaningful markers of otherness to the 'us.'" Sylvia Wynter (1995), "1492: A New World View," in Vera Lawrence and Rex Nettleford (eds.), *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View*, Washington, Smithsonian Institution Press, 32.

³³⁵ Although Wynter appeals to Pagden's historical analyses, her interpretation of Pagden changes between the essay "1492: A New World View" and "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/ Power/ Truth/ Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument." While in the first essay, Wynter traces the shift between the Judeo-Christian and the secular conceptions of the human to the School of Salamanca, in the latter essay she traces it to the Valladolid Debate. See, for example, Sylvia Wynter (2003), "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/ Power/ Truth/ Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *The New Centennial Review*, 3:3, 269; and Wynter, 2003, 34-36. As above, in my interpretation, Pagden's analysis shows that it is the School of Salamanca which formulates this transition in historical terms. Nevertheless, in both Wynter's and my interpretations, what is important is that the shift in the conception of the human can be traced to the colonization of the Americas.

³³⁶ Wynter, 2003, 288.

conception, knowledge is mediated by the church, on the secular conception, knowledge is a relation between reason and nature.³³⁷ The third aspect is that the historical-epistemological conception reifies the hierarchical social relations between the *propter nos* and those who are morally irrelevant. Wynter argues that the colonization of the Americas introduced a “chain of being” where the colonizers were identified with reason and the colonized were identified with nature.³³⁸ Lastly, Wynter argues that each historical conception of the human entails a normative view of freedom. As she puts it, “the primary behavior-motivating, rather than that of seeking salvation in the *civitas dei*, was now that of adhering to the goal of the *civitas secularis*.”³³⁹ The conception of the human as rational comes to serve as a normative goal or as a normative ideal of freedom.

By proposing the notion of the “coloniality of history,” I aim to expand on Quijano’s notion of the colonization of the imagination and on Dussel’s notion of the “colonization of the lifeworld.”³⁴⁰ For both Quijano and Dussel, the “colonization of the

³³⁷ Ibid, 276-278.

³³⁸ Ibid, 296.

³³⁹ Ibid, 289.

³⁴⁰ The notion of the “colonization of the lifeworld” was first introduced by Jurgen Habermas in the second volume of *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Habermas formulates the “colonization of the lifeworld” as follows:

- “When traditional forms of life are so far dismantled that the structural components of the lifeworld (culture, society, and personality) have been differentiated to a great extent;
- when exchange relations between the subsystems and the lifeworld are regulated through differentiated roles (for employment at organized work places, for the consumer demand of private households, for the relation of clients to government bureaucracies, and for formal participation in the legitimation process);
- when the real abstractions that make available the labor power of the employed and make possible the mobilization of the vote of the electorate are tolerated by those affected as a trade-off against social rewards (in terms of time and money);
- when these compensations are financed according to the welfare state pattern from the gains of capitalist growth and are canalized into those roles in which, withdrawn from the world of work and the public sphere, privatized hopes for self-actualization and self-determination are primarily located, namely, in the roles of consumer and client.”

Jurgen Habermas (1989 [1981]), *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, translated by Thomas McCarthy, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 356.

Habermas’ formulation of the colonization of the lifeworld refers to the development of capitalism as an economic system and liberalism as a political system in Europe. Particularly, it refers to the abstraction

lifeworld” refers to the eradication and the “subsumption,” as Dussel calls it, of one cultural system by another.³⁴¹ With the “coloniality of history,” I aim to capture the *diachronic* aspect of the colonization of the lifeworld in terms of the historical consciousness of colonized peoples. Following Wynter’s analysis of the way in which the colonization of the Americas introduced a “chain of being” from nature to reason, I am arguing that the coloniality of history regards the *normative* meanings which the past, present, and future acquire for colonized peoples along a Eurocentric ideal of humanity. While the past acquires sense in terms of an *uncivilized* indigenous past, the future acquires sense in terms of a *civilized* European future. Moreover, since the coloniality of history regards the historical projects of the colonized, I would like to formulate it in terms of a normative double bind. The coloniality of history situates the historical projects of colonized peoples *between an uncivilized* indigenous past and a *civilized* European future. This double bind is similar to what Mignolo calls the “colonial double bind,” by which he means that either non-European philosophies conform to the Western philosophical cannon, such that their distinctive contribution disappears, or they are so different from the Western cannon, in which case their philosophical status will always

between the lifeworld as the system of intersubjective validation and capitalism and liberalism as systems that “steer” individual behavior, but which do not emerge from intersubjective validation. However, since for Habermas the development of capitalism and liberalism are developments intrinsic to Europe, he does not explain what the *normative* implications of the colonization of the lifeworld are beyond a metaphor for Habermas’ nostalgic view about pre-modern Europe. In contrast, for Dussel, the colonization of the lifeworld refers to the destruction and imposition of one cultural system over another.

³⁴¹ Dussel puts it as follows: “*Colonization (Kolonisierung)* of the life-world, the fourth figure, is not a metaphor, but carries strong, historical, real significance. A Roman *colonia* (near the *column* of the law) was a land or culture dominated by the empire and so forced to speak Latin, at least among its elites, and to pay tribute... The colonization of the indigenous person’s daily life and later that of the African slave illustrated how the European process of modernization or civilization really subsumed (or alienated) the Other under the Same. This Other, however, no longer served as an object to be brutalized by the warlike praxis of a Cortés or a Pizarro. Rather, the Spanish subjugated the Other through an erotic, pedagogical, cultural, political, and economic praxis. The conqueror domesticated, structured, and colonized the manner in which those conquered lived and reproduced their lives.” Dussel, 1995, 45.

be in question.³⁴² Similarly, the coloniality of history entails that either colonized peoples adopt the Eurocentric ideal of humanity to count as *civilizing*, thereby foreclosing the possibility of a future outside of Europe, or they adopt a non-Eurocentric ideal of humanity, in which case their status as *civilized* and thus as *rational* will always be in question. While this is evidently a false dichotomy, it is one that, Quijano argues, has become “hegemonic within the new intersubjective universe of the global model of power.”³⁴³ In the following, I analyze the *existential* consequences of adopting the Eurocentric ideal of humanity for non-European peoples.

3.3. *Zea’s Existential Analysis of the Latin American Sense of “Historical Inferiority”:*

In this section, I aim to show that the analysis of the coloniality of history that I develop from the perspective of decolonial philosophy can help explaining what seminal liberation philosopher Leopoldo Zea calls the Latin American sense of “historical inferiority.” Although the tradition of thought commonly known as liberation philosophy (c. 1950s–1980s) chronologically antecedes what I described above as decolonial philosophy (c. 1992-), applying the categories of the latter to explain the first is not anachronistic. That is because decolonial philosophy expands on reflecting about colonization along the lines of liberation philosophy. The difference is that while decolonial philosophers focus on coloniality as a philosophical category, the focus of liberation philosophers regards the identity of colonized peoples such as Latin

³⁴² Mignolo derives the notion of the “colonial double bind” from Robert Bernasconi’s formulation of the double bind in which the Western philosophical cannon positions African philosophy. Bernasconi puts it as follows: “either African philosophy is so similar to Western philosophy that it makes no distinctive contribution and effectively disappears; or it is so different that its credentials to be genuine philosophy will always be in doubt.” Quoted in Mignolo, 2002, 70. However, whereas for Mignolo, the colonial double bind serves as an epistemological category, I am using it here as a historical-normative category. In my interpretation, the double bind regards the guiding ideals for the historical projects of colonized peoples.

³⁴³ Quijano, 2000, 543.

Americans. In his essay celebrating the eighty-year anniversary of Zea, for example, Dussel writes as follows:

I must express that during the 1960s, Zea's work *America as Consciousness* (1953) impacted me in such a way that ever since that moment my entire work has precisely been to allow for the possibility of Latin America "entering" into world history (both in terms of the historical interpretation of Humanity and in terms of the "hegemonic philosophical community," about which I will say more in what follows). I must thank Zea, and, for that reason, I mention him in my dedicatory, for having taught me that Latin America was *outside* of history... I make this the central topic in my last work *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of 'the Other' and the Myth of Modernity*, which I will deliver as a series of lectures at the Goethe University in Frankfurt in October of 1992.³⁴⁴

Indeed, the importance of Zea in Latin American and liberation philosophy is that he was the first to reflect on the Eurocentric conception of history which emerged during colonization, and which serves to marginalize colonized peoples in Latin America. Much like Quijano and Dussel, Zea argues that the developmentalist conception of history serves to justify the hegemonic position of Western European peoples relative to their non-European counterparts. In Zea's view, the developmentalist conception of history is structured along a Eurocentric ideal of humanity as the modern human *par excellence*. However, unlike decolonial philosophers, Zea offers an *existential* analysis of the way in which the developmentalist conception structures the historical experience of colonized peoples. As I show in this section, Zea distinguishes between an *existential* notion of humanity which he refers to as the "historical circumstance," wherein concrete human beings find themselves, and a normative notion of humanity, which he calls the "value of humanity." In Zea's view, imposing a Eurocentric ideal of humanity over the "historical circumstance" of colonized peoples not only leads to an "amputation," as he says, of the

³⁴⁴ Enrique Dussel (1992), "El Proyecto de una Filosofía de la Historia Latinoamericana," *Cuadernos Americanos*, México, VI:5, 211, Fn. 34.

past, but also to a sense of “historical inferiority,” or the impossibility of achieving the Eurocentric ideal of humanity.

In this section, I argue that the account of the coloniality of history which I offered above can help in explaining what Zea calls the Latin American sense of “historical inferiority.” I thus show that, for Zea, the sense of “historical inferiority” is not a psychological phenomenon, but rather an *existential* one that emerges from the normative meaning that the past, present, and future acquire for colonized peoples. I argue that since the historical projects of colonized peoples are structured along a Eurocentric ideal of humanity which, in principle, is meant to exclude them, colonized peoples experience history as a continuous movement of progress and failure. For this, I begin by tracing the theme of “inferiority” to Zea’s philosophical predecessors. I aim to show that while Zea’s predecessors articulated the sense of “inferiority” in psychological terms, Zea formulates it in existential-historical terms. I then introduce Zea’s distinction between the *existential* and the *normative* notion of humanity as a preamble to his analysis of the sense of “historical inferiority.” Lastly, I show that, for Zea, the Latin American sense of “historical inferiority” emerges from the Eurocentric ideal of humanity that guides the historical projects of colonized peoples.

3.3.1. *The Theme of “Inferiority” In Zea’s Predecessors:*

In *Despertar y Proyecto del Filosofar Latinoamericano* (1974), Peruvian philosopher Francisco Miró Quesada offers a genealogical analysis of the project of an “authentic” Latin American philosophy that might help in tracing the theme of “inferiority” to Zea’s predecessors. Miró Quesada distinguishes three generations that he calls the “patriarchs,”

the “forgers,” and the “young” generation.³⁴⁵ Among the “patriarchs,” Miró Quesada lists philosophers such as Antonio Caso and José Vasconcelos (Mexico), Vaz Ferreyra (Uruguay), Alejandro Korn (Argentina), Enrique Molina (Chile), Alejandro Deustua (Peru), and Raimundo de Fariás Brito (Brazil).³⁴⁶ For Miró Quesada, two aspects distinguish the first generation, namely, an attitude towards European philosophy as “the *non plus ultra*, as finished and conclusive” and the adoption and later rejection of positivist philosophy in Latin America.³⁴⁷ Among the second generation, Miró Quesada includes Francisco Romero (Argentina), Emilio Oribe (Uruguay), Samuel Ramos and Francisco Larroyo (Mexico), and Francisco García Calderón and Oscar Miró Quesada (Peru).³⁴⁸ Important to note is that Miró Quesada also includes philosophers exiled from Spain during the Franco regime such as Joaquín Xirau, Eduardo Nicol, María Zambrano, and José Gaos because of their influence in Mexican philosophy.³⁴⁹ Miró Quesada argues that two aspects distinguish this generation, namely, their attitude towards European philosophy not as something finished, but as something “in the making” and their self-understanding (*autoconciencia*) of being the forgers of a future generation of “authentic” Latin American philosophers.³⁵⁰ Lastly, Miró Quesada argues that among the young generation, there were two approaches to the problem of an “authentic” Latin American

³⁴⁵ Miró Quesada writes that, “Desde los patriarcas hasta nuestros días, han transcurrido apenas tres generaciones... La primera es la generación de los patriarcas, la segunda es la generación de los discípulos intermedios, es decir de aquellos que recibieron la enseñanza de los patriarcas en persona, y que podría llamarse la generación de los ‘primeros discípulos’ or ‘generación intermedia,’ la tercera es la generación de los discípulos de los primeros discípulos y puede llamarse la ‘generación más joven.’” Francisco Miró Quesada (1974), *Despertar y Proyecto del Filosofar Latinoamericano*, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 41.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, 45.

³⁴⁷ Ibid, 34-35.

³⁴⁸ Ibid, 45.

³⁴⁹ Ibid, 46.

³⁵⁰ Ibid, 51.

philosophy, namely, a negative and an affirmative approach.³⁵¹ The first declare that Latin American philosophers must continue adopting the values of European philosophy, thereby postponing the project of an “authentic” philosophy, whereas the latter affirm the possibility of an “authentic” Latin American philosophy.³⁵² While Augusto Salazar Bondi represents the negative approach,³⁵³ Zea and “El Grupo Hiperión” represent the affirmative approach.³⁵⁴

Miró Quesada’s genealogy of the project of an “authentic” Latin American philosophy can help in tracing the theme of “inferiority” to Zea’s predecessors. Particularly, I would like to focus on the line of influence between Antonio Caso from the first generation, and Samuel Ramos and José Gaos from the second generation. I aim to show that Zea is important because he synthesizes the problem of “inferiority” and historicism as the philosophical approach to the problem. Antonio Caso (1883-1946) is central for Zea’s philosophical genealogy because of Caso’s rejection of positivist philosophy in Mexico.³⁵⁵ Caso belonged to an intellectual movement that self-referred to as “Ateneo de la Juventud” (1909), which opposed positivism and the Porfirio Díaz

³⁵¹ Ibid, 80.

³⁵² Ibid, 77-81.

³⁵³ In *Sentido y Problema del Pensamiento Filosófico Hispanoamericano*, Augusto Salazar Bondi argues that, given the situation of economic and cultural dependency between Europe and Latin America, it is not yet possible to speak about the existence of an “authentic” Latin American philosophy. See, Augusto Salazar Bondi (1978), *Sentido y Problema del Pensamiento Filosófico Hispanoamericano*, México: UNAM.

³⁵⁴ Miró Quesada writes that, “Leopoldo Zea es el hombre de la tercera generación que representa la respuesta afirmativa a la exigencia de su circunstancia histórica. Toda su obra se desarrolla en torno de la toma de conciencia de la imperiosa necesidad de que ha llegado el momento ya de un filosofar auténticamente.” Ibid, 209.

³⁵⁵ Zea writes his masters and doctoral theses on the adoption of positivism in Mexico and Latin America under the direction of José Gaos. His master’s thesis was later published under the title of (1943), *El Positivismo en México: Nacimiento, Apogeo y Decadencia*, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica. The extended version of Zea’s doctoral thesis was published under the title (1949), *Dos Etapas del Pensamiento en Hispanoamérica: Del Romanticismo al Positivismo*, México: El Colegio de México. For more on Caso’s influence on Zea, see also, Leopoldo Zea (1988), “Autopercepción Intelectual de un Proceso Histórico,” *Anthropos*, Barcelona, 89, 12-13.

dictatorship (1884-1911) that it served to justify.³⁵⁶ As Mexican philosopher Abelardo Villegas writes:

The intellectual movement started by the Ateneo de la Juventud coincided with the outburst of the Mexican Revolution, and it is not adventurous to say that it constituted part of that outburst, even if it represented an intellectual adventure seemingly detached from social issues. In fact, the Ateneo de la Juventud never engaged in such detachment; what happened is that their social concerns were determined by their particular focus, [namely,] that of ethics and culture, and even more so, of culture as a moral instrument.³⁵⁷

That is, although Caso and the Ateneo de la Juventud focused their intellectual efforts on opposing the metaphysical presuppositions of positivism, particularly that of Auguste Comte, their efforts were not only intellectual, but also social. Important about Caso's rejection of positivism is that he considered it a philosophy imported from Europe which would help in solving the social issues of Mexico.³⁵⁸ Caso's opposition to positivism thus introduces a distinction between the social reality of Mexico and the philosophies which are applied to treat the country's reality. In his essay titled "El Bovarismo Nacional" (1922), Caso refers to the importation of foreign philosophies to solve Mexico's social issues as "Bovarism."³⁵⁹ As in the case of Madame Bovary from Flaubert's novel, Caso

³⁵⁶ In *El Pensamiento Mexicano del Siglo XX*, Abelardo Villegas includes the following in this group: "Antonio Caso, Alfonso Reyes, Pedro Enríquez Ureña, Carlos González Peña, José Escofet y José Vasconcelos. Este era el núcleo del Ateneo, pero también participaban Martín Luis Guzmán, Alfonso Cravioto, Jesús Acevedo, Roberto Argüelles Brigas, Julio Torri, Enrique González Martínez, Diego Rivera, Roberto Montenegro, etcétera." Abelardo Villegas (1993), *El Pensamiento Mexicano en el Siglo XX*, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 37.

³⁵⁷ Villegas, 1993, 36.

³⁵⁸ In an essay titled "Catolicismo, Jacobinismo y Positivismo," Caso criticizes Catholicism, Jacobinism, and positivism as imported philosophies that claim to solve Mexico's social issues regardless of Mexico's social reality. Caso writes as follows: "Ni Jacobinismo ni positivism. Ni don-quijotismo irrealista, ni sanchismo positivista. Ni ideales irrealizables, ni subordinación indiscrepante a la realidad imperfecta; sino alas y plomo, como quería Bacon; fuerza para vencer las causas contrariantes del ideal, e ideales amplios y humanos que no se vean negados al ponerse en contacto con la vida." Antonio Caso (1922), "Catolicismo, Jacobinismo y Positivismo," in *Discursos a la Nación Mexicana*, México: Editorial Porrúa, 72-73.

³⁵⁹ Antonio Caso (1922a), "El Bovarismo Nacional," in Antonio Caso, *Discursos a la Nación Mexicana*, México: Editorial Porrúa.

argues that characteristic of Mexican intellectuals is their “faculty of conceiving themselves as different from what they are.”³⁶⁰ Caso’s point is that the importation of foreign philosophies to solve Mexico’s social issues responds to the aspiration of transforming the country according to foreign values, instead of developing a set of values that emerge from the Mexico’s reality.³⁶¹ While Caso does not develop a systematic analysis of Bovarism, the theme runs through the following generations in Miró Quesada’s genealogy of Latin American philosophy.

The second generation in Miró Quesada’s genealogy, both the Mexican philosophers and the philosophers exiled from Spain, elaborate on Caso’s theme of Bovarism and offer the tools to treat the issue in a systematic way. Particularly important in this sense is the work of Samuel Ramos (1897-1959) in *El Perfil del Hombre y la Cultura en México* (1934). In this work, Ramos employs Alfred Adler’s psychological theory of “inferiority complex” to systematically treat what Caso calls Bovarism.³⁶² According to Adler’s developmental analysis, “the inferiority complex appears in a child as soon as he recognizes the insignificance of his own strength compared to the strength of his parents.”³⁶³ Ramos traces the inferiority complex in Mexico to the events of conquest and colonization and, more particularly, to the event of independence.³⁶⁴ Ramos writes that, after independence, Mexico aimed to reach the maturity level of Europe:

³⁶⁰ Ibid, 79.

³⁶¹ Caso puts it as follows: “Y, como no basta que una idea asome en la conciencia, para que tienda a volverse realidad; como apenas nos imaginamos algo ya propendemos a su realización, el yo ficticio, el individuo que hemos forjado en nuestros sueños, lo que queremos ser y no lo que somos, va poco a poco incorporándose el ser exterior por obra de nuestra vida; nos vamos sacrificando a nuestra mentira, a nuestro ideal, a nuestro sueño.” Ibid, 80.

³⁶² Samuel Ramos (1962 [1934]), *Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico*, translated by Peter G. Earle, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 56.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid, 9.

Being an extremely young nation, it [Mexico] attempted—overnight—to reach the level of traditional European civilization. It was then that the conflict broke out between ambition and the limits of natural capacity. The solution seemed to be imitation of Europe, its ideas and its institutions, creating thereby certain collective fictions which, when we have interpreted them as fact, have artificially solved our psychological conflict.³⁶⁵

That is, in Ramos' view, after independence, Mexicans tried to become European by imitating the values and institutions of Europe. Unlike healthy development where "repeated success in action is what progressively instills in the individual conscience a sense of security,"³⁶⁶ Ramos's view is that the inferiority complex emerges from a continuous failure to transform ambition into reality. As he puts it, "if the existing gap between what he wants to do and what he is able to do is great, he will undoubtedly fail, and he will suffer deep spiritual depression."³⁶⁷ The problem for Ramos is thus that, by adopting the values of Europe, Mexico aims to reach the maturity level of Europe. However, Mexico fails because of its reality as a young independent country, and this failure in turn leads it to feel less than the ideal it aims to achieve. As such, the sense of inferiority emerges from the continuous failure of becoming something other than oneself. In this way, Ramos offers a systematic account of Caso's initial analysis of Bovarism, or the faculty of conceiving oneself as other than oneself, in psychological terms. It is thanks to the influence of the Spanish exiles that Zea accounts for the sense of "inferiority" in historical-existential terms.

The influence of the Spanish exile José Gaos (1900-1969), from the second generation in Miró Quesada's genealogy, is central to Zea's philosophical trajectory.

³⁶⁵ Ibid, 10.

³⁶⁶ Ibid, 5.

³⁶⁷ Ibid, 6.

Gaos was not only instrumental in helping Zea devote himself to philosophy, but he also provided Zea the philosophical tools, as we might say, for the treatment of the theme of “inferiority.”³⁶⁸ Gaos writes that upon his arrival to Mexico, he found that Ramos’ work shared in José Ortega y Gasset’s concern about “saving the circumstance.” In *En Torno a la Filosofía Mexicana* (1980), Gaos puts it as follows:

The author of this essay cannot but be pleased in recalling that, upon his arrival to Mexico, just shortly after the publication mentioned above [i.e., Ramos’ *The Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico*], his [Gaos’] first publication in Mexico was on Ramos’ book: an article—[published] in *Letras de México*—where one of the points of particular interest here has to do with the relationship between the philosophy of saving the Spanish circumstances delineated by Ortega y Gasset in his prologue to *Meditations on Quixote*, and the philosophy of saving the Mexican circumstances, which is the central concern of Ramos’ book; and in which he [Gaos] perceived, or rather foresaw the authentic Mexican philosophy of the immediate future.³⁶⁹

My view is that, through Gaos, Zea adopted two philosophical tools from Ortega y Gasset, namely, the notion of the “circumstance” and the philosophy of historicism. Below, I will show that Zea employs these two tools to address the theme of “inferiority” in historical-existential terms. What is important to note here is that, in Gaos’ view, the notion of the “circumstance” and the philosophy of historicism are complementary. That is because, in Gaos’ characterization of historicism, ideals emerge from the human

³⁶⁸ In Zea’s words: “José Gaos lo recibe en su curso de la Introducción a la Filosofía, Zea escribe sobre Heráclito y la metáfora de Aristóteles. Gaos pide que se identifique. Zea lo hace. ‘¿Ha estudiado usted en España?’, pregunta Gaos. ‘No, nunca he salido de la Ciudad de México.’ ‘Es extraño, su trabajo sobre Heráclito coincide con una de las lecciones de Xavier Zubiri, que no se ha publicado. ¿Cómo explicar esta coincidencia si no ha estado en España ni conoce a Zubiri?’ Zea le explica que quizá porque ha estudiado y estudia a Ortega y Gasset, eso pueda explicar la coincidencia. ‘¿Qué hace usted Zea?’, preguntó Gaos. Este le explica que trabaja por la noche y descansando un día de cada tres. ‘¡Pero eso no podría durar mucho! ¡Hay que hacer algo por usted antes de que sea tarde!’ Pocos días después, Alfonso Reyes y Daniel Cosío Villegas, presidente y secretario de la Casa de España en México, llaman a Zea y le indican que ha sido recomendado por Gaos para una beca que en calidad de prueba hará en esa institución. Pero que debe renunciar a Telégrafos y dejar el Derecho para dedicarse en exclusiva a la filosofía bajo la tutoría de José Gaos.” Zea, 1988, 12.

³⁶⁹ José Gaos (1980a), “México, Tema y Responsabilidad: Alfonso Reyes, Leopoldo Zea, Samuel Ramos,” in José Gaos, *En Torno a la Filosofía Mexicana*, México: Alianza Editorial Mexicana, Appendix II, 156.

necessity to respond to one's "circumstance." That is, the conceptual content of ideals like *the truth* or *justice* depends on the historical problems they aim to address. As Gaos puts it, an idea "lacks its authentic content, its own precise 'sense' if it does not serve the active role or the function for which it was conceived, and this role or function is that of an action towards a circumstance. There are not then 'eternal ideas.'"³⁷⁰ As we shall see below, Zea employs these philosophical tools to offer a historical-existential account of the theme of "inferiority" that I have traced throughout his predecessors.

3.3.2. Zea's Distinction between "Existential Humanity" and the "Value of Humanity":

In Miró Quesada's genealogy, Zea and "El Grupo Hiperión" represent the affirmative response to the project of an "authentic" Latin American philosophy. Particularly, Zea's importance lies in synthesizing the theme of inferiority and the tools handed down by his intellectual predecessors to formulate what Zea calls a "history of ideas."³⁷¹ By the "history of ideas," however, Zea means not the mere enumeration of the philosophical production in Latin America, but the *ideals* that shape the historical *praxis* of Latin Americans. Two aspects are central for Zea's articulation of the "history of ideas," namely, Ortega y Gasset's notion of "the circumstance" and the philosophy of

³⁷⁰ José Gaos (1980), *Entorno a la Filosofía Mexicana*, México: Alianza Editorial Mexicana, 20.

³⁷¹ Zea summarizes his intellectual trajectory as follows: "El meollo del pensamiento de Leopoldo Zea se encuentra en un pequeño trabajo publicado en *Letras de México*, número 11, 15 de noviembre de 1941: 'America y su Posible Filosofía'. Gota de agua sobre un estanque cuyas ondas se fueron extendiendo como una reflexión recurrente pero no repetitiva. En mayo-junio de 1942, en *Cuadernos Americanos*, la reflexión es ampliada bajo el título de 'En Torno a una Filosofía Americana', y más aún en tres conferencias pronunciadas en la Universidad de San Nicolás en Morelia, Michoacán, que el Colegio de México publicó en su *Jornada* número 9, 1947. Después se transforma en un libro cuya primera edición publica *Cuadernos Americanos* en 1953 con el título de *América como Conciencia*. Reiterativamente se va ampliando la reflexión en obras como *América en la Historia* (1957), *Dialéctica de la Conciencia Americana* (1976), *Filosofía de la Historia Americana* (1978) y *Discurso desde la Marginación y la Barbaria* (1988). Este reflexionar se alimenta en estudios sobre la historia de las ideas que se inician con *El Positivismo en México* (1943-1944) y *Dos Etapas del Pensamiento Latinoamericano* (1965). Un filosofar reiterativo pero no repetitivo. Reflexión sobre un tema que va variando de acuerdo a las circunstancias históricas que lo originan y el encuentro con corrientes filosóficas que enriquecen la reflexión." Zea, 1988, 15.

historicism. Ortega y Gasset famously introduces the notion of “the circumstance” in his Prologue to the *Meditations on Quixote* (1957), where he writes:

Man reaches his full capacity when he acquires complete consciousness of his circumstances. Through them he communicates with the universe. / Circumstance! *Circum stantia!* That is, the mute things which are all around us. Very close to us they raise their silent faces with an expression of humility and eagerness as if they needed our acceptance of their offering and at the same time were ashamed of the apparent simplicity of their gift.³⁷²

In his Notes to *Meditations on Quixote*, Julián Marías argues that Ortega y Gasset’s notion of “the circumstance” precedes Jakob Johann von Uexküll’s and Edmund Husserl’s notion of *Umwelt*, or the “surrounding world.”³⁷³ Marías traces the concept of “the circumstance” to Ortega y Gasset’s essay “Adán en el Paraíso” (1910), where Ortega y Gasset writes, “take any kind of object, apply to it different systems of evaluation, and you will have as many other different objects instead of a single one.”³⁷⁴ Differently put, “the circumstance” does not refer only to the “surrounding world” or to the world of spatio-temporal objects, but to the *world of meaning*, or the horizon of valuation within which we relate to individual objects. In this sense, although Ortega y Gasset’s notion of the circumstance might precede Husserl’s formulation of the “lifeworld” or *Lebenswelt*,³⁷⁵ I would suggest that both notions refer to the world of meaning within

³⁷² José Ortega y Gasset (1963 [1957]), *Meditations on Quixote*, New York, NY: The Norton Library, 41.

³⁷³ Julián Marías (1963), “Endnotes,” in José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Quixote*, New York, NY: The Norton Library, En., 5, 168.

³⁷⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*

³⁷⁵ In Part I of this dissertation, I showed that for Husserl, the “world” is not an object, but the purposeful horizon within which we relate to individual objects. As Husserl puts it: “The world is pregiven thereby, in every case, in such a way that individual things are given. But there exists a fundamental difference between the way we are conscious of the world and the way we are conscious of things or objects... Things, objects (always understood purely in the sense of the life-world), are ‘given’ as being valid for us in each case (in some mode or other of ontic certainty) but in principle only in such a way that we are conscious of them as things or objects *within the world-horizon*... The world, on the other hand, does not exist as *an* entity, as an object, but exists with such uniqueness that the plural makes no sense when applied to it. Every plural, and every singular drawn from it, presupposes the world-horizon.” Edmund Husserl (1970b [1954]), *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction*

which individual subjects organize our purposeful, that is, our *aesthetic, practical*, and *epistemic* lives. As Ortega y Gasset puts it in the essay “History as a System” (1935), “I invent projects of being and of doing in the light of circumstance. This alone I come upon, this alone is given me: circumstance.”³⁷⁶

Above we saw that, in his rejection of positivism, Caso distinguishes between the social reality of Mexico and the imported values used to treat the country’s social reality. Zea adopts Ortega y Gasset’s notion of the circumstance to capture the social reality of Mexico and, more broadly, the social reality of Latin America. In his early book *Entorno a una Filosofía Americana* (1945), Zea employs the notion of the circumstance to distinguish between an *existential* notion of humanity and a *normative* notion that he calls the “value of humanity.” By an “existential” notion of humanity, Zea means the historical circumstance within which human beings find themselves and within which we organize our purposeful lives. Zea puts it as follows:

Human beings always find themselves situated in a specific circumstance. This circumstance always presents itself as a problem. Human beings must decide how to solve such a problem; how to live their circumstance. In order to live and to exist, [human beings] must transform their circumstance and their lives; they must adapt their circumstance to their lives and adapt their lives to their circumstance. The circumstance presents itself as an obstacle; but it itself offers the means to save [*salvar*] such obstacle. It [the circumstance] is at once problem and solution. Human beings’ movement [*ir*] of adapting themselves and adapting the circumstance is expressed [*se plasma*] in culture. The history of culture is the history of human beings’ fight [*en lucha*] with their circumstance.³⁷⁷

to *Phenomenological Philosophy*, translated by David Carr, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 143.

³⁷⁶ José Ortega y Gasset (1962 [1935]), *History as a System*, in José Ortega y Gasset, *History as a System and Other Essays Toward a Philosophy of History*, translated by Helene Weyl, New York, NY: The Norton Library, 202-3.

³⁷⁷ Leopoldo Zea (1945), *En Torno a una Filosofía Americana*, México: Colegio de México, 26. Although in this book Zea does not employ the term “existential” to refer to the historical circumstance within which concrete human beings find themselves, in his later works he argues that two traditions of thought were important for the development of an “authentic” Latin American philosophy, namely, historicism and existentialism. For example, in *La Filosofía Americana como Filosofía sin Más*, Zea describes the importance of existentialism for Latin American philosophy as follows: “Este hombre y la situación o

Differently put, in Zea's characterization, the existential notion of humanity refers to the ways in which concrete human beings are determined by their historical circumstance and determine their historical circumstance. Moreover, Zea characterizes the historical circumstance in a concentric way which expands from the concrete human being to her society, to her regional community, and to the "human" circumstance, as he calls it.³⁷⁸

This means that, for Zea, individual subjects share a common identity like "Mexican" or "Latin American" because they share in a circumstance that demands a common response and which gives rise to a common culture. Ultimately, Zea argues that there is a "human circumstance" shared by all human beings, but this human circumstance is different from, for example, Husserl's "universal" ideal of humanity. To clarify Zea's conception of the normative ideal of humanity, we must turn to his adoption of historicism.

The philosophy of historicism is central to Zea's formulation of a Mexican and Latin American "history of ideas." Although Ortega y Gasset is a key influence in Zea's adoption of historicism, Zea also cites philosophers such as Karl Mainheim, Max Scheler, William Dilthey, Husserl, and Martin Heidegger.³⁷⁹ Two theses of historicism are central for Zea's work. The first is that human reality is not a "substance" but a "task," as Ortega

mundo en los que se encuentra forman la base del existencialismo. La base de la doctrina que en vano busca el ser absoluto destacado, tan sólo, la esencia de un ente que carece, precisamente, de esencia. El mismo ente limitado y, por lo mismo, común, en esta o aquella parte del mundo. Lo mismo en Europa que en Asia, África o Latinoamérica. Los Latinoamericanos vueltos sobre sí mismos tratarán no sólo de saberse en un determinado horizonte de historia sino también como hombres, como los actores concretos de esa historia, como los que sufren la situación o circunstancia que los determina, personaliza, individualiza. Leopoldo Zea (1969), *La Filosofía Americana como Filosofía sin Más*, México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 72.

³⁷⁸ Zea puts it as follows: "los hombres participan en una circunstancia personal—un punto de vista que les es propio—; pero esta circunstancia personal participa a su vez de una circunstancia más amplia, de una circunstancia en la cual participan los demás hombres, la circunstancia social—la cual permite la convivencia—; pero esta circunstancia social participa a su vez de otra más amplia, por medio de la cual todos los hombres, cualquiera que sea su circunstancia personal o social, se identifiquen como hombres, como género hombre; esta es la que podemos llamar la circunstancia humana." Zea, 1945, 31.

³⁷⁹ See, for example, Zea 1988, 16.

y Gasset puts it in “History as a System.”³⁸⁰ This means that human life consists in responding to one’s personal and social circumstances. It is through the process of responding to one’s circumstances that human beings, both individually and collectively, become who we are. The second thesis of historicism is that *normative ideals* or values emerge from the ways in which concrete human beings respond to our circumstances. Again, in “History as a System,” Ortega y Gasset argues that ideas are not simply mental objects, but that they serve “a function of the living being as such, the function of guiding his conduct, his performance of his task.”³⁸¹ This means that ideals or values serve what Ortega y Gasset refers to as a “live faith,” by which he means that they serve the purposes of human life.³⁸² Importantly, these two theses of historicism lead to the conclusion that an individual person or a collective *are* our historical *praxis* in response to our circumstances, and that our historical *praxis* can be known through the *normative ideals* that inform our *praxis*. Thus, Ortega y Gasset argues that “to comprehend anything human, be it personal or collective, one must tell its history... Life only takes on a measure of transparency in the light of *historical reason*.”³⁸³

In *Entorno a una Filosofía Americana*, Zea employs the notion of the circumstance and the philosophy of historicism to formulate what he calls a “history of ideas,” which would allow for the possibility of an “authentic” Latin American philosophy. Zea’s argument begins by rejecting the “pretention of universality,” as he

³⁸⁰ Ortega y Gasset writes as follows: “This shows that the mode of being of life, even as simple existing, is not a *being already*, since the only thing that is given to us and that *is* when there is human life is the having to make it, each one for himself. Life is a gerundive, nor a participle: a *facendum*, not a *factum*. Life is a task. Life, in fact, sets us plenty of tasks.” Ortega y Gasset, 1962 (1935), 200.

³⁸¹ Ibid, 167.

³⁸² Ibid, 172.

³⁸³ Ibid, 214.

calls it, characteristic of the history of philosophy.³⁸⁴ Zea not only complains that philosophers forget that the purpose of ideas is to solve the issues of ordinary people, but also that the pretention of universality leads to a series of contradictions in the history of philosophy.³⁸⁵ Zea argues that each individual and each community have a distinct “personality,” which emerges from the way that they respond to their historical circumstances.³⁸⁶ This means that an “authentic” Latin American philosophy regards the normative ideals that emerge from the way in which Latin American peoples respond to our circumstances. Paradoxically, however, Zea argues that Latin American philosophers should not aim to do Latin American philosophy, but to do philosophy “as such” (*filosofía sin más*).³⁸⁷ For this, Zea appeals to a *normative notion of humanity* which is distinct from the *existential notion of humanity* to which I referred above. Zea calls this notion of humanity “humanity as a universal value,” by which he means that given our specific circumstances, human beings aim to being “more human, that is to say, human beings aim to actualize their capacities, to reach the plenitude of whom they can be.”³⁸⁸ Zea’s argument is that although Latin American philosophers should aim to respond to our circumstances, our efforts should also be guided by a normative ideal of the kind of human we aim to become and, as such, we should aim to transcend our historical

³⁸⁴ Zea, 1945, 24.

³⁸⁵ Ibid, 25.

³⁸⁶ Ibid, 26.

³⁸⁷ Ibid, 33. Although in *Entorno a una Filosofía Americana*, Zea does not use the phrasing of “filosofía sin más,” which he introduces in the later *La Filosofía Americana como Filosofía Sin Más*, the view he offers in the latter book is already present in the first. For example, Zea writes that, “La filosofía no se justifica por lo local de sus resultados, sino por la amplitud de sus anhelos. Así, la filosofía americana no se justificará como tal por lo americano, sino por la amplitud del intento de sus soluciones. Es menester que se haga Filosofía con mayúscula, y no simplemente de determinado país; hay que resolver los problemas circunstanciales, pero con miras a la solución de los problemas de todo hombre. En nuestro caso, los límites, lo americano, nos serán dados a pesar nuestro.” Ibid, 33.

³⁸⁸ Ibid, 32.

circumstances. Thus, the history of Latin American ideas would be the history of the *praxis* of Latin American peoples to achieve the normative ideal of humanity we project for ourselves.

3.3.3. *Zea's Account of the Latin American Sense of Historical Inferiority:*

The importance of Zea's work in the traditions of Mexican and Latin American philosophy is that he employs the history of ideas to offer a historical-existential analysis of the theme of inferiority that I traced to his predecessors. Whereas Ramos treats the inferiority complex as a psychological-developmental phenomenon, Zea treats this phenomenon as emerging from the Eurocentric ideal of humanity that directs the historical projects of Latin Americans. The problem with Ramos' treatment of the inferiority complex is that, by extrapolating psychological research from the individual to the collective, he treats a *normative* phenomenon in developmental terms. While Ramos does not claim that Mexico is inferior to Western Europe, he assumes that Mexico is a *less mature* collective relative to Western Europe. As I showed above, the view that Latin America is less historically developed than Europe only serves to justify European colonization. Unlike Ramos, Zea's analysis regards the Eurocentric ideal of humanity that continues to guide the historical projects of Latin Americans. I particularly aim to show that, for Zea, the continuous adoption of the Eurocentric ideal of humanity leads Latin American peoples to an "amputation," as Zea calls it, of our indigenous and colonial past and to a sense of "historical inferiority." That is because Latin Americans blame ourselves for failing to achieve an ideal of humanity which, in principle, is meant to exclude us. I thus argue that Latin Americans experience history as a continuous movement of progress and failure.

In *Entorno a una Filosofía Americana*, Zea begins a reflection on the sense of Latin America's history within the larger context of universal history on which he expands in later works such as *America en la Historia* (1957), *Filosofía de la Historia Americana* (1978), and *Discurso desde la Marginación y la Barbarie* (1988), to name just a few.³⁸⁹ Zea's reflection about the sense of Latin American history regards two aspects. The first is an analysis of the Eurocentric conception of history that emerged during colonization and the second is an analysis of the ways that Latin Americans relate to the Eurocentric conception of history. First, Zea argues that the result of the colonization of the Americas was the emergence of a Eurocentric ideal of humanity which served to negate the humanity of non-European peoples. Important for Zea's analysis is that this ideal of humanity was justified in historical terms, by appealing to the notion of "historical progress." In *America en la Historia*, for example, Zea argues that the notion of historical progress involves a sense of *equality* which justifies modern forms of *discrimination*. That is because "progress is something coveted by all people without distinction, but it is also something which only a group of them, namely the most able, the best or most competent will achieve."³⁹⁰ Moreover, in Zea's view, the notion of historical progress not only justifies the Eurocentric ideal of humanity, but it also becomes a guiding ideal for non-European peoples. That is because to affirm their humanity, non-European peoples aim to fit the Eurocentric archetype. As Zea puts it,

³⁸⁹ Zea puts it as follows: "Here it is my endeavor to find the meaning of the history of Latin America and its relationship to history in general. I am speaking of the relationship that exists between our particular history and world history. Although it has come down to us in different ways, world history has become the history that is common to all peoples. In our own case, history begins by presenting itself in its European form: A history made by European peoples which in turn engendered our own." Leopoldo Zea (1992 [1957]), *The Role of the Americas in History*, translated by Sonja Karsen, Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1.

³⁹⁰ Ibid, 36.

“Western European would be the goal to achieve in order to end the negation, the suspension [of their humanity].”³⁹¹ This means that, in Zea’s view, the Eurocentric ideal of humanity not only *justifies* the hegemonic relations between Western Europe and non-Europe, but it also serves as a normative ideal which *structures* the historical projects of non-European peoples.

The second aspect of Zea’s analysis regards the way in which Latin American peoples relate to the Eurocentric ideal of humanity. Zea argues that the Latin American experience of history differs from the Western European experience of historical progress, where the past makes the present possible and the present becomes the actualization of the future.³⁹² Instead, Zea argues that because the historical projects of Latin Americans obey a Eurocentric ideal of humanity, we negate or “amputate” the past, as he says, and we also develop a sense of “historical inferiority.” regarding our relation to the past, Zea writes as follows:

The Latin American compares his situation with the goals attained by modern nations and sees that he is far removed from them. He feels that this distance can only be bridged if he cuts the tie that binds him both to an inherited cultural world which is no longer valid and to the primitive world he found in America... The Latin American thinks that it is sufficient to renounce American barbarism and the Iberian heritage, for the double guilt he feels disappears and thus makes him an integral part of world culture and history.³⁹³

Zea’s view is that, by continuing to adopt the Eurocentric ideal of humanity, the historical projects of Latin Americans aim to adjust the historical circumstance to the archetype, and “if the circumstances do not adapt themselves, the worst for the circumstances! If

³⁹¹ Zea, 1969, 15.

³⁹² Zea, 1992 (1957), 16.

³⁹³ Ibid, 16-17.

America does not adapt itself, the worst for America!”³⁹⁴ In the previous section, I argued that the colonality of history situates colonized peoples in a normative double bind, namely, between an *uncivilized* indigenous past and a *civilized* European future. Zea captures this normative structure in historical-existential terms. Zea shows that the continuous adoption of the Eurocentric ideal of humanity leads the historical projects of Latin Americans to a negation of our indigenous and colonial past. For Zea, however, this does not simply mean the negation of indigenous cultures, but a process of ethnic cleansing as in the cases of Mexico and Argentina during the mid-19th century.³⁹⁵ Thus, Zea’s view is that the continuous adoption of the Eurocentric, *normative* ideal of humanity comes at the expense of Latin America’s *existential* humanity. In this sense, Zea characterizes the history of Latin America as a history of “amputations” of our historical circumstance.³⁹⁶

Moreover, Zea argues that the continuous adoption of the Eurocentric ideal of humanity not only leads Latin American historical projects to a negation the past, but it also gives rise to a sense of “historical inferiority.” Since Latin Americans negate the past which would justify the present, Zea argues that we place our identity in a Eurocentric future.³⁹⁷ It is the continuous effort to negate our historical circumstance and to achieve a

³⁹⁴ Leopoldo Zea (1983), *América como Conciencia*, México, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 38.

³⁹⁵ Zea refers to the Argentinian project of ethnic cleansing in the following essay, Leopoldo Zea (1989), “El Proyecto de Sarmiento y su Vigencia,” *Cuadernos Americanos: Nueva Época*, 3:1, 85-96. In this essay, Zea discusses what he calls the “civilizatory” project of former Argentinian President Domingo F. Sarmiento. I will return to Zea’s analysis of the “civilizatory” project in the next chapter of this dissertation. For now, suffice it to say that in his now classical *Facundo: Or, Civilization and Barbarism* (1845), Sarmiento identifies barbarism with the indigenous peoples who inhabit the rural areas of Argentina, and he identifies civilization with the urban areas. Not only that, but Sarmiento also supported a policy that aimed to bring European immigrants to Argentina in an effort of ethnic cleansing.

³⁹⁶ Zea, 1992 (1957), 15.

³⁹⁷ Zea, 1983, 39.

Eurocentric future that, Zea further argues, leads Latin Americans to the sense of “historical inferiority”:

Failing to see in Latin America but what Europe wants to see; wanting to be a utopia instead of a reality, leads to the feeling of inferiority. What is real, the circumstance, is seen by the Latin American as something inferior in comparison with what she considers to be her destiny, a destiny which is never realized, a utopian destiny. The Latin American considers that which truly belongs to her as lacking in value. She insists on actualizing models that are foreign to her life. She insists on imitating.³⁹⁸

In these passages, Zea is describing a vicious circle. The circle consists in that Latin Americans aim to recreate our historical circumstance according to a Eurocentric ideal of humanity. However, since we fail to achieve the Eurocentric ideal, we blame our circumstance, which in turn leads us to treat it as *inferior* and thus to effectively negate it or *amputate* it. By way of amputating our historical circumstance then we aim to achieve the Eurocentric ideal of humanity. This means that the sense of inferiority that emerges from Zea’s analysis is historical rather than developmental as in Ramos’ analysis. That is, for Zea, the sense of historical inferiority does not regard the level of maturity of Latin America relative to Europe, but the *Eurocentric ideal of humanity* which guides the historical projects of Latin Americans. Because Latin Americans pursue an ideal of humanity that, in principle, is meant to exclude us, we experience history as a vicious circle of progress and failure. Progress, that is, because of the promise that, by adopting Western European institutions, we will achieve the political and economic prosperity of Western Europe, and failure because not only does this promise leads us to amputate our historical circumstance, but also because we fail to achieve the ideal.³⁹⁹ Hence, unlike the

³⁹⁸ Ibid, 40.

³⁹⁹ Both Zea and Quijano argue that to “modernize,” Latin American countries adopted the political and economic institutions of Western Europe, but that the adoption of these institutions has not led to the prosperity of Western European countries, but to their contradiction. Zea, for example, writes as follows:

Western European experience of historical progress, in Zea's historical-existential analysis, the historical experience of Latin America is characterized by a continuous movement of progress and failure.

3.4. *The Historical Experience of Progress and Failure as Nepantla:*

The analysis of the colonality of history, according to which the developmentalist conception of history *structures* the historical consciousness of colonized peoples along a Eurocentric ideal of humanity thus serves as a framework to interpret Zea's historical-existential analysis of the sense of historical inferiority. Unlike Ramos' psychological-developmental analysis of the inferiority complex which emerges from trying to achieve the *maturity* level of Europe, in Zea's historical-existential analysis, the sense of inferiority emerges from failing to achieve the normative ideal of humanity which was meant to exclude colonized peoples. In this sense, I argued that the historical experience of Latin Americans is one of a continuous movement of progress and failure. In the present section, I characterize the historical movement of progress and failure as *nepantla*—an indigenous concept that captures the existential situation of being in-between worlds of meaning. For this, I turn to the work of Mexican philosopher Emilio

"Therefore, an investment was made by adopting certain ways which would make Latin America's participation in history possible, an investment which in the long run, however, was to prove fatal and produce results contrary to those that had been envisaged... The reality, however, was otherwise because the adoption of the United States constitution in Latin American nations did not lead to democracy, nor did free exchange contributed to their economic greatness. The former only gave rise to so-called democratic dictatorships and the latter made these nations dependent on the economy of more powerful nations." Zea, 1992 (1957), 10. Quijano writes as follows: "While in Europe modernity spread and flourished—nourished by the development of capitalism with all that it implied for the production of material goods and the relationships between peoples—in Latin America, especially from the last third of the 18th century onward, a noticeable contradiction developed between, on the one hand, the ideological and social requirements of modernity and, on the other, the stagnation and disarticulation of the mercantile economy... As a consequence, those who rose to the top of society and power were the most allied with inequality and injustice, with despotism and obscurantism. With the well-known exceptions of those areas most immediately linked to European capitalist development, most of what emerged in Latin America was characterized by this contradiction." Anibal Quijano (1989), "Paradoxes of Modernity in Latin America," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 3:2, 151-52.

Uranga. Much like Zea, Uranga also belonged to the generation of Mexican philosophers who called themselves “El Grupo Hiperión” (1948-1952), and who employed phenomenology, existentialism, and historicism to analyze what they call “*lo mexicano*,” or what it means to be Mexican.⁴⁰⁰ Uranga’s work is important for my characterization of the historical experience of progress and failure as *nepantla* for two reasons. The first reason is that Uranga provides an ontological-existential analysis of *nepantla* in terms of a *pendular movement* between the “substantiality” of values and the “accidentality” of human life. I employ this pendular movement to capture the existential experience of progress and failure. The second reason is that Uranga contends that rather than understanding our relation to values in terms of inferiority, we should understand it in terms of “insufficiency,” which means that human beings cannot fulfill values in an absolute way. Uranga thus offers a point of contention for the analysis of historical inferiority that emerges from the colonality of history.

In this section, I employ Uranga’s ontological-existential analysis of the Mexican circumstance as a pendular movement between “substantiality” and “accidentality” to characterize the historical experience of progress and failure in terms of *nepantla*. However, while Uranga contends that we should understand this pendular movement in

⁴⁰⁰ Carlos Alberto Sánchez characterizes the philosophy of “*lo mexicano*” as follows: “Generally speaking, the philosophy of Mexicanness (alternatively, the philosophy of *lo mexicano*) is a decisive philosophical intervention into *the being of persons* whose existence is formed and informed by or within the complex horizons of ‘Mexico,’ understood as a historical, political, spiritual, and ontological space. The persons whose being is in question are nominated in this space as Mexican persons and their *being* as ‘Mexican’ *being*, that is, their existence represents, phenomenologically, *that which is Mexican*, or, in Spanish, *lo mexicano*.” Carlos Alberto Sánchez (2021), “Critical Introduction,” in *Emilio Uranga’s Analysis of Mexican Being: A Translation and Critical Introduction*, New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 3. Other members of El Grupo Hiperión are Jorge Portilla, Luis Villoro, Ricardo Guerra, Joaquín Sánchez McGregor, Salvador Reyes Narváez, and Fausto Vega. For an extensive analysis of the philosophy of El Grupo Hiperión see Carlos Alberto Sánchez (2016), *Contingency and Commitment: Mexican Existentialism and the Place of Philosophy*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

terms of “insufficiency” rather than in terms of inferiority, I argue that “insufficiency” captures a general feature of our human relation to values and that the analysis of inferiority captures the historical experience of colonized peoples relative to the Eurocentric ideal of humanity. For this, I first introduce Uranga’s ontological-existential analysis of *nepantla* as a pendular movement between “substantiality” and “accidentality.” I then interpret Uranga’s ontological-existential analysis of *nepantla* in terms of our historical relation to values or ideals. Lastly, I intervene in Uranga’s and Ramos’ discussion regarding the analysis of inferiority and the analysis of “insufficiency.” I argue that whereas the latter captures a general feature of our human relation to values, the first captures the historical experience of colonized peoples.

3.4.1. Uranga’s Ontological-Existential Analysis of “Nepantla”:

In his recent translation and critical commentary of Uranga’s *magnum opus*, *Análisis del Ser del Mexicano* (1952), Mexican American philosopher Carlos Alberto Sánchez explains that while the notion of *nepantla* first appears in Franciscan priest and grammarian Alfonso de Molina’s *Arte y Lengua Mexicana* (1547), the term was popularized by Dominican friar Diego Durán in his *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de Tierra Firme* (1581).⁴⁰¹ In this book, Durán recounts an exchange with an indigenous person which is worth reproducing here:

As I listened to an Indian tell me of certain things, and in particular that he had dragged himself on the ground picking up money on bad nights and worse days, and once he had, with much effort, collected a certain amount of money he had a wedding and invited the entire town, and as I rebuked him for the evil he had done he answered: “Father, don’t be alarmed, since we are still *nepantla* [*todavía estamos nepantla*].” And while I understood what he meant to say with that vocabulary and that metaphor, which means to be in the middle, I turned and insisted that he tell me what middle it was in which they were. He told me that, since they were not very well rooted in faith, that I shouldn’t be alarmed since they were still neutral in the sense that

⁴⁰¹ Sánchez, 2021, 81.

they neither depended on one law or another, or better put, that they believed in God and at the same time relied on their ancient customs and demonic rites [*costumbres antiguas y ritos del demonio*], and this is what he meant with that abominable excuse that they still remained in the middle and were neutral.⁴⁰²

In this passage, Durán refers to *nepantla* as “being in the middle” [*estar en medio*] or as “being in between” or “being neutral.”⁴⁰³ However, it is important not to conceive of *nepantla* as a static middle situation between two times or places. As James Maffie argues in his *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion* (2014), “we need to resist the temptation to *reify* *nepantla* that comes with treating it as a noun designating (or adjective modifying) a state of being, state of affairs, condition, relationship, arrangement, place, or thing.”⁴⁰⁴ Instead of a static place or situation, Maffie explains that, in Aztec philosophy, *nepantla* refers to a weaving-like, motion-change pattern through which the universe is generated, destroyed, and regenerated.⁴⁰⁵ As Maffie explains, “*nepantla*-processing is dynamic and diachronic: it is generated by the ceaseless, back-and-forth alternation of two *imbalances*—just as becoming is generated by the back-and-forth alternation of being~nonbeing.”⁴⁰⁶ For example, Maffie shows that the Aztecs conceive of sexual intercourse as a weaving process between two agonistic elements whereby the identities of each partner are destroyed to generate a third element and a new set of relational identities.⁴⁰⁷ *Nepantla*, however, refers neither to the two

⁴⁰² Cited in Emilio Uranga (2021 [1952]), *Analysis of Mexican Being*, translated by Carlos Alberto Sánchez, New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 92.

⁴⁰³ Sánchez, 2021, 81.

⁴⁰⁴ James Maffie (2014), *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion*, Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 362.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, 371.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid, 513.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid, 356.

agonistic elements nor to the third element, but to the weaving-like motion-pattern of generation and regeneration.

Since Durán, the notion of *nepantla* has been used to capture the *mestizx* culture that emerged from the synthesis of the Spanish and indigenous cultures. For example, in her admittance speech to the Academia Mexicana de la Lengua, Mexican philosopher Elsa Cecilia Frost uses *nepantla* to characterize the cultural transformations that resulted from colonization because both the Spanish and indigenous identities ceased being just Spanish or just indigenous to become a third, *mestizx* identity.⁴⁰⁸ Similarly, the notion of *nepantla* figures prominently in Uranga's work, who offers an ontological-existential analysis of *lo mexicano*. In his *Analysis del Ser del Mexicano*, Uranga proposes the ontological-existential analysis both to provide a methodological basis for El Grupo Hiperión's interest in *lo mexicano* and to move beyond the anthropological and, particularly, the psychological analysis offered by Ramos.⁴⁰⁹ For this, Uranga borrows the terms of "accidentality" and "substantiality" from the metaphysical tradition.⁴¹⁰ However, while the metaphysical tradition understands "substance" as what a thing is independently of the mind who knows it and "accident" as what is contingent to the thing being what it is, Uranga interprets these terms in an existential way. Uranga interprets "accidentality" as a relation between being and nothingness, as a "lack of justification" or a "lack of being," and he interprets "substantiality" as a "plenitude or fulness of being" or

⁴⁰⁸ Elsa Cecilia Frost (2014), "Acerca de Nepantla," Ceremonia de Ingreso de doña Elsa Cecilia Frost, Academia Mexicana de la Lengua, <https://www.academia.org.mx/sesiones-publicas/item/ceremonia-de-ingreso-de-dona-elsa-cecilia-frost>. Web: 5/11/2022. Thanks to Carlos Alberto Sánchez for bringing this source to my attention.

⁴⁰⁹ Uranga, 2021 (1952), 93-95.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid, 103.

as “being absolutely justified.”⁴¹¹ As such, accidentality refers to a *contingent* form of existence because our human existence could have been otherwise, and thus it does not have to be, and substantiality refers to an *necessary* form of existence whereby it could not have been otherwise, it is an absolute form of existence. As Uranga writes, “if the accident is nothing before substance, it is something in relation to nothingness.”⁴¹² By employing these ontological categories then Uranga offers an analysis of *lo mexicano* that reaches beyond psychological studies.

In *Análisis del Ser del Mexicano*, Uranga’s central argument is that the behavioral traits that thinkers such as Ramos attribute to the Mexican character find their ultimate explanatory ground in the ontological structure of accidentality. The behavioral traits that Uranga considers are those of “emotionality,” “fragility,” “unwillingness,” and Ramos’ inferiority complex.⁴¹³ Uranga argues that underlying these behavioral traits is the ontological structure of accidentality or, as he writes, the radical sense of “not knowing what to depend on”:

In virtue of another of its dimensions, the accident is what is fragile and fractured, what with equal originality is both in being and not in being. There lies the essential vulnerability of affectivity, the “encountering itself” in the Heideggerian sense, but, at the same time, the not knowing what to depend on, the not adhering in a definite sense, hesitation, or zozobra.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹¹ Ibid, 103-4. I am drawing the definition of “substantiality” as “being absolutely justified” from Uranga’s essay “Essay on an Ontology of the Mexican,” published prior to the *Analysis del Ser del Mexicano* and where Uranga also argues that “substantiality” can only be reserved to God. See, Emilio Uranga (2017 [1951]), “Essay on an Ontology of the Mexican,” translated by Carlos Alberto Sánchez, in *Mexican Philosophy in the 20th Century: Essential Readings*, edited by Carlos Alberto Sánchez and Robert Eli Sánchez, Jr., New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 175.

⁴¹² Uranga, 2021 (1952), 104.

⁴¹³ Ibid, 106. Uranga offers a more extensive analysis of these behavioral traits in his “Essay on an Ontology of the Mexican.” See, Uranga, 2017 (1951), 166-68.

⁴¹⁴ Uranga, 2021 (1952), 118-19.

Thus, Uranga writes, “conducts or behaviors of Mexican persons are ‘modes’ of accidentalization belonging to an originary accidentality.”⁴¹⁵ Differently put, in Uranga’s view, behavioral traits such as “emotionality” and “fragility” emerge because Mexicans experience our accidentality in a proximate way, which means that we experience existence as an in between being and non-being, or as the being who does not have to be. Uranga employs two terms to refer to the existential in-betweenness that characterizes the Mexican being, namely, *nepantla* and “zozobra.”⁴¹⁶ Although in different works, Uranga employs *nepantla* in various ways, in *Análisis del Ser del Mexicano*, he writes that, “what must be kept in mind as decisive is not, I insist, the content, but the schema, one that we preliminarily refer to as logical, pendular, oscillating, and zig-zagging.”⁴¹⁷ Below, I will offer a more detailed analysis about the oscillating schema of *nepantla*. For now, we can say that it refers to the existential, to-and-fro movement between being and nothingness which, Uranga argues, characterizes the accidentality of Mexican existence. Thus, Uranga writes, we have “in all its purity, the central category of our ontology, autochthonous, one that does not borrow from the Western tradition, [thereby] satisfying our desire to be originalists.”⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁵ Ibid, 119.

⁴¹⁶ In the following, I focus on the notion of *nepantla* rather than on “zozobra.” Although it is unclear from Uranga’s texts what the semantic difference between the two terms might be, Sánchez argues that whereas *nepantla* refers to an ontological structure devoid of emotional content, “zozobra” captures the emotionality of existence. As Sánchez writes, “Nepantla, however, is devoid of emotional content; it is simply an original or originary state of being. On the other hand, zozobra captures nepantla *plus* the emotionality of existence. Uranga borrows the concept of zozobra from [Mexican poet Ramón López] Velarde, and it is meant to designate the dynamic, becoming structure of a being that is emotionally conflicted in regard to bringing about, or ‘making simultaneous,’ one’s existential possibilities (as limited as these may be).” Sánchez, 2021, 58.

⁴¹⁷ Uranga, 2021 (1952), 167.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

Before offering a more extensive interpretation of the notion of *nepantla*, I would like to note that Uranga refers to his analysis of *lo mexicano* as a “radical humanism.”⁴¹⁹ In *Análisis del Ser del Mexicano*, Uranga considers the objection that the analysis of accidentality which he attributes to *lo mexicano* in fact corresponds to humanity in general.⁴²⁰ Uranga’s response to this objection is seemingly paradoxical for two reasons. On the one hand, Uranga argues that what passes for a “general humanity” is rather a Eurocentric conception and that this conception of humanity does not present itself as accidental, but as “arrogant substantiality.” As he writes:

To these objections we respond, first, that *we are not very certain of the existence of the human being in general and, second, that whatever passes itself off as human being in general, namely, generalized European humanity, does not appear to us to define itself as accidental, but precisely as arrogant substantiality.*⁴²¹

On the other hand, Uranga argues that his proposal regarding the accidentality of *lo mexicano* is not a nationalism which would exclude other human beings. Rather, Uranga’s view is that one can arrive to what is most genuinely human only through an examination of the concrete human being, as opposed to a general idea of humanity. As Uranga writes, “*paradoxical as it may seem, it is better to begin with the being of the Mexican in order to illuminate from that being what will be called man in general or the essence of man.*”⁴²² Differently put, the “radical humanism” which Uranga advocates consists in arriving at the accidentality of human beings by analyzing *lo mexicano* rather than through the general idea of humanity which, in fact, *dehumanizes* what does not

⁴¹⁹ Ibid, 137. See also, Emilio Uranga (2013 [1951]), “Notas Para el Estudio del Mexicano,” in *Análisis del Ser del Mexicano y Otros Ensayos sobre la Filosofía de lo Mexicano (1949 – 1952)*, edited by Guillermo Hurtado, D.F., México: Bonilla Artigas Editores, 136.

⁴²⁰ Uranga, 2021 (1952), 106-7.

⁴²¹ Ibid, 107.

⁴²² Ibid. 137.

correspond to the archetype.⁴²³ Uranga's humanism thus entails that sharing in the condition of accidentality, or not knowing what to depend on, is what characterizes human beings.

3.4.2. *Nepantla as the Historical Movement of Progress and Failure:*

Throughout this chapter, I have supported two theses. The first is that the coloniality of history entails that the developmentalist conception of history that emerged from colonization *structures* the historical projects of colonized peoples within a normative double bind, namely, between an *uncivilized* indigenous past and a *civilized* European future. The second thesis that I am supporting throughout this chapter is that since the historical projects of colonized peoples obey a Eurocentric ideal of humanity which, in principle, is meant to exclude us, colonized peoples experience history as a continuous movement of progress and failure. I would now like to characterize the historical movement of progress and failure in terms of the pendular, to-and-fro movement of *nepantla*. For this, I first offer a more extensive analysis of *nepantla* in Uranga's work to show that, for Uranga, *nepantla* functions as a to-and-fro movement towards *ideals* or *values*. I then appeal to Sánchez's interpretation of *nepantla* as the pendular, to-and-fro movement of Mexican philosophy between a "universalist" and a "particularistic" philosophical project. Lastly, I extrapolate the to-and-fro movement between the "universalistic" and "particularistic" philosophical projects in Sánchez's interpretation as regarding the *ideal of humanity* guiding the historical projects of Mexican and, more broadly, of Latin American peoples. That is, while the "universalist" historical project is a movement towards the Eurocentric and substantial ideal of humanity, the

⁴²³ Ibid, 109.

“particularistic” project is a movement towards our accidental mode of relating to values. Thus, while Mexican and Latin American peoples aim to substantialize ourselves by pursuing the Eurocentric ideal of humanity, we ultimately fail and thus develop a sense of historical inferiority.

The notion of *nepantla* figures prominently in three of Uranga’s essays. These are his *Análisis del Ser del Mexicano*, to which I have already referred, “Ensayo de una Ontología del Mexicano” (1949), which precedes the publication of Uranga’s *magnum opus*, and “Optimismo y Pesimismo del Mexicano” (1952), which seems to follow the publication of *Análisis del Ser del Mexicano*.⁴²⁴ In “Ensayo de una Ontología del Mexicano,” Uranga employs *nepantla* to capture the to-and-fro movement that characterizes our relation to *ideals* or *values*. Uranga argues that the “fragility” of the Mexican character corresponds to the pendular movement between the apparent substantiality of values and the realization that values are grounded on “*naderías*” or “nothingnesses”:

The melancholic individual is trapped in his interior abode from whence he brings to the life of the imagination a thousand worlds to which he bestows value and sense while never losing sight of the fact that those worlds are grounded on nothingness, that they are suspended over nothingness, and this knowledge about the deception regarding the groundlessness of the world is precisely what we are apt to call melancholy.⁴²⁵

Uranga captures the movement between the substantiality of values and the realization of their radical contingency in terms of the oscillating, to-and-fro movement of *nepantla*: “these are the oscillations, so familiar to Mexican existence, of a diligent enthusiasm, a

⁴²⁴ See Guillermo Hurtado (2013), “Prólogo,” in *Análisis del Ser del Mexicano y Otros Escritos Sobre la Filosofía de lo Mexicano (1949-1952)*, edited by Guillermo Hurtado, D.F., México: Bonilla Artigas Editores, 20-21.

⁴²⁵ Uranga, 2017 (1951), 172.

hopeful deliverance to a movement that is followed almost immediately by a deep depression, by falling once again into a hopeless dreaming.”⁴²⁶ Similarly, in “Optimismo y Pesimismo del Mexicano,” Uranga offers a philosophy of Mexican history as an oscillatory movement between optimism and pessimism. Uranga traces the moment of optimism to the Jesuit humanism of the 18th century as one which is “open” to all forms of the human.⁴²⁷ However, Uranga argues that this form of humanism turned into a *nationalism* or into a culture of “having” [*haber*] rather than “making” [*hacer*] a motherland [*patria*] motivated by the Enlightenment idea of historical progress and by Enlightenment thinkers’ attacks to the humanity of Mexicans.⁴²⁸ Uranga argues that Mexicans aimed to *affirm* their humanity by displaying the motherland’s riches, such as gold and silver.⁴²⁹ However, to this moment of optimism there followed a moment of pessimism during the 19th century. “A century of bitter loss has faced us with a motherland [*patria*] which is not well ‘endowed,’ but rather insufficiently [*ingratamente*] endowed.”⁴³⁰ Here, Uranga seems to refer to the Treatise of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1948) through which Mexico ceded 55 percent of its territory to the U.S. Thus, for Uranga, to the moment of optimism there followed a moment of pessimism in the form of a *loss*. In this sense, Uranga writes that, “Europe cannot offer us the guiding idea with which to move forward this myriad of problems that constitutes our reality.”⁴³¹

⁴²⁶ Ibid, 171.

⁴²⁷ Emilio Uranga (2013 [1952]), “Optimismo y Pesimismo del Mexicano,” in *Análisis del Ser del Mexicano y Otros Escritos sobre la Filosofía de lo Mexicano (1949-1952)*, edited by Guillermo Hurtado, D.F., México: Bonilla Artigas Editores, 154-55.

⁴²⁸ Uranga puts it as follows: “En todo y por todo, el haber, el tener, y para nada el hacer. No hablar del trabajo y del esfuerzo. Todo está al alcance de la mano, todo está ya elaborado, todo ha sido puesto en tal grado de acabamiento que solo basta la decisión de empezar a saciarse, a llenarse.” Ibid, 159.

⁴²⁹ Ibid, 158.

⁴³⁰ Ibid, 159.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

Two aspects of Uranga's characterization of *nepantla* are central for my argument. The first is that Uranga characterizes the to-and-fro movement of *nepantla* in terms of our relation to values, such that one oscillating moment corresponds to our aiming towards the *substantiality* of values and the second moment corresponds to our realization of the *accidentality* of values. The second aspect in Uranga's characterization of *nepantla* regards the Eurocentric ideal of humanity. Uranga interprets the history of Mexico as an oscillating movement between our aiming towards the *substantial* mode of existence represented by the Eurocentric ideal of humanity, and our failure to achieve the ideal which in turn leads to the realization of our Mexican accidentality. These two aspects of Uranga's analysis mean that the history of Mexico is characterized by our aiming to become European and thus substantialize ourselves, and by the subsequent failure which leads to the realization of our accidental mode of existence. This reading of *nepantla* finds support in Sánchez's *Contingency and Commitment: Mexican Existentialism and the Place of Philosophy* (2016), where he reads 20th century Mexican philosophy as oscillating between a "passionate" philosophy committed to the "particularity" of the circumstance, and an "imperial passion," as Zea calls it, that *refuses* its own subjectivity and demands "universality" and "objectivity."⁴³² Sánchez shows that, after their Hiperión period, once passionate philosophers such as Luis Villoro and Uranga criticize Gaos' philosophy of "personalism" because, "philosophy ought to be objective, and the way to achieve objectivity is to remove the philosophical from the passions of subjective life."⁴³³ As such, Sánchez argues that post-Hiperión Villoro and Uranga felt

⁴³² Sánchez, 2016, 75-76.

⁴³³ Ibid, 80.

the pressure to align “philosophy with its traditional definition. They felt the pressure of the imperial passion.”⁴³⁴

Although Sánchez does not make this point, his reading of the history of Mexican philosophy as oscillating between the “universal” and the “particular” philosophical projects corresponds to the to-and-fro movement between the *substantial* form of existence represented by the Eurocentric ideal of humanity and the subsequent realization of Mexican *accidentality*. That is, what Sánchez describes as a movement towards a “universal” philosophical project corresponds to the moment of *substantialization* by pursuing the Eurocentric ideal of humanity. Similarly, the movement that Sánchez describes as a “particular” philosophical project corresponds to the moment of realization about Mexican *accidentality*. In the reading I am proposing, this to-and-fro, *nepantla* movement that characterizes the history of Mexico and, more broadly, the history of Latin America regards the vicious movement of aiming towards the Eurocentric ideal of humanity, and the subsequent failure to achieve the ideal which leads to the sense of historical inferiority. Thus, in my reading, the reason that Mexicans experience accidentality in a proximate way is the continuous failure to substantialize ourselves by achieving the Eurocentric ideal of humanity. However, there remains the question of whether the oscillating movement between the substantial mode of existence and the failure to achieve the ideal is a general feature of human existence or an experience particular to the way that colonized peoples relate to the Eurocentric ideal of humanity. For this, I now turn to the debate between Ramos and Uranga about whether the accidentality of Mexican existence should be characterized in terms of the human

⁴³⁴ Ibid, 83.

“insufficiency” to fulfill values in absolute terms, or whether it should be characterized in terms of historical inferiority which, I have argued, is a phenomenon that emerges from the historical experience of colonized peoples.

3.4.3. *Mexican Accidentality: Between “Insufficiency” and “Historical Inferiority”:*

Throughout this section, I have shown that Uranga offers the ontological-existential analysis of *lo mexicano* to provide a methodological basis for the behavioral analyses that other thinkers have offered, particularly Ramos. That Ramos is Uranga’s main interlocutor is clear in *Análisis del Ser del Mexicano*, where Uranga writes as follows:

In a previous essay dedicated to the ontology of the Mexican, we *have sought to define a certain constitutional insufficiency in our manner of being*; at the same time we have discussed a project, first studied excellently by Samuel Ramos, of elevating insufficiency over and above the so-called complex of inferiority.⁴³⁵

Uranga’s main contention is that while Ramos explains the behavioral traits of Mexicans in terms of an *inferiority complex*, Uranga explains them in terms of an ontological *insufficiency*. Of particular interest is the debate between the two thinkers which took place at the lecture series “El Mexicano en Busca del Mexicano,” celebrated at the National University of Mexico in 1951, where Ramos presented the essay “Entorno a las Ideas sobre el Mexicano” and Uranga presented “Notas para un Estudio del Mexicano.”⁴³⁶ Apart from its historical importance, this debate offers a point of contention to my interpretation of *nepantla* as the oscillating, to-and-fro movement of progress and failure which leads to the sense of *historical inferiority*. That is because, in Uranga’s view, rather than *inferiority*, accidentality refers to the *insufficiency* of human

⁴³⁵ Uranga, 2021 (1952), 103.

⁴³⁶ Peter G. Earle (1962), “Translator’s note,” in Samuel Ramos, *Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico*, translated by Peter G. Earle, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 177, fn. 5.

existence to fulfill values in absolute terms and thus to substantialize ourselves. As such, *insufficiency* is not only a constitutive feature of human existence, but it is our “authentic” mode of existence. Indeed, after presenting Ramos’ and Uranga’s arguments, I argue that whereas *insufficiency* captures a general feature of our “authentic” human relation to values, *inferiority* captures the “inauthentic” way in which colonized peoples relate to the Eurocentric ideal of humanity.

Three aspects are central in Ramos’ and Uranga’s debate. The first is *methodological* because it regards the way in which Ramos’ and Uranga’s analyses proceed. In “Entorno a las Ideas sobre el Mexicano,” Ramos accuses Uranga of adopting a ready-made ontology, namely, *existentialist* ontology to explain the case of *lo mexicano*. For Ramos, an ontology of *lo mexicano* must “be conceived in conformity with the Mexican, and not that the Mexican be conceived in conformity with some ready-made ontology, simply to give credence to the latter.”⁴³⁷ Uranga’s response is not only that Ramos is overly demanding, since the latter employs Adler’s analysis of inferiority complex to explain *lo mexicano*, but also that Ramos’s criticism ignores the differences between existentialist ontology and Uranga’s ontology.⁴³⁸ While this is an important aspect, in my view, the second and third aspects of Ramos’ and Uranga’s debate gets to

⁴³⁷ Samuel Ramos (1962 [1951]), “Concerning Mexican Character,” translated by Peter G. Earle, in Samuel Ramos, *Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, Appendix II, 179.

⁴³⁸ Uranga puts it as follows: “Nuevamente Ramos se manifiesta aquí extremadamente exigente. Que cuando aplicamos al mexicano el esquema del complejo de inferioridad ‘caemos en la ilusión de encontrar en el mexicano lo que de antemano estaba en la filosofía’, en la doctrina de Adler, no tiene mayor importancia, pero no que quiera hacer lo mismo la ontología y entonces se le va la mano. Para decir si nuestra ontología ha sido hecha desde el mexicano o simplemente estamos aplicando al mexicano una ontología ya hecha es indispensable que nuestros críticos conocieran esta ontología y que conocieran también esa otra ontología de que tanto se teme estemos sólo aplicando, es decir, la ontología existencialista.” Uranga, 2013 (1951), 142.

the crux of their differences. In “Notas para el Estudio del Mexicano,” Uranga formulates this difference as follows:

The inferiority complex expresses a modality of the fundamental project of existence [*projecto fundamental de existencia*]. We do not believe, however, that it is the ultimate but, in any case, the penultimate explanation. It in turn requires an explanation. Indeed, the inferiority complex is one of the modalities that the insufficiency of the Mexican being takes, and not the most authentic, as we pointed out on another occasion. The inferiority complex is a behavior which retreats [*retrocede*] facing the demands of an existential autonomy, it throws itself on the arms of others so that they might solve that which oneself cannot... The Mexican who experiences inferiority emphasizes in her being what seeking protection [*arrimo*] implies. She prioritizes the relation of “dependency” that her being houses [*entraña*]. She cannot give meaning to her own life but seeks it in others.⁴³⁹

In *Análisis del Ser del Mexicano*, Uranga argues that “sufficiency and insufficiency represents an ‘immanent’ or ‘intrinsic’ value scale. But, if we compare Mexican culture with European culture, if we look for an ‘extrinsic’ criterion of valuation, the problem of ‘superiority’ and ‘inferiority’ is automatically introduced.”⁴⁴⁰ For Uranga then the difference between *insufficiency* and *inferiority* consists in the following. *Insufficiency* means that we aim towards fulfilling values such as “friendship” in absolute terms, or that we aim towards becoming a *good* friend, but that given our accidental condition we fail to fulfill the ideal. In fact, in Uranga’s view, believing that we embody the ideal in a substantial way is an inauthentic mode of existence. In contrast, *inferiority* entails believing that others embody values in an absolute way and thus adopting a foreign set of values. In this case, we experience our human accidentality, or the inability to fulfill values in absolute terms, as *inferiority*. As such, Uranga argues, inferiority is also an inauthentic mode of human existence. As Uranga puts it in “Ensayo de una Ontología del

⁴³⁹ Ibid, 139.

⁴⁴⁰ Uranga, 2021 (1952), 140.

Mexicano,” “in inferiority there is idolatry; a will to make the other an absolutely justified existence.”⁴⁴¹

The third aspect of the debate between Ramos and Uranga regards Ramos’ response to Uranga’s distinction between inferiority and insufficiency. Ramos argues that the analysis of inferiority he provides regards the way Mexicans *are* and thus captures the *real* Mexican, whereas Uranga’s analysis of insufficiency corresponds to the *ideal* Mexican, or whom Mexicans should become.⁴⁴² Differently put, Ramos’ point is that while the Mexican character is currently marked by the sense of inferiority, the aim should be for Mexicans to recognize that our inferiority is rather a condition of *insufficiency*. Uranga’s response to this argument is worth quoting at length:

I do not believe that it is a valid formula to say that what is real in Mexicans is their inferiority and what is ideal is their insufficiency, because insufficiency is as real as inferiority, and just as ideal is the first as the second, depending on how one sees it. Being inferior is an ideal for many Mexicans. They have committed to it [*se lo han propuesto*] and they have achieved it, they hold on to it even if it reveals to them as such. The feeling of inferiority solves for them many problems. It rules their lives. I do not see why we would not say that it is an ideal, since it has all the characteristics of a command [*deber ser*]. In contrast, insufficiency is not an ideal but what is real. Given the insufficiency of our being we have chosen inferiority. What is ideal here is inferiority. While Ramos believes that Mexicans are “really” inferior and only “ideally” insufficient, I believe that they are “really” insufficient and only “ideally” inferior.⁴⁴³

Uranga’s argument is that his analysis has revealed that the ontological condition of Mexicans is one of insufficiency and thus that insufficiency is our *real* mode of existence. It is only because Mexicans choose to pursue the Eurocentric ideal of humanity, to use my terms, that the Mexican character expresses a sense of inferiority. In

⁴⁴¹ Uranga, 2017 (1951), 175.

⁴⁴² Ramos, 1962 (1951), 179.

⁴⁴³ Uranga, 2013 (1951), 140.

this sense, Uranga argues that although Mexicans are ontologically insufficient, we choose inferiority as a form of life. Despite the differences between Ramos and Uranga, however, I agree with Ramos when he argues that, ultimately, they both aim at *liberating* Mexicans from the sense of inferiority. Ramos writes that, Uranga's essay "is an eloquent plea for all Mexicans to cure themselves of their inferiority complex by recognizing that it is actually only a question of [insufficiency]." ⁴⁴⁴ What the liberating process requires, Ramos continues, is that "the Mexican must measure his life by his own criteria and cease comparing it to lives measured by other standards." ⁴⁴⁵ Thus, despite their differences, Ramos and Uranga agree that liberating Mexicans and, more broadly, Latin Americans from the sense of inferiority requires abandoning the Eurocentric ideal of humanity as our guiding, normative ideal.

In the foregoing, I employed Uranga's analysis of *nepantla* to capture the historical experience of Mexican and, more broadly, Latin American peoples. In my view, since the historical projects of Latin American peoples obey a Eurocentric ideal of humanity which, in principle, is meant to exclude non-European peoples, Latin American peoples experience historical development as a continuous movement of progress and failure. The historical experience of progress and failure is what I referred to as the sense of historical inferiority. Moreover, in the reading I am proposing, Uranga's analysis of *nepantla* as the oscillating, to-and-fro movement between the substantiality of values and the accidentality of our human existence captures the historical experience of Latin American

⁴⁴⁴ Ramos, 1962 (1951), 178. I modified the translation from "inadequacy," which is the term that Peter Earle uses to translate "*insuficiencia*" because I think that Sánchez's use of "insufficiency" is a better translation. For the Spanish version, see, Samuel Ramos (1951), "Entorno a las Ideas sobre el Mexicano," *Cuadernos Americanos*, X:3, 112.

⁴⁴⁵ Ramos, 1962 (1951), 178.

peoples, committed as we are to substantialize ourselves by becoming European as well as the subsequent failure to achieve the ideal. Although, for Uranga, the ontological condition of accidentality and thus of insufficiency regarding our relation to values is an *authentic* feature of human existence, he also agrees that the Eurocentric ideal of humanity not only presents itself as the *substantial* human, but it also guides the historical projects of Mexican and Latin American peoples. The latter phenomenon, Uranga argues, is an *inauthentic* way of relating to values. In my view, Ramos is right when he argues that Uranga's analysis of accidentality and insufficiency aim at *liberating* Mexican and Latin American peoples from the sense of historical inferiority. In fact, I read Uranga's radical humanism as a "cynical inversion of values," which he characterizes as "an attitude of dignified rebellion before the complex of inferiority, which is itself a submissive rebellion or, at bottom, the submission of rebels."⁴⁴⁶ Hence, by arguing that the authentic condition of human beings is one of accidentality rather than substantiality, Uranga aims at liberating both colonized peoples such as Latin Americans from the sense of historical inferiority and European peoples from the inauthentic way of conceiving themselves as the substantial human.

3.5. *Conclusion:*

The argument I offered in the foregoing regards the way in which the developmentalist conception of history that emerged from the colonization of the Americas continues to *structure* the historical projects of colonized peoples along a normative, Eurocentric ideal of humanity. For this, I first showed that the developmentalist conception of history not only serves a *justificatory* function, as Quijano and Dussel correctly argue, but that it also

⁴⁴⁶ Uranga, 2021 (1952), 146.

situates colonized peoples within a normative double bind, namely, between an *uncivilized* indigenous past and a *civilized* European future. That is what I referred to as the coloniality of history. I then traced the notion of historical inferiority to the work of Zea to show that since the historical projects of colonized peoples obey a Eurocentric ideal of humanity which, in principle, is meant to exclude colonized peoples such as Latin Americans, colonized peoples experience history as a continuous movement of progress and failure. I argued that, for Latin Americans, the sense of historical inferiority emerges from the historical experience of aiming to become European and the subsequent failure to achieve the ideal. Lastly, drawing from Uranga's work, I characterized the historical experience of progress and failure as the oscillating, to-and-fro movement of *nepantla*. While, for Uranga, *nepantla* refers to the to-and-fro movement between the substantiality of values and the accidentality of human existence, I argued that, for colonized peoples, this to-and-fro movement refers to the Eurocentric ideal of humanity which presents itself as substantial, and the failure to achieve the ideal which leads to the realization of our accidental condition. In this sense, I argued that whereas Uranga's analysis of insufficiency captures a general feature of our authentic human relation to values, the analysis of historical inferiority captures the inauthentic way in which colonized peoples such as Latin Americans relate to the Eurocentric ideal of humanity.

However, there might be two shortcomings to the analyses of the coloniality of history and to the sense of historical inferiority that I offered in the foregoing. The first is that my analyses are too abstract and thus that they remain *speculative*, without showing how the analyses correspond to the historical reality of colonized peoples. The second shortcoming is that my analyses *abstract* from the cases of Mexico, Latin America, and

colonized peoples more generally. Thus, it might be argued that although the coloniality of history might serve as a general category to analyze the way that the developmentalist conception of history informs the historical projects of colonized peoples, it does not necessarily follow that Latin American and, more broadly, colonized peoples experience a sense of historical inferiority. To address these concerns, I would like to conclude by drawing from what Franz Fanon calls “The Trials and Tribulations of National Consciousness” in his famous *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). In this work, Fanon analyses the historical processes that the movement of liberation undergoes, and he particularly focuses on the roles of the *national bourgeoisie* and of the *political leadership* after the Algerian achievement of political emancipation (1962). First, Fanon argues that different from the metropolitan bourgeoisie, after independence, the national bourgeoisie lacks the “production, invention, creation, or work” and, instead, “all its energy is channeled into intermediary activities.”⁴⁴⁷ That is, Fanon’s point is that, rather than aiming to create a national economy independent from the metropolitan economy, the national bourgeoisie aims to replace the metropolitan bourgeoisie without changing the relation of dependency between the metropole and the former colony. For example, Fanon argues that after independence, the national bourgeoisie continues to depend on the metropolitan financing, it also continues to export natural resources to import manufactured goods, and it turns the former colony into a bordello for Western European tourism.⁴⁴⁸ Hence, Fanon writes that the national bourgeoisie “subtly transforms itself not into a replica of Europe but rather its caricature.”⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁷ Franz Fanon (2004 [1961]), *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Richard Philcox, New York, NY: Grove Press, 98.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid, 100-1.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid, 119.

Similarly, Fanon argues that, after independence, the political leadership serves to protect the economic interests of the national and the metropolitan bourgeoisies. Fanon argues that prior to independence, the leader “personified the aspirations of the people— independence, political freedom, and national dignity,” after independence, the political leader becomes “the CEO of the company of profiteers composed of a national bourgeoisie.”⁴⁵⁰ Thus, the political leadership who once derived the legitimacy of its political power from its close contact with the aspirations of the people, now exercises institutional power against the people and in favor of the bourgeoisie. For this reason, Fanon argues that the political leadership turns into a dictatorship that serves only to pacify the people: “in these poor, underdeveloped countries where, according to the rule, enormous wealth rubs shoulders with abject poverty, the army and the police force form the pillars of the regime; both of which, in accordance with another rule, are advised by foreign experts.”⁴⁵¹ The result is not only that the national bourgeoisie and the national leadership maintain the relation of dependency with the economic and political interests of the metropole, but also that the “masses are hungry and the police commissioners, now African, are not particularly reassuring. The masses begin to keep their distance, to turn their backs on and lose interest in this nation which excludes them.”⁴⁵² In Fanon’s analysis then the tribulations that the movement of liberation undergoes are that rather than fulfilling their historical role of securing economic and political independence, the national bourgeoisie and the political leadership continue to obey the economic and political interests of the metropole. The problem, for Fanon, is that not only do the

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid, 112.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid, 117.

⁴⁵² Ibid, 114.

national bourgeoisie and the political leadership fail to achieve the economic and political stability of the metropolises, but also that they sacrifice the popular movement that made political emancipation possible.

In this chapter, I argued that the coloniality of history situates colonized peoples within a normative double bind, namely, between an *uncivilized* indigenous past and a *civilized* European future. In this sense, the analysis of historical inferiority that I characterized in this chapter as the historical movement of progress and failure thus corresponds to one of the two “prongs” within which the coloniality of history situates colonized peoples. This means that the sense of historical inferiority emerges because of the way in which colonized peoples conceive of the future along a normative, Eurocentric ideal of humanity. In the next chapter, I turn to the way in which colonized peoples conceive of their relation to the past by analyzing the Latin American historical project of *mestizaje*, or the historical synthesis of the Spanish and indigenous traditions. Important about the project of *mestizaje* is that while it presents itself as a liberatory historical project, I show that it continues to relegate indigenous peoples to the *past* rather than considering them the *present* of Latin America. I thus show that while the historical project of *mestizaje* aims to offer an alternative to the Eurocentric ideal of humanity it continues to fall within the coloniality of history.

Chapter 4: A Phenomenological Analysis of the *Mestizx* Historical Consciousness

4.1. Introduction:

This chapter offers a phenomenological analysis of *mestizaje* as a historical-liberatory project in the work of Mexican philosopher Leopoldo Zea. By “*mestizaje*,” Zea understands not only the cultural synthesis of the Spanish, indigenous, and African traditions which took place during the colonization of the Americas, but a *historical project* which aims at liberating Latin American peoples from the Eurocentric way in which we conceive of the past, present, and future. In the previous chapter, I proposed the notion of “the colonality of history” to capture the way in which the historical projects of colonized peoples continue to obey a Eurocentric ideal of humanity that, in principle, is meant to exclude us. For this reason, I argued, Latin American peoples experience historical development as a continuous movement of progress and failure, and I referred to this phenomenon as *nepantla*—an indigenous concept that captures the existential situation of being in-between worlds of meaning. Zea’s project of *mestizaje* aims at liberating Latin American peoples from the historical experience of progress and failure. Particularly, Zea argues that three main historical projects mark the historical development of Latin America, namely, the *liberatory*, the *conservative*, and the *civilizing* projects. Zea traces the *liberatory* project to Simón Bolívar’s (1783-1830) and José Martí’s (1853-1895) calls for the formation of a Latin American identity at the time of independence which would prevent from Western European and U.S. imperialism. The conservative project corresponds to the post-independence period, when the white Latin American elites aimed to maintain the colonial past and the racial forms of social

organization. Lastly, the civilizing project of the late 19th century consists in the negation of the indigenous and colonial past and in the adoption of the U.S. values and institutions. Zea argues that either by maintaining the colonial past or by negating the past and adopting a foreign future, the conservative and the civilizing projects continue the “situation of dependence” to the Eurocentric ideal of humanity. In this sense, Zea’s project of *mestizaje* or the *assumptive* project, as he also calls it, consists in the assimilation of the past which would ground the projection of an *authentic* future.

My approach to the project of *mestizaje* is critical because I trace the *limits* of Zea’s historical-liberatory project by analyzing the sense that the past, present, and future acquire for the *mestizx* consciousness that he proposes.⁴⁵³ However, my critical analysis is different from those offered by contemporary critics of the project of a Latin American identity such as Walter Mignolo, Santiago Castro-Gómez, Alejandro Vallega, and Mario Sáenz. These thinkers argue that the project of a Latin American identity not only relies on a Western European way of conceiving history, but that it also replicates colonial power relations by homogenizing diverse social identities into a single national identity. For example, in *The Idea of Latin America* (2005), Mignolo argues that the idea of “Latin” America is an identity which emerges from the geohistorical organization imposed by Western Europe during colonization, and which serves the white elites to replicate colonial forms of social organization at the national level. Similarly, in his *Crítica de la Razón Latinoamericana* (1996), Castro-Gómez adopts Foucault’s archeological method to criticize both the transcendental subjectivity on which identity

⁴⁵³ Much like the term “Latinx” is a gender-neutral way of referring to peoples of Latin American descent in the U.S., I employ the term “*mestizx*” as a gender-neutral way of referring to the cultural identity that emerges from the historical project of *mestizaje*.

discourses like Zea's rely, and the *populist* regimes which they serve to justify. Vallega's more recent *Latin American Philosophy: From Identity to Radical Exteriority* (2014) proposes a decolonial aesthetics that captures the pre-reflective temporality which would transcend the modern rationality that served to justify colonization. Vallega thus criticizes identity discourses such as Zea's for adopting Western Europe's modern rationality and thereby also for failing to break with the universal conception of history. Lastly, although critical of Zea, Sáenz adopts a different approach. Instead of criticizing Zea's project of *mestizaje* as an identity discourse which relies on Western Europe's conception of history and which replicates colonial relations, in *The Identity of Liberation in Latin American Thought* (1999), Sáenz argues that Zea's is a top-down identity project which leads the later Zea to be critical of grassroots movements such as the Zapatista uprising in 1994. These contemporary thinkers thus criticize Latin American discourses such as Zea's for homogenizing difference into a project of national identity.

The critical approach I offer in this chapter differs from the previous critiques because I trace the limits of Zea's historical-liberatory project by analyzing the sense that the past, present, and future acquire within the project of *mestizaje*. I particularly focus on the sense that the future and the past acquire at the universal and national levels. At the universal level, I show that Zea adopts G.W.F. Hegel's *dialectical* method to criticize the *monological* conception of universal history and to propose, instead, a *dialogical* conception of universality. I argue that Zea's conception of the future is one where the universal ideal of humanity emerges from the historical projects of concrete peoples rather than from the imposition of a provincial ideal of humanity. At the national level, I analyze the meaning that the past acquires within Zea's project of *mestizaje*. I employ

Mexican philosopher Luis Villoro's (1922-2014) phenomenological analysis of the sense that indigeneity acquires for the Mexican consciousness within different historical projects. In his *Los Grandes Momentos del Indigenismo en México* (1950), Villoro shows that the Mexican consciousness situates indigenous peoples at various degrees in the past according to her historical projects. Following Villoro's analysis, I argue that, although Zea incorporates indigenous peoples into a project of national identity, he conceives of indigenous peoples as the *past* identity of *present* Mexico. As such, I argue that Zea's historical-liberatory project continues to relegate indigenous peoples to the *past* rather than considering them the *present* of Latin America.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section introduces Zea's project of *mestizaje* by tracing its intellectual resources to identity discourses in Latin America, particularly to thinkers such as Bolívar, Martí, and Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos (1882-1959). Unlike contemporary critiques, I show that identity discourses in Latin America emerge as nationalistic projects in response to the threat of U.S. imperialism. The second section offers a critical review of contemporary critiques about Latin American identity discourses like Zea's. I show that not only do these contemporary critiques fail to situate Latin American identity projects within the geopolitical context from which they emerge but also that, as in Vallega's case, they misunderstand Zea's alternative conception of universal history. The third section provides a critical-phenomenological analysis of Zea's conception of the *mestizx* historical consciousness. I argue that, at the universal level, Zea adopts Hegel's dialectics to propose a *dialogical* conception of humanity, one that emerges from the historical projects of concrete peoples. As such, I argue that Zea does not fall into the false

universalism of the Eurocentric ideal of humanity. Moreover, at the national level, I employ Villoro's phenomenological analysis of indigeneity to model my analysis of the *mestizx* historical consciousness in Zea's historical-liberatory project. I argue that although Zea's project of *mestizaje* incorporates indigenous peoples as the *past* identity of *present* Mexico, he continues to relegate indigenous peoples as the *past* rather than as the *present* of Mexico and, more broadly, of Latin America. I conclude by drawing from decolonial thinker Sylvia Wynter's triadic analysis of coloniality to show that, although Zea is in conversation with African nationalistic projects, he replicates colonial relations by excluding Afro-Latinx peoples from the *mestizx* historical consciousness that he proposes.

4.2. Zea's Project of Mestizaje as a Historical-Liberatory Project:

The purpose of this section is to introduce Zea's project of *mestizaje* as a historical-liberatory project by tracing its intellectual resources to the Latin American identity discourses from the 19th and 20th centuries. I particularly focus on the influence that thinkers such as Bolivar, José Enrique Rodó (1871-1917), Martí, and Vasconcelos had on Zea's articulation of *mestizaje*. The importance of tracing Zea's intellectual resources is to avoid anachronism by situating Latin American identity discourses within the geopolitical context from which they emerge. Central to this geopolitical context is the year of 1898, which marks the fall of the Spanish empire as well as the rise of U.S. imperialism. The weakening of the Spanish empire had begun in the 1810s with the invasion of Spain by Napoleon Bonaparte, and with the wars of independence throughout Latin America. At the same time, throughout the 19th century, the U.S. consolidated its geopolitical influence in the Americas with policies such as the Monroe Doctrine (1823),

with the Doctrine of Manifest Destiny (1845), and with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848). It was in 1898, however, that Spain loses its last colonies, the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico to the U.S. The identity discourses that I analyze in this section, precisely respond to this shift in geopolitical relations. For example, consider the following dedicatory from Vasconcelos' *Indología* (1927): "This book is dedicated to the National University of Puerto Rico, which asked me for advice to reach a better understanding about the two cultures that divide the New World. It has seemed to me that a clear exposition of the facts is the best contribution towards a future of harmony and progress."⁴⁵⁴ Note that Vasconcelos delivered the chapters of this book as a lecture series at the National University of Puerto Rico ten years after the island officially became a U.S. territory in 1917. In this sense, the National University's request for Vasconcelos advice corresponds to the necessity of clarifying its cultural identity vis-à-vis the shift in geopolitical relations. The identity discourses that inform Zea's project of *mestizaje* are thus nationalistic discourses which aim at articulating a sense of cultural and political identity relative to the emerging hegemony of the U.S. in the Americas.

In this section then I present Zea's project of *mestizaje* by tracing its intellectual resources to the Latin American discourses of the 19th and 20th centuries. I aim to show that these nationalistic discourses emerge from the necessity of defining their cultural and political identity in the face of the rising hegemonic influence of the U.S. throughout the Americas. For this, I first focus on the canonical works of Bolívar, Rodó, and Martí, from which Vasconcelos' and Zea's project of *mestizaje* draw. I then introduce Vasconcelos' formulation of *mestizaje* as both a *biological* and a *spiritual* project. Although

⁴⁵⁴ José Vasconcelos (1927), *Indología: Una Interpretación de la Cultura Ibero-Americana*, Agencia Mundial De Librería, París, Francia, (dedicatory). All translations are mine unless indicated otherwise.

Vasconcelos' conception of miscegenation has been discredited, I show that he aims to counter the racial science of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Lastly, I show that Zea draws from these identity discourses to formulate *mestizaje* as a historical project which aims at liberating Latin American peoples from the historical experience of progress and failure that emerges from continuing to obey the Eurocentric ideal of humanity.

4.2.1. *The Creation of "Latin" America During the 19th Century:*

Two aspects characterize the 19th century discourses which give rise to the idea of a "Latin" American identity. The first is the necessity of a political and cultural unity which would not only prevent from future colonial interventions, but which would also give rise to political systems that correspond to the historical circumstances of the nascent nation-states. For example, Venezuelan political leader Simón Bolívar argues that the newly formed nation-states not only lack the cultural unity which would ground their specific forms of government, but that they also lack in training in the art of self-government. In a famous passage, for example, Bolívar establishes the following analogy between the fall of the Roman empire and the fall of the Spanish empire:

I consider the current state of America similar to the circumstances surrounding the fall of the Roman Empire, when each breakaway province formed a political system suitable to its interests and situation... There is, though, this notable difference, that those dispersed members reestablished their former nations with the changes demanded by circumstances or events, while we, who preserve only the barest vestige of what we were formerly, and who are moreover neither Indians nor Europeans, but a race halfway between the legitimate owners of the land and the Spanish usurpers—in short, being Americans by birth and endowed with rights from Europe—find ourselves forced to defend these rights against the natives while maintaining our position in the land against the intrusion of the invaders.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁵ Simón Bolívar (2003 [1815]), "The Jamaica Letter: Response from a South American to a Gentleman from this Island," in *El Libertador: Writings of Simón Bolívar*, translated by Frederick H. Fornoff, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 18.

In Bolivar's view, the cultural identity of the newly formed nation-states corresponds neither only to the Spanish nor only to the indigenous populations. For this reason, the form of government which would be suitable to the newly formed nation-states can be neither only Spanish nor only indigenous, but it must be autochthonous to their cultural identity. Not only that, but Bolivar also argues that the emerging nation-states lack experience in the art of government. As he puts it, "we will find that America was not only deprived of its freedom but deprived as well of the opportunity to practice its own active tyranny."⁴⁵⁶ The problem, in Bolivar's view, is that the lack of a cultural identity and the lack in experience in the art of self-government lead the newly formed nation states to *imitate* the political systems of other countries, particularly from the U.S.

Bolivar offers the case of the first Republic of Venezuela, which adopted a federalist system after declaring its independence in 1811, and which made it vulnerable to fall into Spanish hegemony again in 1812.⁴⁵⁷ For this reason, Bolivar not only advocates for the adoption of a centralist political system, but he also advocates for the formation of a larger confederation of American states which would prevent from the threat of imperialism, particularly from U.S. imperialism.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid, 19. See also, Simón Bolívar (2003 [1819]), "The Angostura Address," in *El Libertador: Writings of Simón Bolívar*, translated by Frederick H. Fornoff, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 33-34.

⁴⁵⁷ In Bolivar's view, although the federalist system allows for greater autonomy by municipalities, it weakens the newly formed nation states by dividing them into factions which defend their individual interests. See, Simón Bolívar (2003 [1812]), "The Cartagena Manifesto: Memorial Addressed to the Citizens of New Granada by a Citizen from Caracas," in *El Libertador: Writings of Simón Bolívar*, translated by Frederick H. Fornoff, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 3-4.

⁴⁵⁸ In 1824, Bolivar invited the governments of Colombia, Mexico, Argentina, Chile and Guatemala to a congress that would lead to the formation of a confederation of American states in Panamá. The congress was meant to meet in June of 1825, but it met two years later, when the newly formed nation-states had divided into different factions. See, Simón Bolívar (2003 [1824]), "Invitation to the Governments of Colombia, Mexico, Río de la Plata, Chile, and Guatemala to Hold a Congress in Panama," in *El Libertador: Writings of Simón Bolívar*, translated by Frederick H. Fornoff, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 159-161. Bolivar's interest in creating a confederation of American states was also meant to prevent from U.S. imperialism. As he puts it in a lesser-known letter: "the United States, which seems destined by Providence to plague America with miseries in the name of freedom." Simon Bolivar (2003

Although Bolívar had foreseen the threat of U.S. imperialism, it was Uruguayan essayist José Enrique Rodó who, with his now canonical *Ariel* (1900), responded to the consolidation of U.S. imperialism in 1898. In *Ariel*, Rodó uses the characters of Caliban and Ariel from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (c. 1610-1611) to characterize the "Anglo American" and "Latin American" cultures that constitute the continent.⁴⁵⁹ While Rodó's characterization will be inverted by later thinkers, he identifies "Anglo America" with Caliban and "Latin America" with Ariel.⁴⁶⁰ As he puts it:

Ariel, genie of the air, represents, in the symbolism of Shakespeare's work, the noble and swift part of the spirit. Ariel represents the reign of reason and feeling over lower irrational stimuli; it is the generous enthusiasm, the higher goal and disinterested action, the spirituality of culture, the vivacity and grace of intelligence—the ideal goal towards which humanity aims, rectifying in the superior human the stubborn vestiges of Caliban, [which] symbolizes sensuality and ineptitude, with the persevering chisel of life.⁴⁶¹

More precisely, in Rodó's view, two aspects characterize Anglo American culture. The first is its utilitarian form of life which is expressed in its technical orientation to education and science, and which aims at "the subordination of nature to the human will and at the expansion of material well-being."⁴⁶² That is, for Rodó, Anglo American

[1829]), "Letter to Colonel Patrick Campbell, British Chargé d'Affaires: 'Plague America with Miseries,'" in *El Libertador: Writings of Simón Bolívar*, translated by Frederick H. Fornoff, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 172-173.

⁴⁵⁹ In his essay "Caliban," Cuban literary critic Roberto Fernández Retamar shows that Shakespeare's play was informed by Michel de Montaigne's essay "On Cannibals" (1580), which was a popular description in Europe of the indigenous peoples in the Caribbean, and which portrayed them as savages and eaters of human flesh. See, Roberto Fernández Retamar (1989 [1971]), "Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America," in *Caliban and Other Essays*, translated by Edward Baker, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 8.

⁴⁶⁰ Retamar writes as follows: "Our symbol then is not Ariel, as Rodó thought, but rather Caliban. This is something that we, the *mestizo* inhabitants of the same isles where Caliban lived, see with particular clarity: Prospero invaded the islands, killed our ancestors, enslaved Caliban, and taught him his language to make himself understood. What else can Caliban do but use that same language—today he has no other—to curse him, to wish that the 'red plague' would fall on him?" Ibid, 14.

⁴⁶¹ José Enrique Rodó (1967 [1900]), *Ariel*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 22.

⁴⁶² Ibid, 52.

utilitarian culture fails to rise beyond the immediate satisfaction of the material necessities of human life. The second aspect that characterizes Anglo American culture in Rodó's view is its democratic system, which promotes mediocracy instead of "the cultivation of a higher culture."⁴⁶³ In contrast to Anglo American utilitarianism, Rodó argues that characteristic of Latin American culture is its aesthetic orientation towards life. By an aesthetic orientation towards life, Rodó means the *disinterested* "feeling of beauty" as a moral principle.⁴⁶⁴ In this sense, Rodó argues that education should promote the feeling of beauty and that it should serve as a selective process for the formation of an aristocratic class which would embody higher culture.⁴⁶⁵ Lastly, in Rodó's view, different from Anglo American culture that failed to incorporate indigenous peoples, the Catholic element in Latin American culture involves a *cosmopolitanism* which allows it to incorporate other cultural traditions.⁴⁶⁶ Rodó's *Ariel* then represents not simply an ethnographical effort, but a nationalistic project in the face of U.S. imperialism.

Lastly, echoing Bolívar's call for a cultural and political unity, in his famous "Our America" (1891), Cuban poet José Martí calls for the formation of a cultural identity which would integrate the European, indigenous, and African elements that constitute Latin America, and from which an autochthonous political system would emerge. In Martí's diagnosis, the newly formed republics had adopted foreign cultural and political

⁴⁶³ Ibid, 54.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid, 42. Rodó puts it as follows: "Those who have learned to distinguish between what is fine from what is vulgar, what is ugly from what is beautiful, is already half-way to distinguishing what is bad from what is good." Ibid, 45.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid, 54.

⁴⁶⁶ Rodó puts it as follows: "We—Latin Americans—possess a racial inheritance, a great ethnic tradition to protect, a sacred link that ties us to the immortal pages of history, trusting in our honor its continuation in the future. [That is the] cosmopolitanism to which we must hold fast as irremediably necessary for our formation, which excludes neither the feeling of fidelity towards the past nor the directive and express force with which the spirit of the race must impose itself in the reformation of the various elements that will constitute the American of the future." Ibid, 72.

models and had imposed them on the indigenous and *mestizx* populations of Latin America. It is because of these foreign cultural and political models, Martí argues, that Domingo Sarmiento's dichotomy between civilization and barbarism, which we saw in the previous chapter, emerges. As Martí puts it, "the battle is not between civilization and barbarity, but between false erudition and nature."⁴⁶⁷ Thus, instead of *imitating* foreign cultural and political models, Martí calls for the *creation* of an autochthonous culture and political systems: "they understand that there is too much imitation, and that salvation lies in creating. *Create* is this generation's password. Make wine from plantains; it may be sour, but it is our wine!"⁴⁶⁸ For Martí then the creation of an autochthonous culture which would integrate the Spanish, indigenous, and African elements would also lead to the creation of an autochthonous political system. As he puts it, "The spirit of the government must be the spirit of the country. The form of government must be in harmony with the country's natural constitution."⁴⁶⁹ Lastly, as in Bolívar's and Rodo's cases, Martí's formulation of "Our" American culture also responds to the threat of U.S. imperialism. It is important to note that Martí died fighting the Cuban war of independence against Spain in 1895, and that the U.S. would be the beneficiary of the Spanish-American War (1898). For this reason, Martí writes that to the importation and imposition of foreign cultural and political systems, "our America may also face another danger, which comes not from within but from the different origins, methods and interests of the continent's two factions," namely, Anglo and Latin America.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁷ José Martí (2002 [1891]), "Our America," in *José Martí: Selected Writings*, translated by Esther Allen, New York, NY: Penguin Books, 290.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid, 294.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid, 290.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid, 295.

The 19th century discourses that call for a Latin American cultural and political unity and that, as we shall see, inform Zea's project of *mestizaje*, are thus characterized by two aspects. The first one is that they are nationalistic projects which call for the cultural integration of the indigenous, Spanish, and African elements that constitute Latin America. This cultural project would in turn serve to ground an autochthonous political system which would correspond to the peoples that constitute Latin America. The problem to which these nationalistic projects respond is not only that the newly formed nation-states impose foreign cultural and political models, thereby leading to the dichotomy between civilization and barbarism, but also that this imitative attitude makes them vulnerable to the threat of imperialism, particularly U.S. imperialism. The second aspect that characterizes 19th century discourses of a Latin American identity is that they aim to respond to the fall of the Spanish empire and the rise of U.S. imperialism. Although these thinkers do not make this point, we might read their identity discourses as a *dialectical* way of defining the "Latin" American identity. By "dialectical," I mean that one's identity is defined in negative relation to that which one is not. In this sense, we might read Bolívar's, Rodo's, and Martí's nationalistic projects as an effort to define Latin America's cultural and political identity in negative relation to the emerging U.S. imperialism. This means that, contrary to contemporary criticisms of the project of a Latin American identity, the nationalistic projects of the 19th century are not simply efforts by the ruling elites to establish their hegemonic position at the national level but aim at responding to changes in the geopolitical relations between Spanish and U.S. imperialism. This project will continue into the 20th century through the work of José Vasconcelos and Leopoldo Zea.

4.2.2. *Vasconcelos' Formulation of Mestizaje as a Biological-Spiritual Project:*

So far then we have seen that the 19th century discourses regarding the formation of a Latin American identity respond not only to the lack of an internal cultural unity, but also to the threat of U.S. imperialism. In her recent *Theorizing Race in the Americas: Douglass, Sarmiento, Du Bois, and Vasconcelos* (2017), political scientist Juliet Hooker argues that Vasconcelos' *mestizaje* as a racial identity in Latin America "sought to facilitate regional unity and oppose US dominance in the hemisphere."⁴⁷¹ Not only that, but Hooker shows that Vasconcelos' formulation of *mestizaje* responds to the scientific racism in the U.S. and Europe from the 1850s to the 1940s.⁴⁷² Thus, situating Vasconcelos' formulation of *mestizaje* as a racial project in Latin America can help in understanding the scientific and geopolitical context to which it responds as well as the theoretical background from which he draws. For example, in *Indología*, Vasconcelos directly responds to a book published by U.S. eugenicist Madison Grant as follows:

When I was about to finish the final version of this book, I learned about the publication of a book by Madison Grant, with a French prologue by [Georges Vacher de] Lapouge, who, if I understand correctly, is one of the most prominent phrenologists, one of those who have made of anthropology a pseudo-science. The reading of his book has led me to raise a few comments which I transcribe here in the order in which they appeared to me.⁴⁷³

Hooker particularly argues that from the mid-19th to the mid-20th centuries, three schools were the most prominent in articulating scientific racism, namely, the ethno-biological school, the historical school, and the social-Darwinian school.⁴⁷⁴ According to the ethno-

⁴⁷¹ Juliet Hooker (2017), *Theorizing Race in the Americas: Douglass, Sarmiento, Du Bois, and Vasconcelos*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 158. For another account of the influence of scientific racism on Vasconcelos' formulation of *mestizaje*, see Manuel Vargas (2000), "Lessons from the Philosophy of Race in Mexico," *Philosophy Today*, 44, 18-29.

⁴⁷² Ibid, 6.

⁴⁷³ Vasconcelos, 1927, 104, footnote.

⁴⁷⁴ Hooker, 2017, 7.

biological school, differences in biological composition among humans corresponded to “external factors, such as climate and geography.”⁴⁷⁵ Moreover, the historical school “argued that race was the central factor in historical development, that Aryans or Anglo-Saxons had reached the most advanced level of civilization, and that racial mixing led to degeneration.”⁴⁷⁶ Lastly, for the social-Darwinian school, “different races exhibited different levels of aptitude, including the ability to survive and become dominant, and as a result some were destined to rule over others.”⁴⁷⁷ As Hooker argues, disproving these theories was not only important for “anti-colonial thinkers such as Vasconcelos,” but Vasconcelos also drew from these theories as the scientific background for his articulation of *mestizaje*.⁴⁷⁸

Vasconcelos’ project of *mestizaje* particularly involves two main premises. The first premise is that, while Vasconcelos draws from mid-19th and mid-20th centuries racist science to formulate a theory of racial groupings, he follows Henri Bergson in arguing that the creative force of racial evolution is not only biological, but also spiritual.⁴⁷⁹ This means that, for Vasconcelos, racial groups are not only biological composites but, most importantly, groups that have a distinct spiritual life that distinguishes them from other racial groups. For this reason, in his famous *La Raza Cósmica* (1925), Vasconcelos argues that his purpose is to determine whether the racial mixing in Latin America has a

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid, 8.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid, 11.

⁴⁷⁹ In his Introduction to Vasconcelos’ *The Cosmic Race / La Raza Cósmica*, Didier T. Jaén explains Bergson’s influence in Vasconcelos as follows: “Opposing this [Spencerian evolutionary theory], Henri Bergson, in his work *Creative Evolution* (1907), proposed the theory that evolution is initiated and carried forward by a vital impulse. This *élan vital* is not mechanical but free and creative, therefore, unpredictable. Bergson’s theory shifts the driving force of evolution from the purely materialistic and mechanical to the spiritual and free.” Didier T. Jaén (1997), “Introduction,” in José Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race / La Raza Cósmica*, translated by Didier T. Jaén, Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, xi-xii.

“contribution to culture comparable to that of the relatively pure races that have made history up to our days, such as the Greeks, the Romans, or the Europeans.”⁴⁸⁰ Moreover, for Vasconcelos, there are four main racial trunks, namely, “the Black, the Indian, the Mongol, and the White.”⁴⁸¹ Vasconcelos argues that each of these racial groups have made an important cultural contribution to humanity, and that the white race is the one which is currently dominant because of its colonial expansion across the world.

Vasconcelos claims that the cultural contribution of the white race is that, by expanding across the world, it “has brought the world to a state in which all human types and cultures will be able to fuse with each other.”⁴⁸² For Vasconcelos then the cultural contribution of the white race is that it has afforded the *material* conditions for the evolution of a fifth race which will result from the racial mixing of all other races and which he calls the *mestizx* race. This universal mixing of all races, Vasconcelos continues, will take place in Latin America not only because of the racial intermixing that took place during colonization, but also because it is the region of the world which can afford the natural resources for this mission. As Vasconcelos puts it, “the dispersion will come to an end in American soil; unity will be consummated there by the triumph of fecund love and the improvement of all the human races.”⁴⁸³ To oppose the racist-scientific view that racial mixing leads to degeneration, Vasconcelos turns to the cultural contribution of *mestizaje* in Latin America, which is the second premise of his formulation.

⁴⁸⁰ José Vasconcelos (1997 [1925]), *The Cosmic Race / La Raza Cósmica*, translated by Didier T. Jaén, Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 4.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid*, 9.

⁴⁸² *Ibid*.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid*, 18.

The second premise in Vasconcelos' formulation of *mestizaje* as a biological-spiritual project is that different from Bergson's theory of creative evolution which lacks a *teleological* direction, for Vasconcelos, historical evolution obeys a teleological principle which he calls "the law of the three stages."⁴⁸⁴ According to this law, each stage accomplishes a higher level of social integration. For example, in Vasconcelos' view, the principle that rules social organization in the "material or warlike" stage is physical necessity, such that individuals make war or form agreements based on the satisfaction of their biological needs.⁴⁸⁵ In the second stage, that Vasconcelos calls "intellectual or political," reason is the principle of social organization and individuals make pacts based on mutual convenience rather than immediate need.⁴⁸⁶ Although this stage reaches a higher degree of social integration, Vasconcelos argues that it is the third, "spiritual-aesthetic" stage, which reaches the highest degree of social integration.⁴⁸⁷ That is because in the third stage the principle that rules social organization is what Rodó calls "the feeling of beauty." As Vasconcelos puts it, the norm of conduct in the third state is the law of "creative feeling and convincing beauty."⁴⁸⁸ This means that institutions of social integration such as marriage will obey "the laws of emotion, beauty, and happiness," rather than immediate or mediate convenience.⁴⁸⁹ Importantly, in Vasconcelos' view, the white race, which he identifies with Anglo Saxon and European peoples, has already afforded the material conditions to accomplish social integration at the global level, but its culture lacks the aesthetic sensibility characteristic of the Spanish and Catholic

⁴⁸⁴ Vasconcelos, 1997 (1925), 28.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid, 29.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid, 30.

traditions in Latin America. Indeed, Vasconcelos reads the shift in geopolitical relations between Spain and the U.S. as a threat to the project of global integration into a single, fifth race because, if the U.S. becomes hegemonic, “the armies would come out of there to impose upon the other continents the harsh law of domination by the blond-hair Whites.”⁴⁹⁰ Vasconcelos thus argues that, given the *mestizaje* which took place during colonization and given the aesthetic feeling derived from the Spanish tradition, the *mestizx* race in Latin America is destined to become the fifth race which would unify all other races.⁴⁹¹

The two premises in Vasconcelos’ formulation of *mestizaje* thus mean that, different from the racist science in the U.S. and Europe which discredited racial mixing as degrading, the cultural contribution of racial mixing is not only biological but primarily spiritual. The spiritual element that Vasconcelos draws from the Spanish tradition is the aesthetic principle of social organization which would accomplish not only social integration in Latin America, but which would result in a global project of racial integration. In this sense, Vasconcelos’s project of *mestizaje* is a biological-spiritual project of universal dimensions. However, despite his contribution to the integration of a Latin America, Vasconcelos has been criticized for favoring Nazism in his later years and because in his depiction of *mestizaje* Vasconcelos retains much of the

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid, 25.

⁴⁹¹ Vasconcelos puts it as follows: “The race best qualified to discover and to impose such a law upon life and material things will be the matrix race of the new civilization. Fortunately, such a gift, necessary to the fifth race, is possessed in great degree by the mestizo people of the Ibero-American continent, people for whom beauty is the main reason for everything. A fine aesthetic sensitivity and a profound love of beauty, away from any illegitimate interests and free from formal ties, are necessary for the third period, which is impregnated with a Christian aestheticism that puts upon ugliness itself the redemptive touch of pity which lights a halo around everything created.” Ibid, 38.

racial prejudice against indigenous and Afro-Latinx peoples.⁴⁹² For example, Hooker argues that Vasconcelos depiction of *mestizaje* retains much of the racial prejudice against indigenous and Afro-Latinx peoples, “given this litany of negative racial traits ascribed to nonwhite racial groups, it is difficult to believe that Vasconcelos found much to value in them.”⁴⁹³ What I find most problematic about Vasconcelos formulation of *mestizaje* is that, in his view, indigenous and Afro-Latinx peoples would become integrated into *mestizaje* through a process of *Latinization*. Vasconcelos thus argues that the future of indigenous and Afro-Latinx peoples is Latin culture, thereby relegating them to the past. As he puts it, “the Indian has no other door to the future but the door of modern culture, nor any other road but the road already cleared by Latin civilization.”⁴⁹⁴ Moreover, another aspect that I find problematic in Vasconcelos’ formulation of *mestizaje* is his characterization of gender relations. On this respect, Hooker argues that “Vasconcelos’s account of *mestizaje* is masculinist in two ways: women are rarely mentioned in his texts and when they do appear it is mainly as objects of the male sexual

⁴⁹² In an interview, for example, Spanish exile philosopher in Mexico María del Carmen Rovira relates that “There is a second Vasconcelos, the one from the 1930s and 40s, which I assume is the Vasconcelos to which you are referring, the Vasconcelos who would unequivocally express his Spanish and Catholic political position. It is correct. Vasconcelos ended up being a fascist. He used to praise Hitler in his magazine *Timón*. Anyone is free to have whatever ideology they prefer, and we must respect it. What I do not tolerate is hypocrisy.” José Manuel Cuéllar Moreno and María del Carmen Rovira (2022), “María del Carmen Rovira o la Honradez Intelectual,” *El Universal*, Web Access (9/20/2022): <https://confabulario.eluniversal.com.mx/maria-del-carmen-rovira-o-la-honradez-intelectual/>. Without aiming to delve deeper into this controversy, I only want to point out that his fascist turn in Vasconcelos politics comes as a surprise, particularly when one considers his writings from the 1920, where he explicitly condemns Nazism. See, for example, this passage from *La Raza Cósmica*: “This prediction [about the intermixing of all racial groups in the world] was first published at a time when the Darwinist doctrine of natural selection, which preserves the fittest and dooms the weak, was still prevalent in the scientific world; a doctrine which, applied to the sociological field by Gobineau, gave origin to the pure Aryan theory, supported by the English and carried to aberrant imposition by the Nazis.” Vasconcelos, 1997 (1925), 3. As the case might be, Vasconcelos’ formulation is still an important contribution to the formation of Latin America as an ethnic unity despite its many shortcomings.

⁴⁹³ Hooker, 2017, 172.

⁴⁹⁴ Vasconcelos, 1997 (1925), 16.

gaze.”⁴⁹⁵ More than that, in both *La Raza Cósmica* and *Indología*, women appear prominently but gender relations are between a White man and an indigenous or black woman. When commenting on the role that the feeling of beauty will play in marriage, for example, Vasconcelos writes that, “we see with profound horror the marriage of a black woman and a white man.”⁴⁹⁶ This means that Vasconcelos characterizes whites as playing a *masculine* role while indigenous and Afro-Latinx peoples play a *feminine* role in the process of *mestizaje*. These problematic aspects in Vasconcelos’ formulation of *mestizaje* will reappear in future formulations, including in Leopoldo Zea’s.

4.2.3. Leopoldo Zea’s Formulation of Mestizaje as a Historical-Liberatory Project:

In the foregoing, I aimed to show that the 19th and 20th centuries discourses regarding a Latin America identity respond both to the necessity of cultural unity and to changes in the geopolitical relations between Spain and the U.S. Leopoldo Zea draws from thinkers and political leaders such as Bolivar, Rodó, Martí, and Vasconcelos to formulate Latin America’s “situation of dependency,” as Zea calls it, and the project of *mestizaje* as a historical-liberatory project. Much like thinkers like Vasconcelos then Zea argues that what characterizes the history of Latin America is that “the responses of Latin American peoples are inscribed within the colonial horizon we have described. These responses make up the historical conception of these peoples.”⁴⁹⁷ That is, in Zea’s reading, the historical projects of Latin American peoples emerge in response to the imperialistic projects of Europe and the U.S. Moreover, much like Bolivar, Rodó, Martí, and Vasconcelos, Zea argues that in an effort to liberate ourselves from the situation of

⁴⁹⁵ Hooker, 2017, 173.

⁴⁹⁶ Vasconcelos, 1997 (1925), 31.

⁴⁹⁷ Leopoldo Zea (1978), *Filosofía de la Historia Americana*, México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 165.

dependency, Latin American peoples have adopted the political, economic, and cultural ideals of Europe and the U.S., which has led to new forms of dependency. As Zea puts it, “one form of colonization takes the place of the other. Western countries would occupy, plain and simple, the ‘power vacuum’ [*vacío de poder*] left by Iberian colonialism.”⁴⁹⁸ The problem, Zea further argues, is that the recurring historical pattern of aiming to liberate ourselves while continuing to fall into the situation of dependency leads Latin American peoples to treat our historical circumstance as *inferior* relative to the European and U.S. ideals we *imitate*. What distinguishes Zea’s project of *mestizaje* from Vasconcelos’, however, is that whereas for Vasconcelos *mestizaje* consists in a biological-spiritual project of racial mixing, for Zea, *mestizaje* consists in the historical synthesis of the different projects that constitute the history of Latin America, and which would ground an *authentic*, liberatory future. Zea’s project of *mestizaje* thus aims at liberating Latin American peoples from the historical pattern of progress and failure that emerges from continuing to obey the Eurocentric ideal of humanity.

Particularly, Zea argues that three historical projects mark the development of Latin America, namely, the *liberatory*, the *conservative*, and the *civilizing* projects. Zea attributes the liberatory project to the calls for unity against U.S. imperialism by thinkers and political leaders like Bolívar and Martí. In Zea’s words, the banner of the liberatory project is “unity, unity, unity was necessary to make this project possible. Not only the project already accomplished of expelling the colonizer but the more difficult project of organizing, legislating, governing, and educating for freedom.”⁴⁹⁹ However, the project of a Latin American unity for the sake of liberation failed because the local elites

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid, 166.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid, 188.

defended their interests at the expense of the common interests. In this sense, Zea argues that although they turn into new forms repressive systems, the *conservative* and the *civilizing* projects adopt the emancipatory promise of the liberatory project. More precisely, Zea characterizes the *conservative* project as an effort by the white “*criollos*”⁵⁰⁰ to achieve political emancipation while maintaining the social and political organization left by Spain. Zea traces the historical expression of the conservative project to the parliamentary congress celebrated in Spain in 1810 that came to be known as the Cortes de Cádiz. The Cortes de Cádiz aimed to restore power of the kingdoms of Castille to the Spanish King during the occupation by Napoleon Bonaparte. Zea argues that the position of the Latin American *criollos* was twofold. On the one hand, the *criollos* tried to maintain the hegemonic link between the King of Spain and the Vice-Royalties in Latin America. On the other hand, however, the *criollos* demanded equality of representation. As such, Zea interprets the position of the *criollos* as an effort to “assimilate the best of our colonial past, the heritage over which the new nations would be built. The past that had given rise form of order that would also be maintained. Not, of course, the order of colonial dependency, but the order which had allowed the metropolis to prevail.”⁵⁰¹ That is, for Zea, the conservative project consists in maintaining the colonial order without the colonial dependency. Ultimately, however, the conservative project fails because the Cortes de Cádiz refused to grant to the Latin American *criollos*

⁵⁰⁰ Roughly, “criollos” refers to a white racial group that directly descended from the Spanish colonizers, but which were born in Latin America and, for this reason, were unable to hold high ranking positions of power. Zea describes “criollos” in Latin America as follows: “Es éste criollo, presente en ésta nuestra América, imitando al padre conquistador y colonizador, tratando de ser como él; pero siempre dentro del plano de desigualdad, que le viene del hecho de haber nacido en esta América y no en el centro de poder. Es el señor local, superior a los indígenas, negros y mestizos, pero nunca igual al peninsular, el cual le dicta, ordena lo que ha de ser hecho.” Ibid, 167.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid, 215.

the equality of rights which it protected for citizens of the metropolis. As Zea puts it, “the Cortes de Cádiz, which were liberal regarding their opposition to Napoleon’s despotism, will be indifferent to recognizing the rights of its Spanish descendants abroad. For the metropolitan Spanish, America is but a place to be exploited and, along with it, its native population.”⁵⁰²

Unlike the conservative project, which aimed to maintain the cultural and political institutions of Spain, Zea argues that the *civilizing* project constituted an effort by the *mestizx* bourgeoisie and by the *criollo* elites to *negate* the indigenous and colonial past and an effort to adopt the cultural and political institutions of the U.S. In this sense, Zea argues that the civilizing project consisted in a “blood cleansing and a brain washing.”⁵⁰³ That is, for the proponents of the civilizing project, the indigenous peoples and the values and institutions inherited from Spain were inadequate for achieving the economic progress of the U.S. For this reason, it was necessary, on the one hand, to repopulate Latin America through a process of ethnic cleansing and to reeducate Latin Americans according to the pragmatic values of the U.S. As Zea puts it, the civilizing project was instituted “through a great migration which would take the place of the *criollo*, indigenous, and *mestizx* peoples; and through an education which would make of Latin Americans a people different from what they had been.”⁵⁰⁴ In this sense, Zea argues that the civilizing project consists in an effort to *negate* the past as well as an effort to remake oneself according to a foreign future.⁵⁰⁵ The most important representatives of the civilizing project are Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1868-1874) in Argentina and the

⁵⁰² Ibid, 224.

⁵⁰³ Ibid, 253.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid, 244.

Porfirio Díaz regime (1884-1911) in Mexico. These governments not only implemented a politics of ethnic cleansing as in the case of the Yaqui peoples in Sonora, Mexico, or the Gaucho peoples in the Argentinian Pampas, but they also implemented industrial policies that were meant to achieve the economic progress of the U.S.⁵⁰⁶ Ultimately, however, Zea argues that the civilizing project fails because it generated a “pseudo-bourgeoisie which would contend itself with playing a managerial role in the region, [that is] an intermediary bourgeoisie which protected the interests of the Western bourgeoisie.”⁵⁰⁷ As such, Zea argues that the civilizing project fell into the neocolonial efforts of Western Europe after the fall of the Spanish empire.

In Zea’s view, the conservative and civilizing projects failed for two reasons. The first reason is that these are imitative projects of European and U.S. values and institutions which make Latin American peoples vulnerable to new forms of colonization. In the previous chapter, I characterized this phenomenon in normative terms through the Eurocentric ideal of humanity which guides the historical projects of colonized peoples. The second reason these projects fail is that they constitute a juxtaposition of foreign values over the Latin American reality. As Zea puts it:

A de-personalizing [*despersonalizante*] juxtaposition because it negated the colonized of any right to adopt as her own the values that the colonizer considers his own. Negation which not only would reach the indigenous peoples, but also criollos and mestizxs. Over the indigenous peoples would be imposed a foreign culture, a culture for which they are only an instrument to be exploited. As for the criollo, who rules

⁵⁰⁶ Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, a Mexican anthropologist who I discuss in the conclusion of this chapter, for example, describes the struggles of the Yaqui peoples as follows: “Some peoples resisted in spite of everything. The Yaqui and Mayo rose up in 1825 under the youthful leadership of Juan Banderas, and did it again from 1885 to 1905, under the command, first, of Cajeme and, later, of Tetabiate. Don Porfirio sent many Yaqui to Yucatan in chains, for being ‘obstinate enemies of civilization.’ There they escaped from the henequen plantations to begin their return on foot to their own land, thus writing one of the most prodigious epics in the struggle for liberty. It was only one episode among dozens in the same country during the same century.” Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (1996 [1987]), *Mexico Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization*, translated by Philip A Dennis, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 99.

⁵⁰⁷ Zea, 1978, 267-68.

over the indigenous; she rules not on her own name, but in the name of the Iberian, whom she recognizes as her ruler. Regarding the *mestizx*, the offspring of an indigenous woman and an Iberian man, she will aspire, although ineffectively, to become part of the father's world, feeling ashamed for her mother's origin. She will be like a bastard: rejected from one world while she renounces the other.⁵⁰⁸

That is, for Zea, the conservative and civilizing projects follow a juxtaposing pattern that consists in adopting foreign values and in negating an element of the Latin American reality, such as the colonial and indigenous past or the *mestizx* present. Zea's project of *mestizaje* aims at correcting these two shortcomings of the previous projects. More precisely, Zea adopts the Hegelian notion of *Aufhebung* which Zea interprets as "assumption" to formulate the project of *mestizaje*.⁵⁰⁹ As Zea writes, the assumptive project "takes as its point of departure our own reality, for negative that it might appear, to build with it the world that we desire. Negation, but a negation that affirms. That is, assumption of our own reality. And with reality, history, and the past."⁵¹⁰ For Zea, the project of *mestizaje* thus consists in incorporating the previous historical projects as well as the indigenous and colonial past into a historical project that would ground an *authentic* future. This project entails that different from the conservative and civilizing projects, the values that would guide the historical projects of Latin Americans would emerge from their various efforts to respond to the situation of dependency relative to Europe and the U.S. In this sense, Zea's project of *mestizaje* promises to integrate the

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid, 166.

⁵⁰⁹ Ofelia Schutte makes an interesting point when she argues that Zea's interpretation of *Aufhebung* is a softer one than Hegel intended: "The Meaning of the Hegelian *Aufhebung* is softened to 'assimilation,' in contrast to the German sense of double negation, cancelation, and uplifting, which carries a stronger, sharper sense of opposition and synthesis than that found in the work of the Mexican philosopher." Ofelia Schutte (1990), "The Master-Slave Dialectic in Latin America: The Social Criticisms of Zea, Freire, and Roig," *The Owl of Minerva*, 22:1, 11.

⁵¹⁰ Zea, 1978, 270-71.

indigenous, colonial, and *mestizx* elements of the Latin American reality as well as to break with the Eurocentric ideal of humanity.

4.3. Contemporary Critiques to the “Idea” of a Latin American Identity:

In the previous section, I introduced Zea’s *mestizaje* as a historical-liberatory project by tracing its intellectual resources to the 19th and 20th century discourses regarding the formation of a Latin American identity. I aimed to situate these discourses within the geopolitical context from which they emerged to show that they respond to the lack of cultural and political unity after achieving political emancipation and to the rising threat of U.S. imperialism. In my view, the contemporary critiques about 19th and 20th century identity projects in Latin America precisely fail to consider the geopolitical context from which these identity projects emerge. For this reason, contemporary thinkers such as Walter Mignolo, Santiago Castro-Gómez, Alejandro Vallega, and Mario Sáenz criticize these identity projects as homogenizing efforts by the Latin American elites which aim to replicate colonial forms of social organization. More precisely, these thinkers argue that 19th and 20th century thinkers continue to adopt Western-European ways of conceiving of Latin America’s historical identity thereby also continuing to reproduce colonial relations. For example, in *The Idea of Latin America* (2005), Mignolo argues that the Latin American identity emerges from the geopolitical organization imposed by Western Europe during colonization, and which serves the creole and *mestizx* elites to replicate racist forms of social organization. Similarly, in *Crítica de la Razón Latinoamericana* (1996), Castro-Gómez argues that advocates of the project of a Latin American identity adopt a “transcendental subjectivity” which he identifies with the notion of “the people” [*el pueblo*], and which serves to justify *populist* regimes in Latin America. For his part,

Vallega argues that Zea's historical-liberatory project of *mestizaje* adopts Hegel's "reflexivity" to arrive at a sense of universal history, thereby excluding the pre-reflective, aesthetic experience of indigenous peoples. Lastly, in *The Identity of Liberation in Latin American Thought*, Sáenz takes a different approach. While sympathetic of Zea, Sáenz argues that Zea's *mestizaje* is a top-down approach that leads the later Zea to dismiss the importance of grassroots movements. The problem for contemporary critics is thus that 19th and 20th century discourses regarding the formation of a Latin American identity continue to adopt colonial forms of social organization.

In this section, I offer a critical review of contemporary critiques regarding the formation of a Latin American identity. I first show that although Mignolo's analysis about the modern continental organization is correct, he fails to consider the specific geopolitical context to which identity discourses in Latin America respond. In this sense, I argue that "Latinidad" is not only a colonial imposition but a dialectical way of defining one's identity relative to the growing imperial power of the U.S. I then consider Castro-Gómez's view that identity discourses in Latin America depend on the modern conception of "transcendental subjectivity" and serve to justify populist regimes. I argue that Castro-Gómez critique corresponds to the *depoliticized* view of the subject prominent in Latin America since the 1980s and which we have seen crumbling in the early 21st century. Moreover, I show that Vallega's reading of Zea's view of universality is misguided. Against Vallega, who argues that Zea's universality depends on Hegel's notion of "reflexivity," I argue that Zea's universality depends on his adoption of Hegel's dialectics. Lastly, I argue, against Sáenz, that the reason Zea dismisses grassroots movements such as the Zapatista movement is not so much that his approach of *mestizaje*

is a top-down one, but that in Zea's view, indigenous movements have been *subsumed* as the past of present Mexico. In the following section, I expand on my critique of Zea's *mestizaje*.

4.3.1. Walter Mignolo on the "Idea" of Latin America:

In the previous chapter, I noted that Mignolo's important contribution to decolonial philosophy is the notion of the "colonial difference." By the "colonial difference," Mignolo means that the colonization of the Americas not only gave rise to a geopolitical organization the center of which was occupied by Western Europe, but that to this organization also corresponds a "geo-politics of knowledge."⁵¹¹ That is, Mignolo's view is that Western Europe not only became the global center of political and economic relations, but that it also reserved for itself the monopoly of *reason*. In Mignolo's view the monopoly of reason gave rise to a hierarchical organization between Western European and non-European subjects, such that Western European subjects came to be considered as *rational* and non-European subjects came to be considered *irrational* or *pre-rational* at best.⁵¹² Moreover, Mignolo argues that relations of superiority and inferiority during colonization came to be conceived of as *natural*, thereby giving rise to the racialization of power relations. However, in Mignolo's view, the racialization of power relations was not only an intersubjective process such that it regards relations between individuals, but a geopolitical process as well, such that it regards relations between geographical regions. As Mignolo puts it, "that undisputed division underlies not only debates over continental divides but also ideas of East and West, North and South,

⁵¹¹ Walter Mignolo (2005), *The Idea of Latin America*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 10.

⁵¹² *Ibid*, xv.

and explicitly hierarchical categories such as First, Second, Third, and Fourth Worlds.”⁵¹³

In short, this means that the colonization of the Americas gave rise to a system of geopolitical relations where geographical regions came to be defined in terms of superiority and inferiority. For Mignolo, it is against this background that the “idea” of a Latin America emerges. For example, Mignolo draws from philosopher and historian Edmundo O’Gorman’s analysis about the so called “discovery” to argue that, rather than the “discovery” of a subjectively independent entity, the Americas were constituted as an entity inferior to Western Europe.⁵¹⁴ Thus, Mignolo argues, “Americanity” is an identity *invented* by Western Europe and *imposed* over the inhabitants of this territory.⁵¹⁵

Moreover, Mignolo argues that, at the local level, the continuation of colonial forms of social organization required the adoption of colonial identities by the local elites. According to Mignolo, during the 19th century, the creole and *mestizx* elites began a process of cultural identification with the values and institutions of the metropole. The idea of “Latin” America precisely emerges from this process of cultural identification with metropolitan culture. As Mignolo writes:

White Creole and Mestizo/a elite, in South America and the Spanish Caribbean islands, after independence from Spain adopted “Latinidad” to create their own postcolonial identity. Consequently, I am arguing here, “*Latin*” America is not so much a subcontinent as it is the political project of Creole-Mestizo/a elites. However, it ended up by being a double-edge sword. On the one hand, it created the idea of a new (and the fifth) continental unit (a fifth side to the continental tetragon that had been in place since the sixteenth century). On the other hand, it lifted up the population of European descent and erased the Indian and the Afro populations. *Lati*

⁵¹³ Ibid, x.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid, 3.

⁵¹⁵ Mignolo puts it as follows: “‘Discovery’ and ‘invention’ are not just two different interpretations of the same event; they belong to *two different paradigms*. The line that distinguishes the two paradigms is the line of the shift in the geo-politics of knowledge; changing the terms and not only the content of the conversation. The first presupposes the triumphant European and imperial perspective of world history, an achievement that was described as ‘modernity,’ while the second reflects the critical perspective of those who have been placed behind, who are expected to follow the ascending progress of a history to which they have the feeling of not belonging.” Ibid, 4.

America was not—therefore—a pre-existing entity where modernity arrived and identity questions emerged. Rather, it was one of the consequences of the remapping of the modern/colonial world prompted by the double and interrelated process of decolonization in the Americas and emancipation in Europe.⁵¹⁶

The process about the constitution of “Latin” America as Mignolo describes it here thus involves a twofold movement. The first is that “Latin” America resulted from the geopolitical organization which emerged during colonization where Western Europe came to occupy a central position in political and economic relations. The second movement is that “Latin” America resulted from the adoption of metropolitan identities by the creole and *mestizx* elites. The implication of Mignolo’s argument is that this double process replicated colonial relations of power both at the geopolitical and at the local levels. This means that, at the geopolitical level, the local elites became subservient to the political and economic interests of their metropolitan counter parts. And at the local level, the creole and *mestizx* elites also replicated colonial forms of social organization within the former colonies. As such, Mignolo’s view is that the formation of a “Latin” America identity as a “political and ethical project was the ethos of internal colonialism.”⁵¹⁷

Although I find Mignolo’s analysis about how colonization gave rise to relations of superiority and inferiority not only at the intersubjective but also at the geopolitical level illuminating, I find that Mignolo also de-contextualizes the adoption of a “Latin” American identity by the local elites. Particularly, Mignolo fails to consider that the adoption of the “Latin” American identity was an effort by the Latin American political leaders and intellectuals to take a geopolitical stance regarding the shift in geopolitical

⁵¹⁶ Ibid, 59.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid, 65.

relations from Spanish to U.S. imperialism. Above, I suggested that one way of reading the geopolitical stance that Latin American leaders and intellectuals adopted is in *dialectical* terms. That is a way of defining one's identity in negative relation to what one is not. In the case of the Latin American leaders and intellectuals, I am suggesting that the reason they claimed "Latin" culture as their own and in contradistinction to the "Anglo" culture is that they were responding to the rising hegemonic position of the U.S. in the hemisphere. This reading explains why thinkers and political leaders such as Rodó and Vasconcelos claimed Catholic ideals like the aesthetic moral feeling and cosmopolitanism as defining of the Latin American identity. Thus, in the face of the rising U.S. hegemony, Latin American leaders and intellectuals adopted the cultural identity of the previous metropolitan power, Spain. However, this does not mean that the adoption of the "Latin" American identity was free from power relations, since both Rodó and Vasconcelos advocated for aristocratic forms of government and for the Latinization of indigenous and Afro-Latix peoples. Nevertheless, failing to situate 19th and 20th century discourses regarding the formation of a "Latin" American identity within their geopolitical context results in failing to consider that these discourses were also *anti-imperialistic*. As such, it is misguided to argue that these discourses were efforts by the creole and *mestizx* elites to occupy the position of power previously occupied by the metropolitan colonizers. Even if these thinkers replicated colonial forms of social organization at the local level, by failing to situate them within the geopolitical context from which they emerge, Mignolo misses the anti-imperialistic nature of these discourses.

4.3.2. *Castro-Gómez's Critique of Latin American Reason:*

In *Crítica de la Razón Latinoamericana*, Santiago Castro-Gómez criticizes discourses about the formation of a Latin American identity by adopting Foucault's genealogical method. Castro-Gómez argues that by employing Foucault's genealogical method he will "offer a critical analysis of the family of discourses which made possible the creation of the entity called 'Latin America,' endowed with an *ethos* and a cultural identity which supposedly transcends the modern European rationality."⁵¹⁸ Castro-Gómez's genealogical analysis particularly focuses on two aspects, namely, on the type of rationality presupposed by discursive practices regarding the formation of a Latin American identity and on the political regimes that they serve to justify. In the case of the type of rationality, Castro-Gómez argues that although they claim to trace a distinct type of rationality, Latin American discourses in fact presuppose a "transcendental subject" characteristic of modern European rationality. In Latin America, Castro-Gómez continues, this "transcendental subject" is identified with "the people" or *el pueblo*, which serves as the "foundation without foundations" [*"fundamento infundamentado"*].⁵¹⁹ That is, in Castro-Gómez's analysis, *el pueblo* serves as the agent of Latin American history which, although dependent on the activity of individual subjects, cannot be reduced to any individual subject. Castro-Gómez particularly distinguishes between two traditions of Latin American discourses, namely, the "historicist" tradition represented by Zea and the "liberationist" tradition represented by

⁵¹⁸ Santiago Castro-Gómez (1996), *Crítica de la Razón Latinoamericana*, Bogotá, Colombia: Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 12.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid*, 118.

Enrique Dussel.⁵²⁰ For example, Castro-Gómez shows that although Dussel claims for Latin America a kind of rationality which is *exterior* to Western European modern rationality, Dussel “does not decentralize the [modern] subject but only replaces it for another absolute subject.”⁵²¹ As such, Castro-Gómez argues that Dussel’s discourse is but an extension of Western European modern rationality. Similarly, in Zea’s case, Castro-Gómez shows that the history of ideas depends on a transcendental subject which is constituted throughout the liberating efforts of individual subjects, and which emerges through philosophical reflection. In this sense, Castro-Gómez writes that Zea’s “philosophy of history functions as the representation of a subject which pre-exists the relations of power and the discourses that constitute it, and which manifests its unfolding across history.”⁵²² In both cases then Castro-Gómez argues that although identity discourses aim to capture the particularity of a Latin American rationality, they are in fact extensions of the modern European rationality they criticize.

In Castro-Gómez’s analysis the transcendental subject serves to abstract from the power relations that constitute empirical or individual subjects. In contrast to the Latin American identity discourses then by employing the genealogical method, Castro-Gómez aims to trace the regimes of power within which these discourses emerge. For this, Castro-Gómez follows the Uruguayan literary critic Angel Rama who, in his famous *La*

⁵²⁰ Castro-Gómez describes these traditions as follows: “El historicismo que puede retraerse desde Ortega y Gasset a través de la influencia de José Gaos en México en los años cincuenta, desemboca finalmente en el proyecto de la ‘historia de las ideas’ difundido por Leopoldo Zea entre los años cincuenta y setenta. El liberacionismo, en cambio, es una corriente que emerge de la mano del marxismo en los años sesenta con las críticas de Augusto Salazar Bondy, y que encuentra en Argentina su lugar de convergencia con los escritos de Enrique Dussel, Juan Carlos Scannone, Mario Casalla, Oswaldo Ardiles, Horacio Cerutti, etc.” Ibid, 13.

⁵²¹ Ibid, 38.

⁵²² Ibid, 118.

Ciudad Letrada (1984),⁵²³ shows that “discourses do not directly obey the intentionality of human consciousness, but rather a symbolic order which functions with relative independence of the individuals who employ them, and which is inscribed within social relations of power.”⁵²⁴ Particularly, in the case of Latin American identity discourses, Castro-Gómez argues that *el pueblo*, as a transcendental subject, serves to justify *populist* political regimes in Latin America. As Castro-Gómez writes:

From this perspective, populism can be seen as a *democracy of the masses*. It is neither individual citizens, nor civil society, but ‘the people’—seen as a substantial and homogeneous mass—which serves as the primary referent of populism. The people as something pre-given, as a referent prior to politics itself, as a being ‘in-itself’ that expresses the national identity.⁵²⁵

That is, in Castro-Gómez’s view, *el pueblo* serves to abstract away from the diverse identities of individual subjects and to constitute a homogeneous national identity. Moreover, by appealing to *el pueblo*, populist political leaders or *caudillos*, justify the imposition of social relations of power over diverse individuals, thereby creating a regime of power which excludes difference. Castro-Gómez thus writes that “such tropes... function in the Latin American philosophical discourse as mechanisms which *homogenize difference*, serving then as the perfect correlate of the authoritarian and excluding practices of populism.”⁵²⁶ Castro-Gómez offers as examples the Mexican revolution of 1910, which led to the single-party authoritarian regime of the PRI, the Argentinian Peronism in 1945, which opposed foreign capitalism and the local oligarchy in the name of the dispossessed masses, and the Cuban Revolution from 1959, which

⁵²³ See, Angel Rama (1996 [1984]), *The Lettered City*, translated by John Charles Chasteen, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

⁵²⁴ Ibid, 118.

⁵²⁵ Ibid, 67.

⁵²⁶ Ibid, 68.

opposed U.S. imperialism while installing an authoritarian regime.⁵²⁷ In all these cases, Castro-Gómez argues, the trope of *el pueblo* serves to ground a homogeneous national identity and to justify authoritarian practices.

In my view, Castro-Gómez's critique of Latin American identity discourses belongs to a series of *postmodern* analyses that became prominent in U.S. and Western European universities during the 1990s and which served to justify the implementation of *neoliberal* policies in Latin America. Consider, for example, that although Castro-Gómez renounces the postmodern bent of his analysis in the second edition of *Crítica de la Razón Latinoamericana*, which was published in 2011, the book was originally published in 1984, four years after Augusto Pinochet promulgated the current Chilean constitution, which represents the first constitutional effort to adopt neoliberal policies in Latin America.⁵²⁸ Moreover, it is not merely coincidental that postmodern analyses such as Castro-Gómez's appeared at the same time as the implementation of neoliberal policies in Latin America. That is because Castro-Gómez's critique of *el pueblo* as the transcendental subject employed by Latin American identity discourses corresponds to the postmodern de-politization of the subject. For Castro-Gómez, the "postmodern condition," as he calls it following Lyotard, consists not only in the abolition of grand narratives and in the decentralization of the subject, but also in a process of *cultural mediatization*. This means that the formation of cultural and political identities "has

⁵²⁷ Ibid, 67-68.

⁵²⁸ Regarding his renouncement of the postmodern language he employs in the book, Castro-Gómez writes as follows: "Cuando regresé al país en 1998 dejé de interesarme por el tema de la filosofía latinoamericana y pasé a ocuparme de asuntos relacionados con las teorías poscoloniales y los estudios culturales. No veía la necesidad de republicar un texto escrito varios años atrás, en coyunturas teóricas y personales que ya no sentía como propias. Esto sin mencionar la distancia que había tomado frente al lenguaje vanguardista que se utiliza en el libro... Finalmente llegue a una especie de compromiso: dejaría intacta la estructura del libro, tal como apareció en su versión original, y conservaría su lenguaje posmoderno." Ibid, 11.

nothing to do with the purity of folklore and popular traditions, but with the way in which people appropriate in their own way deterritorialized symbols disseminated by *media*.”⁵²⁹ In this sense, it is not surprising that, for Castro-Gómez, the postmodern condition “is characterized by a tendency towards the formation of ‘restrictive identities,’ which value the micro-group and private life.”⁵³⁰ The de-politization of the subject that Castro-Gómez advocates corresponds to the privatization of rights such as education, health, labor, and security during neoliberal regimes. What is ironic is that the recent wave of progressive governments in Latin America are recovering the trope of *el pueblo* and the public rights that were privatized by neoliberal policies since the 1990s.

4.3.3. *Vallega’s Critique of Zea’s Universalism:*

Much like Castro-Gómez, in his relatively recent *Latin American Philosophy from Identity to Radical Exteriority* (2014), Alejandro Vallega criticizes philosophers such as Enrique Dussel and Leopoldo Zea for adopting Western European rationality to formulate their projects of liberation. However, unlike Castro-Gómez, who criticizes these thinkers for adopting the transcendental view of subjectivity, Vallega criticizes them for adopting the *universal* conception of rationality which would allow for the recognition of colonized peoples by Western European subjects. For example, Vallega argues that while Dussel aims to capture the “radical exteriority” of the colonized relative to Western European rationality, he “ultimately takes the form of traditional rational arguments, seeking to speak theoretically and in the language of the center for the sake of gaining recognition for the excluded and the oppressed.”⁵³¹ In this sense, Vallega argues,

⁵²⁹ Ibid, 30.

⁵³⁰ Ibid, 25.

⁵³¹ Alejandro Vallega (2014), *Latin American Philosophy: From Identity to Radical Exteriority*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 7.

Dussel's project of liberation fails to capture the particular experience of the colonized and falls back into Western European universality. Moreover, in Zea's case, Vallega criticizes the notion of *authenticity* as the Western European condition for entering universal history. That is, in Vallega's reading Zea interprets the history of Latin America as a continuous effort to become like the colonizer, and Zea's project of liberation consists in adopting the *creativity* of Western European culture rather than in adopting specific values or institutions. Thus, in Vallega's view, for Zea, "the root of the force of Western thought and culture, the power that makes for its eventual worldwide expansion, is its 'creativity' or originality (*originalidad*)."⁵³² For Zea, Vallega continues, the source of European authenticity is *reflective through* as "a creative process in the sense that it occurs from a people's engagement with their own living historical situation," and which allows the colonized to situate their particular history within a universal context.⁵³³ In this sense, Vallega argues that, by adopting the Western European reflexive thought, Zea seeks to inscribe the particularity of Latin American history into the universal history developed by Western Europe and which served to justify colonization.

The problem, in Vallega's view, is that although liberation philosophers like Dussel and Zea adopt Western European rationality to gain recognition from the colonial centers, they sacrifice the particularity of Latin American experience for the sake of a false universalism. Particularly, in Zea's case, Vallega argues that by inscribing Latin American history within the Western European conception of universal history, Zea also encloses the experiences of colonized peoples within a "single sense of time and history [which] functions as an aesthetic disposition that limits and determines the possibilities of

⁵³² Ibid, 27.

⁵³³ Ibid, 28.

philosophical knowledge at a pre-conceptual, embodied level.”⁵³⁴ In this sense, Zea’s project of liberation continues to enclose colonized peoples within colonial ways of conceiving subjectivity at the pre-reflective level. In contrast to the Eurocentric conception of universal history, Vallega characterizes the pre-reflective experience of colonized peoples as what he calls an “ana-chronic” temporality, which means “an overlapping of histories that by virtue of the overlapping of lineages decenter an ultimately disseminate any possible idea of an essential or ontologically single origin to which lives must answer.”⁵³⁵ This means that ana-chronic temporality aims to capture a pre-reflective temporal experience that transcends and decenters the Eurocentric conception of universal history. To capture this ana-chronic temporality, Vallega proposes a “decolonial aesthetics,” as the “affirmation of distinct Latin American experiences, dispositions, and senses of being in the affective and physically embodied dimensions, which set up and delimit the very projections of desires from which and in terms of which conceptual knowledge, ideas, and discourses of freedom take form.”⁵³⁶ In contrast to Zea’s project of an authentic history through *reflective thought*, Vallega proposes to reject the universal conception of history by capturing the particular pre-reflective, temporal experience of colonized peoples.

Although I find Vallega’s decolonial aesthetics which would capture the distinct temporality of colonized peoples interesting, I find his view problematic for two reasons. The first reason has to do with his critique of Zea’s conception of universality. As I showed above, Vallega interprets Zea as adopting reflective thought through which the

⁵³⁴ Ibid, 8.

⁵³⁵ Ibid, 115.

⁵³⁶ Ibid, 4.

particular experiences of colonized peoples would reach the level of universality. And the conception of universality within which Zea aims to inscribe the historical experience of the colonized is the Eurocentric conception which served to justify colonization. As I will show in more detail in the following section, however, Vallega's interpretation of Zea is misguided. To sketch Zea's view, consider the argument I presented in Chapter 2 of this dissertation against Edmund Husserl's conception of universality. I argued that Husserl offers a monological view about the European discovery of *the world*, and that Husserl's view about the constitution of objectivity should instead have led him to a *dialogical* conception where *the world* emerges in the I-other relation, such that *the world* would transcend the subjective realm of experience. Similarly, Zea adopts Hegel's dialectical method to challenge the monological view of universal history that Hegel proposes. This means that instead of adopting the Eurocentric conception of universal history, in Zea's view, universal history emerges from the overlapping, to use Vallega's felicitous expression, of the historical projects of concrete peoples. Not only that, but as I aim to show, Zea also realized that this *dialogical* conception of universal history can de-center the Eurocentric ideal of humanity. For this reason, Vallega's criticism that Zea inscribes the historical experience of the colonized within the Eurocentric conception of universal history is misguided. Moreover, the second reason I find Vallega's view problematic is that, for him, the project of a Latin American identity that philosophers such as Dussel and Zea advocate not only homogenizes the pre-reflective temporal experience of Latin American peoples, but also aims to seek recognition from the European center. As in Castro-Gómez's case, my view is that Vallega fails to acknowledge the anti-imperialistic character of these identity projects. In the first section of this Chapter I showed that rather

than seeking recognition from the European centers, the project of formulating a distinct Latin American identity emerges as a response to the geopolitical shift from Spanish to U.S. imperialism. As such, I am suggesting that Vallega fails to situate identity projects such as Zea's within the historical context from which they emerge.

4.3.4. *Sáenz's Critique of Zea's Mestizaje from Above:*

The last author I would like to discuss is Mario Sáenz. Although critical of Zea's *mestizaje*, in *The Identity of Liberation in Latin American Thought* (1999), Sáenz takes a different approach. Different from Mignolo, Castro-Gómez, and Vallega who criticize identity projects like Zea's for adopting Western European rationality and for reproducing colonial relations, Sáenz recognizes the importance of Zea's project of *mestizaje* but criticizes it for proceeding in a top-down manner. The argument of Sáenz's book then is twofold. On the one hand, Sáenz recognizes that for groups of people whose humanity has been denied through several waves of colonization, the question of identity becomes the most fundamental philosophical question. In this sense, Sáenz agrees with Zea in that the history of ideas can serve as the ground to formulate Latin American identity. On the other hand, however, Sáenz argues that the problem with the history of ideas is that it focuses on the production of the intellectual elites and misses the historical ideals of the oppressed masses. In a telling passage, for example, Sáenz writes as follows:

I agree in this with Zea's original intuition that it is in the history of our ideas (which Latin Americans only apparently borrowed) that we are to find the heart and substance of Latin American philosophy. Thus I would argue against Dussel's practical (though perhaps unintended) dismissal of most of Latin American philosophy; according to him, we have to wait until the philosophy of liberation germinated in Argentine philosophical thought. Yet I agree with Dussel's attempt to find the substance of our thought beyond the dominant intellectual strata; it is also necessary as well to listen to the ideas of the marginalized and the oppressed, and to give voice to the voiceless if need be. Dussel attempts to do those things. Because of that I tend to disagree with Zea's culturalist approach to our history of ideas, for often

a culturalist approach misses the nuances and the differences between the culture of the oppressor and that of the oppressed, as well as the class stratification of our own internal social structures. However, there is validity in what Zea has done even to the extent of showing that the philosophy of the bourgeoisie was *our* (i.e., the Latin American's) philosophy, whether *we* commit ourselves to bourgeois rule or not.⁵³⁷

That is, for Sáenz, Zea's concern with formulating an authentic culture emerges from the colonial negation of Latin American people's humanity, but also from the imposition of foreign ideals and institutions over the Latin American reality. In this sense, Sáenz argues, the question that Zea aims to respond is "how is it possible not to have a culture that is one's own?"⁵³⁸ Differently put, the question of cultural authenticity regards the very humanity of Latin American peoples in as much as being a human being entails being a cultural agent. Lacking in an authentic culture then means that Latin American peoples are not cultural agents and not authentically human. Sáenz shows that Zea adopts José Ortega y Gasset's notion of the circumstance to capture the situation of colonial dependency and the way that the projects of Latin American peoples aim to transcend this historical situation. This means that, in Zea's history of ideas, the cultural identity of Latin American peoples emerges from the efforts of transcending the situation of colonial dependency. Moreover, an important aspect of Sáenz's reading is that he avoids purist interpretations which would exclude the historical projects of the creole and bourgeois elites such as the conservative and the civilizing projects from the authentic Latin American identity.⁵³⁹ As such, Sáenz argues that Zea's project of *mestizaje* incorporates

⁵³⁷ Mario Sáenz (1999), *The Identity of Liberation in Latin American Thought: Latin American Historicism and the Phenomenology of Leopoldo Zea*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 20.

⁵³⁸ Ibid, 76.

⁵³⁹ Sáenz puts it as follows: "We cannot separate the culture *imposed* from the culture *attained* by proposing a model of interpretation that seeks to produce a mythical purism, as has been the case in some of the legends that have characterized racist ideology in some countries." Ibid, 96. That is, in Sáenz's interpretation, excluding the projects of the creole and bourgeois elites would lead to a similar negation

both the culture *imposed* through colonial projects as well as the culture *attained* throughout the liberating efforts of Latin American peoples.

However, although appreciative of Zea's concern with cultural authenticity, Sáenz also argues that, in Zea's view, cultural production is an activity reserved for the intellectual elites, such that the project of *mestizaje* for which Zea advocates regards the integration of the projects of the elite instead of emerging from the ideals and aspirations of oppressed peoples. Sáenz writes that, "Zea associates the meaning of culture to the *intellectuals*' reflections on culture. 'American man' is thus in effect the Latin American intellectual man."⁵⁴⁰ Indeed, most of Zea's work of recovering a Latin American philosophical tradition focuses on the philosophical and political projects of the intellectual elites. Consider, for example, that the conservative and civilizing projects which Zea analyzes and aims to integrate are the projects of the creole and bourgeois elites. For this reason, Sáenz distinguishes between Zea's legitimate concern with cultural authenticity from the elitism that permeates Zea's analysis. As Sáenz puts it, "it is possible to develop the conception of culture Zea develops without the intellectualism and elitism that characterized his own version of it."⁵⁴¹ The problem, in Sáenz's view, is that his intellectual elitism led the later Zea to incorporate the marginalized into his liberatory project, but in so far as they "did not challenge the class alliances those national movements brought about."⁵⁴² For example, Sáenz argues that the later Zea became a spokesperson for the PRI political party that emerged after the Mexican

from Latin American reality which led to the genocide of indigenous peoples throughout the region during the 19th century.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid, 78.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

⁵⁴² Ibid, 308.

Revolution while also discrediting the demands of grassroots movements such as the Zapatista uprising in 1994 which threatened to destabilized the political hegemony of the PRI.⁵⁴³ For this reason, Sáenz distinguishes between Zea's "*mestizaje* from above" and a "*mestizaje* from below." By "*mestizaje* from above," Sáenz means a "rhetorical device for *directing* the national and the continental project at the expense of the masses left outside of it or, at best, in the role of mere followers because of their social, economic, and cultural situation."⁵⁴⁴ In contrast, Sáenz advocates for an "ideal of *mestizaje* [which] is neither finished not completed except in the realm of illusion, unless it is done 'from below' and interests of those [grassroots] cultural organizations" like the Zapatista movement.⁵⁴⁵

Although Sáenz is right that the later Zea is critical particularly of the Zapatista movement in Mexico, I disagree that this should be attributed to Zea's intellectual elitism. As I aim to show in more detail in the following section, my view is that Zea's critical stance regarding the Zapatista movement corresponds to Zea's *assumptive* project, which incorporates indigenous peoples as the *past* identity of present Latin America. More precisely, for Zea, what characterizes the Mexican revolution is that it brought to light and incorporated the indigenous masses which other projects had excluded. This means that, in Zea's reading, the Mexican revolution integrated the indigenous identity into a single, national identity. This interpretation leads Zea to deny that the Zapatista movement have an identity claim that transcends the Mexican national

⁵⁴³ Ibid, 316-17.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid, 294.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid, 317.

identity. Regarding Zea's intellectual elitism,⁵⁴⁶ I agree that Zea focuses on the historical projects of the intellectual elites at the expense of the historical ideals of grassroots movements. However, my view is that it would be wrong to consider the historical projects that Zea analyses as simply representing the historical aspirations of the intellectuals, since these historical projects had social, political, and economic consequences in the lives of Latin American peoples. Consider, for example, that the civilizing project, as Zea calls it, resulted in political regimes such as the Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship, in the adoption of industrializing economic policies, and in the implementation of genocidal campaigns against indigenous peoples throughout the region. In this sense, although Zea's history of ideas focuses on the historical projects of the political and intellectual elites, it would be misguided to think that these projects fail to correspond to the Latin American historical reality. More generally, without denying the shortcomings of Zea's project of *mestizaje* as a historical liberatory project, my approach to contemporary critics of the project of a Latin American identity has been to

⁵⁴⁶ Zea's role as a spokesperson for the PRI political party is a controversial issue. On the one hand, Sáenz is right in that Zea received governmental resources to launch his project of recovering the history of Latin American ideas. As Zea recounts in his *Filosofía de la Historia Americana*, he became the president of the Comité de la Historia de las Ideas en América in 1947. During his presidency, Zea promoted the publication of works such as *La Filosofía en Uruguay en el Siglo XX* by Arturo Ardao, *El Pensamiento Boliviano en el Siglo XX* by Guillermo Francovich, *Esbozo de una Historia de las Ideas en el Brasil* by João Cruz Acosta, *El Desarrollo de las Ideas en la Sociedad Argentina* by José Luis Romero, among others. See, Zea, 1978, 9. On the other hand, it is not clear to me that Zea became a naïve or uncritical spokesperson for the PRI. Consider, for example, Zea's view about the role of the intellectual in politics from 1954, when he was invited to join the ranks of the party: "En 1954 [Zea] será invitado a articipar en el Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) por el Presidente del Comité Ejecutivo Regional del Distrito Federal... 'Qué puedo hacer en el Partido?—preguntó Zea—. No soy político y no sabría qué hacer.' 'Dígalo así doctor, participe en la Asamblea Regional y exponga cuál puede ser la participación del intelectual en la política.' Aceptó Zea y habló ante el Ejecutivo en Pleno del Partido de la Revolución Mexicana, el 27 de noviembre de 1955. Fue esta su primera intervención política. Entre otras cosas dijo: 'El intelectual no es, ni puede ser, un adorno para vestir a un determinado partido en unas determinadas circunstancias, manteniendo su calidad de intelectual.' Cuando se hace tal cosa se renuncia al papel de intelectual. Leopoldo Zea (1988), "Autopercepción Intelectual de un Proceso Histórico," in *Anthropos: Revista de Documentación Científica de la Cultura*, 89, 14. That is, while Zea benefited from institutional resources, it is unclear that, as Sáenz portrays him, he was an uncritical spokesperson for the PRI.

show that not only do they fail to situate identity projects such as Zea's within the historical context to which they respond, but also that, as in Vallega's case, by attributing to Zea a Western European view of universality, they also fail to realize the *anti-colonial* character of these discourses.

4.4. Zea's Universality and the Critique of The Mestizx Historical Consciousness:

Although I offer a critical approach to Zea's project of *mestizaje*, my approach differs from contemporary critics of Latin American identity projects in two ways. First, contemporary critics argue that identity projects such as Zea's depend on Eurocentric conceptions either of the subject or of universal history that justified colonization. Castro-Gómez and Vallega, for example, argue that Zea appeals either to a transcendental subject or to universal history to develop the identity of Latin America and to inscribe it within universal history. Contrary to these contemporary critics, I show that Zea does not adopt the *monological* conception of universal history characteristic of Eurocentric thinkers. Rather, I will show that although Zea adopts Hegel's *dialectical* method, he does so to develop a *dialogical* conception of universal history, one where universality is achieved through the interaction of the historical projects of concrete peoples. Second, contemporary critics argue that Latin American identity discourses such as Zea's homogenize particular identities into a national identity, thereby marginalizing those who do not conform to the national identity. My view differs from this criticism in that, while I think that Zea's project of *mestizaje* marginalizes indigenous peoples, he does so by incorporating them as the *past* identity of *present* Latin America. In this sense, although my critical approach coincides with that of contemporary critics, it differs in that I consider the sense that the *past*, *present*, and *future* acquire for Zea. For this reason, I

argue that, different from contemporary critics, my analysis focuses on the diachronic aspect of Zea's project rather than on the synchronic one. I support my analysis by drawing from the work of Latin American philosophers such as Ofelia Schutte and Luis Villoro. Schutte's interpretation is important because she shows that, although Zea draws from Hegel's dialectics to formulate his conception of universality, he does not fall into the *monological* view of Eurocentric discourses. Villoro offers a diachronic analysis of the way in which the *mestizx* consciousness constitutes its indigenous object *as a historical object*. I employ Villoro's analysis to model my reading of Zea's project of *mestizaje*. I show that, in Zea's *assumptive* project, indigenous peoples constitute the *past* identity of *present* Latin America. As such, I argue that Zea's *mestizaje* continues to relegate indigenous peoples to the *past* rather than considering them the *present* of Latin America.

This section then offers a critical analysis of Zea's project of *mestizaje* by clarifying the sense that the past, present, and future acquire for the *mestizx* historical consciousness he proposes. I first focus on the sense that the future acquires in Zea's view by analyzing his view of a universal history. I argue that, unlike contemporary critics such as Vallega, Zea offers a *dialogical* rather than a *monological* conception of history. I show that, in Zea's later work, this dialogical conception of universal history *de-centers* the Eurocentric view of universality. I then introduce Villoro's analysis of the *mestizx* historical consciousness to show the way in which the *mestizx* constitutes her indigenous object in historical terms. Lastly, I model my analysis of Zea's *mestizaje* after Villoro's. I thus argue that while Zea's project of *mestizaje* incorporates indigenous

peoples into a Latin American identity, he also relegates indigenous peoples to the *past* rather than considering them the *present* of Latin America.

4.4.1. *Dialectics and Zea's Critique of Eurocentric Universality:*

While Zea's early formulation of the history of Latin American ideas draws primarily from the work of Ortega y Gasset, since the 1950s, Zea adopts two concepts from Hegel's work, namely, the notion of *Aufhebung* and the *dialectical* method. I have already introduced how Zea adopts the notion of *Aufhebung* to formulate the project of *mestizaje* as a historical synthesis of the previous historical projects that have shaped Latin American reality, and I return to it below when I discuss the problematic aspects of Zea's *mestizaje*. For now, I focus on Zea's adoption of the *dialectical* method to show how he employs it to criticize the *monological* way in which Eurocentric thinkers conceive of universal history. Zea explicitly employs Hegel's dialectics to analyze the situation of colonial dependency in Latin America in works such as *Dialéctica de la Conciencia Americana*⁵⁴⁷ (1976) and in *Filosofía de la Historia Americana* (1978). However, my analysis draws from *La Filosofía Americana como Filosofía sin Más* (1969) because this book synthesizes Zea's early formulation of the history of ideas and his later employment of dialectics to articulate a *dialogical* conception of universal history and to *decenter* the Eurocentric ideal of humanity. In *La Filosofía Americana como Filosofía sin Más*, Zea models his analysis of colonial relations along the terms of Hegel's master-slave dialectics. Much like in Hegel's analysis, one consciousness negates the other to affirm itself as *essential*, Zea formulates colonial relations as the affirmation of European humanity and the negation of the humanity of non-European peoples. In

⁵⁴⁷ Leopoldo Zea (1976), *Dialéctica de la Conciencia Americana*, México: Alianza Editorial Mexicana.

Zea's view, the universal conception of history emerges as a reflective process whereby European peoples affirm their own humanity and justify colonial enterprises against non-European peoples.⁵⁴⁸ Unlike the Eurocentric view, Zea argues that Latin American philosophy emerges from the necessity of colonized peoples to question the status of their humanity, and the history of Latin American ideas emerges from the attempts of the colonized to *affirm* their humanity.⁵⁴⁹ As we shall see, this means that, as in Hegel's master-slave dialectic, the slave-consciousness that formerly appeared as inessential, now becomes *essential* through the struggle to affirm its humanity.

In my view, two aspects are important about Zea's conception of universality. The first is that different from the *monological* conception that emerges from Eurocentric thinkers, Zea proposes a *dialogical* conception of universality. For example, in her canonical paper "The Master-Slave Dialectic in Latin America: The Social Criticism of Zea, Freire, and Roig" (1990), Ofelia Schutte interprets Zea's adoption of the dialectical method as an effort to criticize the "unilineal, univocal conception of history, whose end result has been to marginalize Latin America, Asia, and Africa from a narrowly defined

⁵⁴⁸ In *Filosofía de la Historia Americana*, for example, Zea puts it as follows: "La aventura geográfica conducirá, inevitablemente, a la aventura de la conciencia. Dentro de sí mismo, el hombre que ha iniciado los grandes descubrimientos geográficos va a descubrirse como hombre. Como hombre en relación con otros muchos antes que, en alguna forma, parecen semejarle. Y, como consecuencia del descubrimiento de su humanidad, a partir de su relación con otros hombres, y rompiendo las limitaciones de las viejas fronteras en que se había realizado su historia como europeo, y aun antes de que se pueda hablar de su europeísmo, este hombre se encontrará también con otras historias. Y al encontrarse con otras historias se encontrará igualmente con su propia historia. Es el encuentro con otros hombres y otras historias, el que hace que el europeo descubridor, conquistador, y colonizador se defina como hombre, dando sentido a la historia, a su propia y concreta historia." Zea, 1978, 48.

⁵⁴⁹ In *Filosofía Americana como Filosofía sin Más*, Zea puts it as follows: "Sin embargo, en esta historia no se daba el caso de que alguien inquirese si tenía o no derecho al Verbo, Logos o Palabra, aunque la misma inquisición implicase ya el uso de este derecho. El uso sin más, por el simple preguntar y por solicitar una respuesta. Tal es el caso de quienes, en América Latina, desde hace algún tiempo, y en otros lugares al margen del mundo llamado occidental, se preguntan por la posibilidad de una filosofía, o por la existencia de la misma." Leopoldo Zea (1969), *La Filosofía Americana como Filosofía sin Más*, México: Siglo XXI Editores, 10.

logocentric movement of history.”⁵⁵⁰ In contrast to the Eurocentric view, Schutte argues that Zea’s project of universality captures the “other side” of world history, or the perspective of history that emerges from the point of view of the colonized.⁵⁵¹ That is, Zea’s call for the development of the history of ideas among colonized peoples represents an effort not only to affirm their humanity, but also to develop their own perspective regarding the colonized world. This means that neither universal history nor the ideal of humanity can be reduced to the point of view of Europe, but that both universality and humanity are constituted from the perspectives of the historical projects of concrete peoples, including European peoples. As Schutte writes, “it is the rationality of a conquering civilization which needs to be brought into dialogue with the view of the world pertaining to those who have suffered the conquest as something imposed on them by an external force.”⁵⁵² Not only that, but the possibility of dialogue between the different historical projects of colonized peoples emerges because, while they aim to respond to the concrete situation of colonial dependency, they also aim to transcend that situation. Thus, when Zea writes that “the philosophies that emerge from a certain circumstance, from the problems of a specific reality, can in some way be useful to solve the problems of another reality,”⁵⁵³ he means that while historical projects emerge from specific realities, they also aim to transcend those realities. In this sense then Zea’s conception inverts the imposition of a universalized conception of history into a *dialogical* conception of universality that emerges from the interaction of concrete historical projects.

⁵⁵⁰ Schutte 1990, 9.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid, 10.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Zea, 1969, 30.

Moreover, the second important aspect of Zea's alternative conception of universality is that he not only advocates for a *dialogical* engagement between concrete historical projects, including European historical projects, but also that he *de-centers* the Eurocentric conception of humanity. This is most evident in *La Filosofía Americana como Filosofía sin Más*, where Zea offers what we might describe as a decolonial argument *avant la lettre*. In Zea's view, the humanism that emerges from colonization not only implies the dehumanization of non-European peoples, but it also leads to the dehumanization of European peoples. Zea particularly argues that the humanitarian crisis of World War II represents a dehumanizing process by European peoples of European peoples, much like European peoples dehumanize non-European peoples. For this reason, Zea argues that while formerly non-European peoples had to justify their humanity to European peoples, it is European peoples who must now justify their humanity to non-European peoples. In this sense, Zea writes that "this human being took herself as essential in the world; but there are new eyes that see her ceasing to be so. There are other human beings to whom those who considered themselves human *par excellence* must justify their humanity as well as their inhumanity against other humans."⁵⁵⁴ This means that, in Zea's alternative reading of universal history, Eurocentric humanism leads to dehumanization and thus to its contradiction. At the same time, the humanism that emerges from the dehumanization of colonized peoples represents an alternative ideal of humanity, alternative, that is, to the Eurocentric one. In this sense, Zea writes that "the truth comes now to the Westerner from the non-Western world, from the action that the human beings of this part of the world make to escape the alienation which had been

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid, 83.

imposed on them. An alienation that the Western human being has imposed over herself.”⁵⁵⁵ Differently put, much like the slave consciousness in Hegel’s master-slave dialectic becomes *essential* through labor, in Zea’s reading it is through the process of negating their dehumanization that colonized peoples develop an alternative humanism to the dehumanizing Eurocentric humanism. In this sense, Zea’s alternative proposal of universality is a *dialogical* one and one that *de-centers* the Eurocentric ideal of humanity.

The foregoing analysis of Zea’s alternative conception of universal history thus aims to show that, contrary to contemporary critics of the project of a Latin American identity such as Castro-Gómez and Vallega, Zea does not fall back into Eurocentric universality. As we saw above, in Castro-Gómez’s and Vallega’s views, projects of a Latin American identity rely either on a transcendental conception of the subject or on the universal conception of universality which served to justify colonization. In this sense, Castro-Gómez and Vallega argue that thinkers such as Zea not only fail to reject the Eurocentric conception of universality, but they also replicate colonial relations at the national level. On the contrary, I have aimed to show that although Zea adopts the theoretical apparatus of Eurocentric thinkers like Hegel, Zea employs their theoretical apparatus to criticize the *monological* conception of universality and to propose an alternative conception. I argued that Zea’s alternative conception is a *dialogical* one which emerges from the historical projects of concrete peoples and one that *de-centers* Eurocentric humanism in favor of a *decolonial* humanism. The decolonial humanism that Zea advocates emerges from the efforts of colonized peoples to negate their dehumanization rather than from the imposition of a humanism that leads to

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid, 97.

dehumanization. Moreover, if we interpret Zea's alternative conception of history in a diachronic way, this means that the conception of *the future* that emerges from Zea's project of *mestizaje* is one in which universal history and the ideal of humanity are constituted throughout the decolonizing efforts of colonized peoples. As I argued in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, Zea's conception of the future is one where humanity is constituted as the negation of the negation and thus through the affirmation of colonized peoples' humanity. While this does not mean that Zea's *mestizaje* does not replicate colonial relations at the national level, it dispels interpretations according to which thinkers like Zea naively adopt the Eurocentric conception of universality.

4.4.2. Villoro's Phenomenological Analysis of the Indigenist Historical Consciousness:

Although I offer a critical approach to Zea's project of *mestizaje*, my approach differs from the ones offered by contemporary critics of the project of a Latin American identity in two ways. The first is that, as I showed in the foregoing subsection, I disagree with contemporary critics such as Vallega who charge Zea for failing to reject with the Eurocentric conception of universality which served to justify colonization. As I showed above, not only does Zea offer a *dialogical* conception of universality, but he also *de-centers* the Eurocentric ideal of humanity. The second way that my critical approach differs from those offered by contemporary critics is that while they analyze the projects of a Latin American identity in a synchronic way, or at one point in time, I analyze Zea's project of *mestizaje* in a diachronic way, or across time. I particularly aim to analyze the sense that the past, present, and future acquire for the *mestizx* consciousness that Zea proposes. My view is that Zea's conception of the *future* corresponds to the dialogical formulation of universality that I sketched above. My analysis of Zea's view of the *past*

follows the analysis of what Luis Villoro calls “*indigenist* consciousness” in *Los Grandes Momentos del Indigenismo en México* (1950). In this work, Villoro does not offer a history of the indigenist movements in Mexico but analyzes the historical consciousness through which the Mexican consciousness *constitutes* her indigenous object. As Villoro puts it, “once we clarify the ‘indigenist conception,’ we will then inquire about the ‘indigenist consciousness’ that makes sense of it.”⁵⁵⁶ Villoro thus offers a phenomenological analysis because he considers the *noesis-noema* relation between the indigenist consciousness and her indigenous object in historical terms. In this way, Villoro clarifies the *historical sense* that the indigenous object acquires within different historical projects. More precisely, Villoro focuses on the indigenist consciousness that emerges at three historical moments. The first corresponds to the religious consciousness during the conquest, the second corresponds to the rationalism of the 18th and 19th centuries, and the third corresponds to the 20th century indigenist movement.⁵⁵⁷ While Villoro offers an exhaustive analysis of each historical period, I focus only on the representative discourses that constitute the historical sense of indigenous peoples. I then model my analysis of Zea’s project of *mestizaje* after Villoro’s analysis of the indigenist historical consciousness.

The first form of indigenist consciousness which Villoro analyzes corresponds to the religious cosmovision during colonization. Although Villoro focuses on Cristopher Columbus and on Friar Bernardino de Sahagun (c. 1499-1590), I only focus on the later because he is most characteristic of the indigenist consciousness during this period.

⁵⁵⁶ Luis Villoro (1996 [1950]), *Los Grandes Momentos del Indigenismo en México*, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 14-15.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid, 15.

Particularly, Villoro distinguishes between the meaning that indigenous peoples acquire “for themselves” (“*ser ante sí*”) and the meaning they acquire “for history” (“*ser ante la historia*”). Villoro argues that the first is “their always present capacity for freedom, as subjects who determine their own history, [and] the second is the social reality as determined by the classes and groups that oppress them.”⁵⁵⁸ Villoro shows how in Sahagun’s portrayal of indigenous peoples these two aspects appear as contradictory. On the one hand, Sahagun “portrays an austere people, loving of virtue and order, sober in their advice and vigorous and strong in their customs.”⁵⁵⁹ On the other hand, however, indigenous peoples appear to Sahagun as “a blind and fallen people, [a people] consecrated to Satan.”⁵⁶⁰ Sahagun, however, does not attribute the fall of indigenous peoples to an ontological condition, but to the ““original sin and, in part, to the maliciousness and old hatred of Satan, our adversary.”⁵⁶¹ From Sahagun’s perspective, the contradictory aspects of indigenous peoples entail two things. The first is that the conquest acquires historical significance because “the conquest, instrument of God and vehicle of conversion, is a punishment to the Indian for her sin; the complete purification of her blame will only be achieved by destroying her civilization and through the death of her gods.”⁵⁶² The second, however, is that since, for Sahagun, indigenous civilization corresponds to natural law, he does not propose the annihilation of indigenous civilization, but the “*translation* of indigenous [culture] into the European one.”⁵⁶³ In Sahagun’s salvific, providential historical consciousness, this means the assimilation of

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid, 10.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid, 66.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid, 44.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

⁵⁶² Ibid, 52.

⁵⁶³ Ibid, 93.

indigenous culture into European culture, thereby abandoning what is properly indigenous. As Villoro writes, “in this way, the Indian negates her own Aztec nation to be reborn into another people now reconciled: New Spain. Destruction and rebirth thus mark the redemptive moments of indigenous peoples.”⁵⁶⁴ In this way, Sahagun inscribes indigenous peoples within a salvific historical consciousness, such that the “sinful” aspect of their culture is relegated to the *past* and their assimilation to European culture represents their salvific *future*.

The second form of indigenist consciousness that Villoro analyzes corresponds to the 18th and 19th century rationalism, particularly in the work of *criollo* intellectuals such as Francisco Javier Clavijero (1731-1787). Unlike the indigenist discourses of missionaries from the 16th century like Sahagun which condemn indigenous religious as sinful, *criollo* intellectuals aim to defend America against the racist discourses of thinkers like Corneille de Paw and Comte de Buffon.⁵⁶⁵ For this, Clavijero appeals to universal reason as the principle of equality between Europe and non-Europe. In this way, the white *criollo* aims to affirm her equality vis-à-vis European peoples. Two aspects are particularly important about Clavijero’s indigenist consciousness. The first one is that Clavijero offers a history of indigenous peoples as a “epic and heroic vision. It is a vigorously outlined story about a people of heroes; peoples that, in the splendor of their youth, remind us about the young Rome, forged by the ancients.”⁵⁶⁶ Significant about Clavijero’s heroic history is that it portrays indigenous peoples as a “perennial fountain of moral teachings.”⁵⁶⁷ In this way, Clavijero not only vindicates America against racist

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid, 109.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid, 115.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid, 124.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid, 126.

European discourses, but he can also criticize the injustice of the conquest as a “terrible tragedy of a courageous and noble people who, after reaching the highest glory falls, defeated to the malice of the enemy.”⁵⁶⁸ Moreover, the second important aspect about Clavijero’s indigenist consciousness is that he does not reduce America as a simple mirror of the European reason, but also that, through its indigenous element, America will acquire “its proper specificity and substantiality. Such that, the judgement that comes from America seems to emerge from the corporeal and silent depths of the Indian.”⁵⁶⁹ In this way, the *criollo* can affirm both her equality and her independence vis-à-vis Europe. Clavijero thus inscribes indigenous peoples in a historical consciousness wherein the glorious indigenous *past* universalizes the *criollo present* while also opening moral possibilities for an independent *criollo future*.⁵⁷⁰

Lastly, the third moment of indigenist consciousness that Villoro analyzes corresponds to the *mestizx* historical consciousness of the 20th century. In Villoro’s view, what distinguishes between the *criollo* and the *mestizx* indigenist consciousness is that whereas the first is characterized by its confrontation against Europe, the second represents a reflective moment through which America turns towards itself.⁵⁷¹ In this sense, the *mestizx* indigenist consciousness corresponds to a project of national unity within which indigenous peoples are integrated. For this reason, Villoro argues that rather than something of the past, the *mestizx* constitutes indigenous peoples as part of their present situation. “Indigeneity shifts its gravitating center from the remote past to the

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid, 130.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid, 159.

⁵⁷⁰ Villoro puts it as follows: “Clavijero proyecta sobre el pasado indígena su propia capacidad de trascendencia; ve en él sus propias posibilidades realizadas hasta su plenitud. Es *su* hazaña posible la que está ahí en el héroe, es *su* capacidad propia de acción la que se realiza en cada acto grandioso. El indio revive, pero como simple presentación de posibilidades ajenas: las del criollo.” Ibid, 161.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid, 209.

moment of the present. And the significance and value of the indigenous will be centered on the present.”⁵⁷² The present that the *mestizx* consciousness attributes to indigenous peoples, however, belongs not to indigenous peoples themselves, but to the *mestizx*. That is to say, by turning towards itself in search for the element that constitutes her national unity, the *mestizx* finds the indigenous element within herself. “The indigenous is, at the same time our own, it lives within ourselves, and it also constitutes us biologically and culturally.”⁵⁷³ By turning towards itself then the *mestizx* finds that the indigenous aspect is the element that can account for the national unity. “Here it is no longer a matter of demanding equality of rights against the other continent, but of distinguishing, within America itself what is specific to herself from that which is foreign. The indigenous thus appears as the nucleus of what is authentically American.”⁵⁷⁴ It is for this reason that the muralism of the mid-20th century, for example, represents indigenous peoples as the cultural and biological root of a *mestizx* nation such as Mexico. Importantly, this means that the historical consciousness within which the *mestizx* inscribes indigenous peoples is not as an archeological and distant *past*, but as the immediate *past* through which the *mestizx* present acquires significance. Similarly, the *future* possibilities of indigenous peoples are circumscribed within a *mestizx* future.⁵⁷⁵ As we shall see, it is this later kind of historical consciousness that Zea proposes for the project of *mestizaje*.

⁵⁷² Ibid, 213.

⁵⁷³ Ibid, 234.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid, 235.

⁵⁷⁵ Villoro puts it as follows: “Una vez que se considera el pasado como cosa propia, habrá que proyectarse a su vez hacia las posibilidades creadoras que alberga el mestizo. De ahí que el arte mexicano contemporáneo aparezca tan a menudo lo indio en una literal ‘recreación.’ Se crea de nuevo en el espíritu mestizo, sin dejar por ello de ser él mismo: es el ser del pasado recapturado por el presente y proyectado a sus posibilidades futuras.” Ibid, 269.

4.4.3. *An Analysis of the Mestizx Historical Consciousness in Zea's Work:*

In *Los Grandes Momentos del Indigenismo en México* Villoro thus analyzes the various kinds of historical projects within which the Mexican consciousness inscribes indigenous peoples. What Villoro shows is that the Mexican historical consciousness inscribes indigenous peoples as more or less in the past depending on its historical projects. The critical analysis that I offer here follows Villoro's analysis in that I am interested in clarifying the sense that the past, present, and future acquire for the *mestizx* historical consciousness that Zea proposes. Different from contemporary criticisms of the project of a Latin American identity, this means that I offer a diachronic rather than a synchronic analysis of Zea's proposal of a Latin American identity. As we saw in the first section of this chapter, Zea formulates the project of *mestizaje* as an *assumptive* historical project by adopting Hegel's notion of *Aufhebung*. This means that, unlike the juxtaposition of historical projects which led to the negation of an aspect of Latin America, the project of *mestizaje* consists in the *synthesis* of the different historical projects—and the peoples whose interests these projects represent—into a unified historical consciousness. The *assumptive* project thus consists, according to Zea, in “making the past the instrument of the present and the future, by way of an assimilating or absorbing effort [*esfuerzo de asimilación o de absorción*]. In such a way that what has been does not have to be again.”⁵⁷⁶ For example, while the civilizing project meant the negation of the colonial and indigenous past, including the genocidal negation of indigenous peoples, the project of *mestizaje* entails integrating the colonial and indigenous past into a future historical project. As I aim to show through an analysis of Zea's reading of the history of Mexico,

⁵⁷⁶ Zea, 1978, 19.

however, this means that the historical consciousness Zea proposes relegates indigenous peoples as the *past* rather than considering them as the *present* of Latin America.

In section 2 of this Chapter, we saw that Zea distinguishes two main historical projects which follow the original liberatory project of political leaders such as Bolívar and Martí. These are the *conservative* and the *civilizing* projects. The conservative project aims to maintain the colonial *past* by maintaining the social, political, and economic institutions while transferring dominance to the Latin American *criollo* rather than to the metropolitan colonizer. In contrast, the *civilizing* project aims to *negate* the indigenous and colonial *past* while adopting the U.S. institutions and values and thus, as Zea puts it, a foreign future. For Zea, the problem with the conservative and the civilizing projects is that they either aim to maintain colonial relations or to change them by engaging in new forms of dependency. Zea writes that the *assumptive* project

aims to recuperate the American reality, assimilating it and assuming it. Because it will be by way of this absorption and assumption that we will be able to change the reality of dependency through which we will avoid the problems of the past. As much as the errors of conservatism, focused as it is in conserving the past; as the errors of the civilizing project, which tries to ignore that past. The mistakes of people, preoccupied only with occupying the vacuum of power left by colonization, as those of people focused on creating new forms of power and domination. Both projects are dependent, the one on the past, the other on a model through which they will alienate the future.⁵⁷⁷

Zea's assumptive project aims to return to the liberatory project by assuming the past, instead of negating it for the sake of a future project free from colonial dependencies. This implies two things for the historical consciousness that Zea proposes. The first is that, rather than negating the colonial past and thereby also the violent negation of Latin American peoples' humanity during colonization, the *assumptive* project implies

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid, 38.

affirming our colonial origin and the negation of our humanity as the mark of our Latin American identity. It is for this reason, for example, that Zea's history of ideas takes as the originary point for Latin American philosophy the negation of Latin American peoples' humanity, and therefore also the impossibility for Latin American peoples to have a philosophy. This means that, for Zea, what distinguishes Latin American philosophy from European philosophy is that it does not take Latin American peoples' humanity for granted but it emerges from inquiring about the status of our humanity. Zea thus follows 19th century projects that trace the originary source of Latin American identity to the negation of humanity.

The second aspect that the *assumptive* project implies for the *mestizx* historical consciousness that Zea proposes is that, for him, without tracing our future historical projects in our past historical experiences, Latin American projects will continue replicating colonial forms of dependency. In contrast to the civilizing project, which negates the indigenous and colonial past because they are preventing Latin America from achieving the level of development of Western Europe, Zea grounds the future Latin American projects in the *past* indigenous and colonial experiences. This assumes, however, that Zea considers indigenous peoples as part of the *past* rather than as part of the *present* or part of the *future* of Latin America. An important example of the kind of historical consciousness is the work of Mexican philosopher Miguel León Portilla (1926-2019). Abelardo Villegas explains the importance of León Portilla's work as follows:

[José Gaos] urged the formulation of the history of Mexican thought and of Mexican and Latin American history through our autochthonous conceptual system. Miguel León Portilla offers a brilliant example of this recommendation when, in 1959, he published *Aztec Philosophy*. There, he explains that, apparently, the concept of philosophy, autochthonous to Greek culture, could not be applied to a cultural product as heterogeneous as pre-Columbian thought, but the formulation of this thought in

poems, aphorisms and, in general, fragmentary expressions made it very similar to presocratic thought and that, for this reason, it could be called philosophy. Yet, the content of León Portilla's book consists in a conceptual system abstracted from Aztec thought baptized with poetic terms such as flower, song, heart, etcetera, which has permitted us to understand a form of thought as heterogeneous as ours.⁵⁷⁸

That is, León Portilla's work is important not only for the historical recovering of Aztec thought, but also because he traces the history of Mexican philosophy to its indigenous past. As such, León Portilla articulates what is *distinct* about Mexican philosophy by tracing it to its indigenous past. Similarly, the historical consciousness that Zea proposes projects a future alternative to foreign ones by grounding it on the *indigenous* past. In Zea's view then the indigenous past opens future possibilities for *present* Latin America. The result, however, is that on the historical consciousness that Zea proposes, and which is the kind of historical consciousness currently prevalent in Latin America, indigenous peoples constitute the *past* identity of *present* Latin America. In this sense, although Zea's project of *mestizaje* aims to avoid replicating colonial forms of dependency, he relegates indigenous peoples to the *past* rather than as the *present* of Latin America.

In the foregoing then I offered an analysis of Zea's project of *mestizaje* at two levels, namely, at the global and local levels, along a diachronic dimension. At the global level, I showed that Zea adopts Hegel's dialectical method to challenge the Eurocentric conception of universality as well as to offer an alternative one. Zea challenges the Eurocentric conception of universality because it is *monological*, which means that it only offers one perspective of history and of the effects of the colonization of the Americas. Moreover, Zea also de-centers the Eurocentric ideal of humanity by arguing

⁵⁷⁸ Abelardo Villegas (1993), *El Pensamiento Mexicano en el Siglo XX*, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 152.

that European humanism leads to the negation of humanity and, ultimately, to its own contradiction. In contrast, Zea argues that the humanism of formerly colonized peoples emerges by negating the colonial negation of their humanity and therefore from the process of *affirming* their humanity. In this way, Zea not only challenges but also de-centers the Eurocentric conception of universality and the Eurocentric ideal of humanity. My argument is that Zea's view of the *future* corresponds to a *dialogical* rather than a monological conception of universality, one that emerges from the confluence of local historical projects. At the local level, I showed that later Zea adopts Hegel's notion of *Aufhebung* to formulate the project of *mestizaje* as a historical synthesis of the previous historical projects that have shaped Latin American reality. I showed that unlike the conservative and the civilizing historical projects, which negate an aspect of Latin American reality, Zea's *mestizaje* consists in *subsuming* previous historical projects for the sake of a *future* free from colonial dependencies. I showed that, in Zea's view, this means assuming the colonial and the indigenous *pasts* as the originary sources for the formulation both of an *authentic* Latin American philosophy as well as an *authentic* historical project. In this sense, rather than negating the colonial past, Zea takes it as an originary source for Latin American philosophy. Similarly, instead of negating the indigenous aspect of Latin American reality, the historical consciousness that Zea proposes *subsumes* it as part of our past in such a way that it would serve as a source for *future* possibilities. As I argued, however, this means that in Zea's proposal of a *mestizx* historical consciousness, indigenous peoples are part of the *past* rather than the *present* of Latin America. I thus argued that Zea relegates indigenous peoples as the *past* identity of *present* Latin America.

4.5. Conclusion:

The purpose of this chapter has been twofold. On the one hand, I aimed to highlight the *anti-imperialistic* aspect of 19th and 20th century discourses regarding the formation of a Latin American identity by situating them within the geopolitical context from which they emerge. Contrary to the contemporary critiques of thinkers such as Mignolo, Castro-Gómez, Vallega, and Sáenz for whom the project of a Latin American identity depends on the adoption of a Eurocentric conception of universal history which serves to maintain colonial structures at the local level, I argued that these discourses respond to the shift in geopolitical hegemony from Spain to the U.S. I argued that thinkers such as Bolívar, Rodó, Martí, and Vasconcelos characterized the Latin American identity in dialectical terms to the U.S. culture and by embracing elements of the Spanish culture such as cosmopolitanism and the feeling of beauty. On the other hand, I offered a critical analysis of the *mestizx consciousness* that Zea proposes in diachronic rather than only in synchronic terms, that is, in terms of the meaning that the past, present, and future acquire in Zea's project of *mestizaje*. I showed that, contrary to thinkers like Vallega who argue that Zea inscribes the history of Latin America within the Eurocentric conception of universal history, Zea adopts Hegel's *dialectical* method to offer a *dialogical* conception of universality, one which *decenters* the Eurocentric and *monological* conception. In this sense, I argued that, for Zea, the future is one where universality emerges from the convergence of the historical projects of concrete peoples. Lastly, I argued that, despite its anti-imperialistic aspect, Zea's *assumptive* project entails the incorporation rather than the negation of the indigenous and colonial past into an authentic historical project, which means that Zea conceives of indigenous peoples as the

past identity of *present* Latin America. For this reason, I argued that the *mestizx* consciousness that Zea proposes continues to relegate indigenous peoples as the *past* rather than considering them the *present* of Latin America.

I would like to end by considering the place of Afro-Latinx peoples in Zea's proposal of the *mestizx* historical consciousness. In several of his mature works, Zea engages with African as well as Caribbean nationalistic philosophies such as the negritude movement (c. 1930s-1950s.) For example, in *Filosofía de la Historia Americana*, Zea discusses Egyptian political scientist Anouar Abel-Malek's (1924-2012) proposal of an African Renaissance. For Abel-Malek, the Renaissance project consists in "returning to the great values of Egyptian culture, the culture of the pharaohs, of the pyramids, of Ramesses."⁵⁷⁹ Although Zea considers Abel-Malek's proposal along the line of his own nationalism, Zea argues that the project of an African Renaissance would entail a return to the past which would also entail negating what Africans have become since colonization. Zea writes that, "the Renaissance, any Renaissance which does not assume the past can become into one more expression of the Bovarism we have already discussed. That is, into another way of eluding the present by replacing it with the past, in the same way that one replaces the present for a foreign culture."⁵⁸⁰ Moreover, in *Filosofía Americana como Filosofía sin Más*, Zea draws from the work of Aimé Césaire and Franz Fanon to formulate what in this chapter I called a decolonial view of universal history *avant la lettre*, one which decenters the Eurocentric ideal of humanity. For example, Zea begins the last chapter of this book by quoting Fanon's famous indictment

⁵⁷⁹ Zea, 1978, 32.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

that decolonization requires the substitution of one “species” of the human by another.⁵⁸¹ As I showed above, Zea draws from these philosophers to argue that the humanism which emerges from the liberating efforts of formerly colonized peoples represents an alternative to the Eurocentric humanism which leads to the dehumanization of both non-European and European peoples. Zea calls this an “inversion” of the human, which means that “two ideas of the human have struggled and are struggling to prevail. The Westerner has imposed his own, the non-Westerner aims to establish her own. [The latter is] An idea which does not imply the annihilation of other humans, but the annihilation of a humanism that negates humanity.”⁵⁸²

Although we cannot reproach Zea for failing to engage with world-philosophies, an important failure in Zea’s work is his lack of consideration of the place of Afro-Latinx peoples in the project of a Latin American identity. In my view, Zea’s lack of consideration, however, is not simply the failure to represent the interests of a minority group within a nationalistic project. Rather, I would like to draw from decolonial philosopher Sylvia Wynter to argue that Zea’s failure reproduces the colonial model of understanding social relations. In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, I showed that for Wynter, different conceptions of the human entail different conceptions moral, epistemic, and ontological relations. Moreover, I showed that Wynter formulates colonial relations along a chain of being, whereby non-European peoples are situated as historically backwards and European peoples are situated as the pinnacle of civilization. In her essay titled, “1492: A New World View,” Wynter makes an important contribution to decolonial philosophy by proposing what she calls a “triadic” model for analyzing colonial

⁵⁸¹ Zea, 1969, 100.

⁵⁸² Ibid, 102.

relations.⁵⁸³ For Wynter, the “triadic” model challenges not only the Eurocentric conception of humanity, but also the dyadic analysis of colonial relations as between European and indigenous peoples. The “triadic” model exposes the centrality of the constitution of Blackness for the articulation of colonial relations. As Wynter puts it, “it was on the basis of this triadic model and its dually antagonistic and interactional dynamic that the new syncretizing cultural matrix of the now-emerging world civilization of the Caribbean and the Americas was first laid down.”⁵⁸⁴ Although Wynter’s triadic model is important for historical as well as for philosophical reasons, in the following, I only focus on the latter.

In Chapter 3, we saw that Wynter traces the shift from the Judeo-Christian conception of the human to the secular conception to the colonization of the Americas, and as involving the way in which we conceive of the morally relevant other, the way in which we conceive of our epistemic mind-to-world relations, and as informing our conception of salvation and freedom. Wynter argues that whereas the Judeo-Christian view conceives of these relations in terms of the dyad of Christians and *infidels*, the secular view conceives of these relations in terms of dyad between the rational and the *irrational*, where the irrational belongs to the realm of nature. In “1492: A New World View,” Wynter complicates the dyadic model as follows:

Columbus would therefore “see” the New World peoples... within the triadic formal model of the Judeo-Christian perception of non-Christians. That is, he would see them as one category of a human population divided up into Christians (who had heard and accepted the new word of the gospel), infidels like the Muslims and Jews, who, although monotheists, had refused the Word after having been preached the Word (and who were therefore *inimici Christi*) enemies of Christ, and *idolators*, those

⁵⁸³ Sylvia Wynter, “1492: A New World View,” in Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford (eds.), *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View*, Washington, D.C.: The Smithsonian Institution, 9.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

pagan polytheistic peoples who had either ignored or had not as yet been preached the Word. Columbus therefore fitted the Tainos or Arawak peoples whom he confronted on October 12, 1492, into the third categorical model, and under the “mobile classificatory label” *Idolator*.⁵⁸⁵

That is, the triadic model complicates Wynter’s analysis of the chain of being by introducing two categories for non-Christians, namely, the category of the *infidel* as an enemy of Christ and the category of the *idolator* as potentially convertible to Christianity. Importantly, the implication of the triadic structure of social relations is that whereas idolators can be, in principle, incorporated into a salvific project, infidels cannot. Moreover, Wynter draws from Anthony Pagden’s analysis of the School of Salamanca to translate the triadic model from the Judeo-Christian to the secular conception of the human. In the previous chapter, we saw that Pagden challenges the view that the inferiority of indigenous peoples was formulated in terms of Aristotle’s “natural slaves” to argue, instead, that indigenous peoples were conceived in developmental terms, as “nature’s children.” Wynter’s triadic model complicates Pagden’s analysis by arguing that whereas the category of the idolator corresponds to the category of nature’s children, which means that indigenous peoples can be incorporated into the European civilizing project, the category of the *infidel* is relegated to the non-historical realm of nature. This means that the infidel cannot be incorporated into the salvific way of conceiving the colonization of the Americas. Thus, Wynter argues that “as this True Self was secularized into the first secular model of being ‘Man,’ these others were to be transformed into its lack, that is, into *natives* and, most absolutely in the nineteenth century, into the nonwhite *native* and its extreme form of Otherness, *the nigger*.”⁵⁸⁶ The triadic model of analyzing

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid, 29.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid, 37.

colonial social relations entails that whereas indigenous peoples could be incorporated into a salvific historical project, Blackness was constituted as the realm of nature and thus African-descended people could not be incorporated into a salvific historical project.

From the perspective of Wynter's triadic model then Zea's lack of consideration of the place that Afro-Latinx peoples occupy within the *mestizx* historical consciousness is more than a failure to represent the interests of a minority group within a nationalistic project. In this Chapter, I aimed to show that although Zea incorporates indigenous peoples as the *past* identity of *present* Latin America, he continues to relegate indigenous peoples as the *past* rather than the *present* of Latin America. From the perspective of Wynter's triadic model, this means that Zea's proposal of the *mestizx* historical consciousness considers indigenous peoples as belonging to the realm of history, even if their historical possibilities are circumscribed within a *mestizx* present and future. At the same time, however, Zea's failure to consider Afro-Latinx peoples within the project of *mestizaje* entails that he does not consider Afro-Latinx peoples as capable of being incorporated into a salvific historical project, which means that Zea relegates Afro-Latinx peoples to the realm of nature rather than to the historical realm. Zea's failure to consider the place of Afro-Latinx peoples within the project of *mestizaje* represents more than an obliviousness in representing the interests of a minority group within a nationalistic project. Rather, Zea's obliviousness means reproducing the colonial model of social relations which relegates Blackness to the realm of nature.

Chapter 5: *Nepantla and Mestizaje: Gloria Anzaldúa's Poetics of Embodiment*

5.1. Introduction:

Part II of this Dissertation introduced two topics. The first one regards the formulation of what I called the coloniality of history as a historical horizon structured along the Eurocentric ideal of humanity which continues to inform the historical projects of Latin American peoples. The second topic regards Leopoldo Zea's project of *mestizaje* as a historical project authentic to Latin American peoples and thus as one which promises to break with the Eurocentric ideal of humanity. In Chapter 4, we saw that while Zea's reinterpretation of universal history criticizes and de-centers the Eurocentric conception of universality, his formulation of a Latin American identity is also one that traces the present Latin American identity to its indigenous past, thereby relegating indigenous peoples to the past and excluding Afro-Latinx peoples to the realm of the unhistorical. This means that while Zea's is an anti-imperialistic project, it also continues to replicate the coloniality of history. The present chapter returns to the analysis introduced in Chapter 1 regarding historical consciousness and, particularly, to the analysis about the *embodied* experience of historical meanings. In that chapter, I showed that meanings are constituted across time at the individual and intersubjective levels, and that individuals validate historical meanings through our embodied practices. In this chapter, I return to the analysis regarding embodied historical consciousness to formulate Gloria E. Anzaldúa's (1942-2004) project of a "*mestizx* consciousness" as what I call a "poetics of embodiment." This project consists of two parts corresponding to the concepts of *nepantla* and *mestizaje* that I introduced in previous chapters. In chapter 3, I introduced

the notion of *nepantla* as being in-between historical projects. Anzaldúa reinterprets the concept to capture the embodied experience of inhabiting historical meanings that split the self and the community into agents and objects of oppression along our racial, gendered, and sexual identities. I show that inhabiting these historical meanings leads to intimate forms of violence which Anzaldúa refers to as “intimate terrorism.” To heal marginalized communities from these intimate forms of violence, Anzaldúa offers a theory of writing or, as I call it, a *poetics* of meaning-making which aims to transform the way in which we conceive of the colonized body.

The formulation of Anzaldúa’s “poetics of embodiment” that I offer in this chapter is inspired by the work of contemporary Latinx feminist philosophers, particularly by the work of Jacqueline Martinez, Mariana Ortega, and Andrea Pitts. The work of these philosophers is important for my purposes for three reasons, namely, because they offer accounts of embodied experience, of critical consciousness, and of Anzaldúa’s theory of writing as a form of “multiplicitous agency.” For example, in her *Phenomenology of Chicana Experience and Identity* (2000), Martinez offers a phenomenological account of the way in which we embody historical meanings through habitual practices, and an account of what I call a “critical semiotics.” In Martinez’s view, historical meanings not only inform our embodied orientation towards the self and others, but we can also reorient our subjective and intersubjective relations through a spiraling-critical process through which we can bring to awareness and transform these historical meanings. Ortega develops Anzaldúa’s account of the new *mestizx* consciousness as an account of critical consciousness. In Ortega’s view, the new *mestizx* consciousness finds herself in-between worlds of meaning along our racial, gendered, and

sexual identities. Ortega argues that the *mestizx* subject's the ability of world-travel allows for the development of a critical consciousness regarding our worlds of meaning. Importantly, Ortega offers an account of the "multiplicitous self" to address ontological issues regarding the plurality of worlds of meaning and of the self who inhabits these different worlds. Lastly, in *Nos/Otras: Gloria E. Anzaldúa, Multiplicitous Agency, and Resistance* (2021), Pitts formulates Anzaldúa's theory of writing as an account of what Pitts calls "multiplicitous agency." Pitts draws from the Nahua⁵⁸⁷ philosophical influence in Anzaldúa's work to formulate a theory of writing which aims to transform both the self and the world, and she proposes an account of "multiplicitous agency" as a theory of meaning-making that requires epistemic friction in interpreting the reasons for action of differently situated agents. My account of Anzaldúa's theory of writing as a "poetics of embodiment" is inspired by the work of these Latinx philosophers and it aims to expand on the central aspects of their work.

I formulate Anzaldúa's "poetics of embodiment" by tracing the development between her original theory of writing from *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), which she calls "ethno-poetics," and her latter theory of writing from *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality* (2015), which she calls "autohistoria-teoría." I argue that supplementing the earlier formulation of "ethno-poetics" with what AnaLouise Keating calls Anzaldúa's later "aesthetics of transformation" and "metaphysics of interrelatedness" can help in clarifying the way in

⁵⁸⁷ Although we commonly refer to the Nahua philosophical tradition as "Aztec philosophy," the Aztecs are only a part of the broader Nahua culture. King and philosopher Nezahualcoyotl, for example, belonged to the city-state of Texcoco, which is part of the Nahua culture but does not belong to the Aztec city-state. Throughout this chapter, I thus use the term "Nahua philosophy" to refer to the philosophical tradition commonly known as "Aztec philosophy."

which Anzaldúa's *poetics* constitutes a process of meaning-making that aims to transform the way in which we conceive of the colonized body. For this, I trace Anzaldúa's "aesthetics of transformation" and her "metaphysics of interrelatedness" to two concepts from Nahua philosophy, namely, "*teotl*" as a metaphysical principle and "*in xochitl in cuicatl*" as the poietic function of Nahua philosophy. Whereas "*teotl*" is the metaphysical principle which creates and recreates reality, "*in xochitl in cuicatl*" is the *poietic* function through which human beings participate in the creative activity of "*teotl*" through the production of new semantic contents. I show that "*in xochitl in cuicatl*" consists in the juxtaposition of two unrelated meanings to generate a new semantic content. For example, "*in xochitl in cuicatl*" juxtaposes "flower" and "song" to generate a new meaning, namely, "poetry." This means that "*in xochitl in cuicatl*" serves a *poietic* function which consists in the creation of new meanings. Following Martinez's critical semiotics, Ortega's account of the *mestizx* consciousness, and Pitts' account of "multiplicitous agency," I argue that Anzaldúa's theory of writing consists in critically juxtaposing or *bridging*, as she puts it, the racial, gendered, and sexual identities that inform our relation to the self and others. In this sense, I argue that Anzaldúa's theory of writing constitutes a poetics which aims to transform our conception of the colonized body, of our communities, and the world.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section introduces an analysis of two original formulations that Anzaldúa develops in *Borderlands/La Frontera* and on which she expands on her later *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro*. These are the concepts of "borderlands" and the concept of "ethno-poetics." The purpose of the first section is to show that Anzaldúa's later work expands on the original formulation of

“borderlands” through the formulation of “*nepantla*” to capture not only the situation of being in-between geographical locations or cultural worlds, but the “intimate terrorism” that emerges from inhabiting racial, gendered, and sexual meanings that split the self and the community into agents and objects of oppression. I also offer a brief analysis of Anzaldúa’s “ethno-poetics” which I then supplement with her later theory of writing that she calls “autohistoria-teoría.” The second section discusses and highlights three main aspects from the work of contemporary Latinx feminists. The first is Martinez’s phenomenological analysis of embodied meanings as habitual practices, which is important for my discussion of Anzaldúa’s poetics of embodiment. Ortega’s account of the new *mestizx* consciousness as a critical consciousness and her account of “multiplicitous agency” inform my own view regarding critical consciousness and addresses the issue of ontological pluralism that emerges from Anzaldúa’s view about the existential situation of being in-between worlds of meaning. Lastly, Pitts’ work informs my view of Anzaldúa’s “aesthetics of transformation” and “metaphysics of interconnectedness” by drawing from the Nahua influence in Anzaldúa’s work, and her account of “multiplicitous agency” informs my account of *juxtaposition* in what I call Anzaldúa’s “poetics of embodiment.” In the third section, I develop my account of Anzaldúa’s “poetics of embodiment” as a theory of writing which juxtaposes the racial, gendered, and sexual identities to generate a new conception of the colonized body, our communities, and the world. I conclude by discussing Anzaldúa’s view of hybrid identities which she calls “new tribalism” and “*nos/otras*” as *mestizx* identities which emerge from the poietic process of transformation in Anzaldúa’s theory of writing.

5.2. *Borderlands, Intimate Terrorism, and Ethno-Poetics:*

Although Anzaldúa originally introduces the concept of “borderlands” to capture the experience of Chicane⁵⁸⁸ communities inhabiting the U.S.-Mexican border and thus of finding themselves in-between cultural worlds, it is clear from the opening pages of *Borderlands/La Frontera* that she intended the concept in a broader way. In the “Preface to the First Edition,” Anzaldúa characterizes “borderlands” as follows:

The actual physical borderland that I’m dealing with in this book is the Texas-U.S. Southwest/Mexican border. The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy.⁵⁸⁹

In this passage Anzaldúa employs the concept of “borderlands” to capture the geographical and cultural situation of inhabiting the U.S.-Mexico border, on the one hand, and the psychological, as she calls it, situation of finding oneself within worlds of meaning that exclude people along class, race, and gender lines. However, despite Anzaldúa’s original intention, she later complains that the concept of “borderlands” was used in too restrictive terms, as referring only to the geographical and cultural situation of inhabiting the U.S.-Mexico border. Keating quotes an interview by Anzaldúa, where the latter expresses this complaint as follows: “I find people using metaphors such as

⁵⁸⁸ Broadly defined “Chicane” is both a cultural and a political identity. Culturally, Chicane are Mexican people who lived in the territories that, after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), through which Mexico ceded its northern territories to the U.S., came to belong to the U.S. The saying that “we did not cross the border; the border crossed us” captures the experience of Chicane people. Since the 1960s, however, Chicane identity has also become a political identity that struggles against anti-Latine racism. Anzaldúa and the contemporary philosophers I address in this chapter employ Chicane identity in both senses.

⁵⁸⁹ Gloria E. Anzaldúa (2012 [1987]), *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute, 19.

‘Borderlands’ in a more limited sense that I had meant it, so to expand on the psychic and emotional borderlands I’m now using ‘nepantla.’”⁵⁹⁰ Indeed, while the concept of *nepantla* appears seldomly in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, it takes a more prominent role in *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro*, where the term “borderlands” practically disappears. More generally, the aim of the present section is to show that both, with the original formulation of “borderlands” and with the later adoption of *nepantla*, Anzaldúa aims to capture the “intimate terrorism” that emerges from inhabiting an in-between space between cultural worlds, and from *embodying* racial, gendered, and sexual identities that split the self and the community into agents and objects of oppression. I aim to show that the “intimate terrorism” to which the *nepantla* experience leads applies both to the level of the cultural world and to the level of the embodied self.

In this section, I introduce Anzaldúa’s original formulation of “borderlands” and her later expansion of the concept with the adoption of *nepantla*. Beyond a hermeneutical exercise, my aim is to show that, with these concepts, Anzaldúa aims to capture the experience of inhabiting social identities that split the self and the community into agents and objects of oppression. I then show that the situation of *nepantla* leads to what Anzaldúa calls “intimate terrorism” both in terms of habitual practices of the embodied self and in terms of the violence inflicted by our cultural worlds on “deviant” individuals. Lastly, I discuss Anzaldúa’s original formulation of an “ethno-poetics” which is intended to heal marginalized communities from the “intimate terrorism” that emerges from inhabiting splitting social identities. I expand on Anzaldúa’s “ethno-poetics” in the third section of this chapter to account for its *poietic* function.

⁵⁹⁰ AnaLouise Keating (2022), *The Anzaldúan Theory Handbook*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 94.

5.2.1. *Borderlands and Nepantla as Inhabiting Splitting Meanings:*

My claim in this subsection is that the concepts of “borderlands” and *nepantla* refer to the situation of inhabiting split meanings at two levels, namely, at the level of inhabiting a space in-between geographical spaces and cultures and at the level of inhabiting split embodied meanings. In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, the most prominent meaning that the concept of “borderlands” acquires is as a space in-between the U.S. and Mexican cultural worlds. Anzaldúa begins her description of “borderlands” by writing that “The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds emerging to form a third country—a border culture.”⁵⁹¹ With the concept of the borderlands, however, Anzaldúa aims to capture not only a geographical space, but a space in-between historical worlds of meaning. Anzaldúa captures the diachronic aspect of these worlds of meaning by drawing from folk sayings, folk songs, and by retelling the history about the conquest of Mexico by Spain and about the incorporation of the northern Mexican territories by the U.S. through the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. As she puts it, “*En 1521 nació una nueva raza, el mestizo, el mexicano* (people of mixed Indian and Spanish blood), a race that had never existed before. Chicanos, Mexican-Americans, are the offspring of those first matings.”⁵⁹² Important for my purposes is that Anzaldúa’s historical description of the borderlands aims at capturing the formation of Mexican and Chicanx identities as the result of the clash between cultural worlds. Thus, Mexican identity is the result of the clash between the indigenous and the Spanish cultural worlds, and Chicanx identity is the result of the clash between the

⁵⁹¹ Anzaldúa, 2012 (1987), 25.

⁵⁹² Ibid, 27.

Mexican and the Anglo cultural worlds. In this initial sense then the concept of the borderlands captures the space in-between historical worlds of meaning.

Moreover, although Anzaldúa refers to the space in-between cultural worlds as creating a new culture as the synthesis between the two, the culture that emerges from the clash between worlds is a *marginal* one, one that excludes from different directions. This is to say that border dwellers find themselves excluded from different cultures. That the concept of the borderlands captures the multiple exclusion from worlds of meaning is evident in chapter 5 of *Borderlands/La Frontera* titled “How to Tame a Wild Tongue,” where Anzaldúa describes the case of Chicanx language as being excluded both from proper English and from proper Spanish. As she puts it:

Chicanos and other people of color suffer economically for not acculturating. This voluntary (yet forced) alienation makes for psychological conflict, a kind of dual identity—we don’t identify with the Anglo-American cultural values and we don’t totally identify with the Mexican cultural values. We are a synergy of two cultures with various degrees of Mexicanness or Angloness. I have so internalized the borderland conflict that sometimes I feel like one cancels out the other and we are zero, nothing, no one. *A veces no soy nada ni nadie. Pero hasta cuando lo soy, lo soy.*⁵⁹³

What Anzaldúa captures in this passage is not only the situation of economic and cultural segregation that Chicanx peoples experience from the U.S. and Mexican cultures, but also their marginalization as *cultural agents* within these worlds. This means that, to become a cultural agent within the U.S. cultural world means that the Chicanx must abandon her Spanish language to fully adopt proper English and, similarly, for the Chicanx to become a cultural agent in Mexican culture means for her to adopt proper Spanish. For example, Anzaldúa recounts that her education was meant to assimilate her

⁵⁹³ Ibid, 85.

into U.S. culture by forcing her to adopt proper English: “I want you to speak English. *Pa’ hallar buen trabajo tienes que saber hablar el inglés bien. Qué vale toda tu educación si todavía hablas inglés con un ‘accent,’* my mother would say, mortified that I spoke English like a Mexican.”⁵⁹⁴ Similarly, the Chicanx is also marginalized as a cultural agent from Mexican culture because she does not speak proper Spanish: “‘*Pocho*, cultural traitor, you’re speaking the oppressor’s language by speaking English, you’re ruining the Spanish language,’ I have been accused by various Latinos and Latinas. Chicano Spanish is considered by the purist and by most Latinos deficient, a mutilation of Spanish.”⁵⁹⁵ The Chicanx identity thus emerges from the double marginalization of the U.S. and Mexican cultures.

Although Anzaldúa’s description of the borderlands as a space in-between cultural worlds is most prominent in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, she intends the concept to capture the broader phenomenon of inhabiting social identities at through habitual practices at the embodied level. It is this later phenomenon that the more expansive notion of *nepantla* aims to capture. While the concept of *nepantla* appears seldomly in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, it becomes prominent in *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro*. What I intend to show is that although *nepantla* takes prominence in the later work, the phenomenon it captures is already present in the earlier work. Consider Anzaldúa’s description in *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro*:

I call the space where I struggle with my creations “nepantla.” Nepantla is the place where my cultural and personal codes clash, where I come up against the world’s dictates, where these different worlds coalesce in my writing. I am conscious of various nepantlas—linguistic, geographical gender, sexual, historical, cultural, political, social—when I write. Nepantla is the point of contact y el lugar between

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid, 75-76.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid, 77.

worlds—between imagination and physical existence, between ordinary and nonordinary (spirit) realities.⁵⁹⁶

There are two aspects implicit in Anzaldúa's later description of the concept of *nepantla*. The first, and to which I come back in section 3 of this chapter, regards an *epistemic* aspect of *nepantla* as a site for "critical consciousness." Anzaldúa describes the situation of *nepantla* as an in-between site wherefrom the *nepantla* dweller can take a critical stance against oppressive meanings from the different cultural worlds.⁵⁹⁷ The second aspect, and most important for my present purposes, is that Anzaldúa characterizes *nepantla* not only as the space in-between cultural worlds, but she describes *nepantla* in a more expansive sense. On the more expansive description, *nepantla* captures the experience of inhabiting social meanings which split our relation towards the self, the community, and the world into agents and objects of oppression. Again, my claim is that although Anzaldúa originally meant the concept of the borderlands to capture this more extensive meaning, the phenomena that she captures with her later description of *nepantla* is already present in her description of the borderlands as it appears in *Borderlands/La Frontera*.

⁵⁹⁶ Gloria E. Anzaldúa (2015), *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, Edited by AnaLouise Keating, Durham, ND: Duke University Press, 2.

⁵⁹⁷ Although this topic takes me beyond the purposes of this chapter, in her latter work, Anzaldúa connects *nepantla* with her theory of *conocimiento*, which is an intimate way of knowing reality that transcends objective scientific knowledge, and with her view about spirituality, or the ontological interconnectedness of different aspects of reality. Two feminist thinkers who have expanded on this aspect of Anzaldúa's interpretation of *nepantla* are Teresa Delgadillo and AnaLouise Keating. For example, Delgadillo connects Anzaldúa's views on *nepantla*, *conocimiento*, and spirituality by arguing that "*Spirituality* denotes, on one hand, a connection to the sacred, a recognition of worlds or realities beyond those immediately visible and respect for the sacred knowledge that these bring and, on the other hand, a way of embodying this understanding and one's response to it." Teresa Delgadillo (2011), *Spiritual Mestizaje: Religion, Gender, Race, and Nation in Contemporary Chicana Narrative*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 4. See also, AnaLouise Keating (2013), *Transformation Now! Toward a Post-Oppositional Politics of Change*, Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Consider the following two examples through which Anzaldúa captures the social meanings that split the self at the embodied level and our communities. The first example appears in chapter 3 of *Borderlands/La Frontera* titled “Entering into the Serpent,” in which Anzaldúa offers a genealogical account of the meaning of gender in Mexican culture. She begins the chapter by recounting that her mother used to advise her “*No vayas al escusado en lo oscuro*. Don’t go to the outhouse at night, Prieta, my mother would say. *No se te vaya a meter algo por allá*. A snake Will crawl into your *nalgas*, make you pregnant.”⁵⁹⁸ That is, her mother would advise her not to go out at night to prevent Anzaldúa from being raped. Anzaldúa traces the violence suffered by women in Mexican culture to the splitting of the meaning of gender at two moments. The first moment regards the splitting of the male-female divinities during ancient Aztec times, where the Indian deity *Coatloapeuh*, or the present-day Virgin of Guadalupe, was stripped from her powers of fertility. Anzaldúa writes that “The male dominated Azteca-Mexica culture drove the powerful female deities underground by giving them monstrous attributes and by substituting male deities in their place, *thus splitting the female self and the female deities*.”⁵⁹⁹ The second moment in the splitting of the meaning of gender takes place during colonization, when “the Spaniards and their Church... desexed *Guadalupe*, taking *Coatloapeuh*, the serpent/sexuality, out of her. They completed the split begun by the Nahuas by making *la Virgen de Guadalupe/Virgen María* into chaste virgins and *Tlazolteotl/Coatlicue/la Chingada* into *putas*.”⁶⁰⁰ Anzaldúa traces the present-day split meaning of womanhood in Mexican culture between the “chaste woman” and the “sexual

⁵⁹⁸ Anzaldúa, 2012 (1987), 47.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid, 49, my emphasis.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid, 50.

woman” through its historical splitting. This means that the meanings which Anzaldúa’s mother transmits to her and through which she is expected to behave as a woman are the split social meanings handed down throughout Mexican history. The second example regards the splitting of our conception of reality itself. Discussing the spiritual beliefs present in her Mexican culture, Anzaldúa argues that Western rationalism has split reality between the physically objective and the spiritually fictional, and that this split accounts for different forms of violence. As she puts it, “In trying to become ‘objective,’ Western culture made ‘objects’ of things and people when it distanced itself from them, thereby losing ‘touch’ with them. This dichotomy is the root of all violence.”⁶⁰¹ This is to say that by objectifying reality, Western rationalism excluded the spiritual aspect of reality, thereby also stripping things and humans of their spiritual character. As we shall see in the following subsection, this splitting of embodied meanings and of reality is the more expansive meaning of *nepantla* and it leads to what Anzaldúa calls “intimate terrorism.”

5.2.2. *Nepantla and Intimate Terrorism:*

So far then I have argued that Anzaldúa’s original formulation of the concept of *borderlands* intended a more expansive sense than the space in-between geographical and cultural worlds, and that she later captures this more expansive sense with the concept of *nepantla*. *Nepantla* thus refers not only to the space in-between cultures, but also to the splitting of meanings that inform our racial, gendered, and sexual identities at the embodied level. In this subsection, I argue that, in Anzaldúa’s view, these split meanings lead to what she calls an “intimate terrorism” suffered by marginalized peoples. Anzaldúa describes “intimate terrorism” when she writes as follows:

⁶⁰¹ Ibid, 59.

I have split from and disowned those parts of myself that others rejected... I have internalized rage and contempt, one part of the self (the accusatory, persecutory, judgmental) using defense strategies against another part of the self (the object of contempt). As a person, I, as a people, we, Chicanos, blame ourselves, hate ourselves, terrorize ourselves. Most of this goes on unconsciously; we only know that we are hurting, we suspect that there is something “wrong” with us, something fundamentally “wrong.”⁶⁰²

That is, for Anzaldúa, “intimate terrorism” refers to the internalization of split meanings which in turn leads to the splitting of the self and of the community into agents and objects of oppression. This terrorism is “intimate” because it regards our most intimate relations with ourselves at the embodied level and our most intimate relations with others. In the following, I offer two examples from Anzaldúa’s writings to show that, in her view, intimate terrorism functions at the embodied level through habitual practices and at the level of our cultural communities through practices of violence against those whom our culture marks as deviant. This analysis will later be useful to clarify the levels of healing to which Anzaldúa’s theory of writing applies.

The first example regards intimate terrorism at the level of the body. Anzaldúa offers an example of this kind of intimate terrorism in her early autobiographical essay “La Prieta” (1981). This essay is important in the development of Anzaldúa’s theory of writing because, as Keating argues, it is a first instance where Anzaldúa explores autobiography as a form of theorizing.⁶⁰³ In “La Prieta,” Anzaldúa writes that although she had been intending to write the essay for two years, she had been terrified to write it because it would require being “hard on people of color who are the oppressed victims. I am still afraid because I will have to call us on a lot of shit like our own racism, our fear

⁶⁰² Ibid, 67.

⁶⁰³ Keating, 2022, 86.

of women, and sexuality.”⁶⁰⁴ Indeed, my view is that this essay represents one of Anzaldúa’s first attempts at theorizing the way in which marginalized communities internalize the very racist, sexist, and homophobic meanings that oppress us and enact them through habitual practices at the level of the body. Anzaldúa begins the essay by recounting the anecdote when “Mamagrande Locha inspected my buttocks looking for the dark blotch, the sign of the indio, or worse, the mulatto blood.”⁶⁰⁵ As the title of the essay suggests, one of the meanings handed down from generation to generation and which informs Anzaldúa’s embodied experience is the meaning of race, or the meaning that we attribute to the dark body. More precisely, one of the meanings that we attribute to the dark body has to do with cleanliness or, more generally, with sanitization. This meaning is normative in the sense that it attributes cleanliness to the white body and marks the dark body as *dirty*. Moreover, this racial meaning is experienced at the embodied level through habitual practices such as scrubbing our skin to clean ourselves from the racial mark. As Anzaldúa recounts, “I passed my adolescence combatting her [her mother’s] incessant orders to bathe my body, scrub the floors and cupboards, clean the windows and the walls.”⁶⁰⁶ Differently put, the habitual practices through which Anzaldúa relates to her own body are marked by racial meanings. The habitual ways in which white and dark peoples relate to our bodies at the most intimate levels is thus marked by racial meanings, and these practices are violent practices of the self because they split the self as being simultaneously the agent of racism and the object of racism.

⁶⁰⁴ Gloria E. Anzaldúa, (2009 [1981]), “La Prieta,” in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, Ed. By AnaLouise Keating, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 39.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid, 38.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

The second form of intimate terrorism regards our most intimate relations with others in our communities. We have already seen two instances where Anzaldúa analyzes the way in which her mother passed down racial and gendered meanings at the habitual level. In the same autobiographical essay, “La Prieta,” Anzaldúa further recounts the way in which her bodily relation to her mother was marked by the meaning of gender.

Anzaldúa recounts that, “I resented the fact that it was OK for my brothers to touch and kiss and flirt with her, but not for my sister and me. Resenting the fact that physical intimacy between women was taboo, dirty.”⁶⁰⁷ The physical relation with her mother that Anzaldúa describes here is different from the former one because it regards not only transmitting gendered meanings across generations or training her to relate to her body in a certain way. Most important for my purposes is that the intimate terrorism that Anzaldúa describes here functions at the intersubjective level, through the kinds of intimate relations she can establish with others. In this case, the meaning of gender informs Anzaldúa’s mother-daughter physical relation, thereby splitting not only the self, but the intersubjective relation. The same can be said about Anzaldúa’s identification as a lesbian, and the violence that she suffered within her Mexican community because of her sexual identity. For example, Anzaldúa recounts her family’s reactions when she spoke openly about her sexuality as follows: “...my mother and brothers calling me puta when I told them I had lost my virginity and that I’d done it on purpose. My mother and brothers calling me jota (queer) when I told them my friends were gay men and lesbians.”⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid, 41.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid, 44. Importantly, Anzaldúa’s intersubjective relations split along the meaning of race, gender, and sexuality in multiple ways. For example, Anzaldúa recounts that Cherrie Moraga criticizes her for not being a real lesbian because she does not stress her lesbian identity in her writings. Anzaldúa puts it as follows: “I’ve had the legitimacy issue thrown at me by another Chicana lesbian, Cherrie Moraga. In a book review of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, she implied that I was not a real lesbian because I did not stress my lesbian identity nor did I write about sexuality.” Gloria E. Anzaldúa (2009), “To(o) Queer the Writer—Loca,

Again, the kind of splitting that Anzaldúa describes here regards her intersubjective relations with her family through the meaning of sexuality. The meaning of sexuality is a normative meaning because it marks people as either heterosexual or homosexual. Thus, the meaning that Anzaldúa's Mexican culture attributes to homosexual peoples as *deviant* splits her relation to her community through excluding practices.

Anzaldúa theorizes intimate terrorism at the level of our most intimate relations of our embodied habitual practices and at the level of our most intimate relations with our intersubjective communities. At both levels, however, intimate terrorism implies internalizing racist, sexist, and homophobic meanings that lead to violent practices against the self and others. Although I distinguished these two levels of intimate terrorism for the sake of analysis, for Anzaldúa, intimate terrorism is multiple, and it informs her personal and interpersonal relations. In a famous passage from "La Prieta," Anzaldúa describes what it means for a lesbian woman of color like her to belong to different communities as follows:

I am a wind-swayed bridge, a crossroads inhabited by whirlwinds. Gloria, the facilitator, Gloria, the mediator, straddling the walls between abysses. "Your allegiance is to La Raza, the Chicano movement," say the members of my race. "Your allegiance is to the Third World," say my Black and Asian friends. "Your allegiance is to your gender, to women," say the feminists. Then there's my allegiance to the Gay movement, to the socialist revolution, to the New Age, to magic and the occult. And there is my affinity to literature, to the world of the artist. What am I? *A third world lesbian feminist with Marxists and mystic leanings*. They would chop me up into little fragments and tag each piece with a label.⁶⁰⁹

Anzaldúa's point is that the meanings that inform our racial, gendered, and sexual identities split different aspects of the marginalized self as well as our marginalized

escritora y chicana," in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, Edited by AnaLouise Keating, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid, 45.

communities, thereby leading to violence against the self and one another rather than to solidarity. More generally, as we saw earlier, my view is that Anzaldúa goes further than theorizing violence at the level of the social world and thinks that our conception of reality itself is split, and therefore, that it is our very conception of reality which leads to our inflicting violence at different levels of our experiential life. As we shall see in the following subsection, Anzaldúa's theory of writing is meant as a healing process for this multilayered violence.

5.2.3. *From Intimate Terrorism to Ethno-Poetics:*

In chapter 6 of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa introduces her theory of writing as what she calls an “ethno-poetics.” Although she later abandons the term and adopts instead the term of “autohistoria-teoría,” the central aspects of her theory of writing are already present in the earlier concept.⁶¹⁰ In this subsection, I sketch the central aspects of Anzaldúa's theory of writing in *Borderlands/La Frontera* and, in section 4 of this chapter, I expand on it by incorporating what Keating calls Anzaldúa's “metaphysics of interrelatedness” and her “aesthetics of transformation.” A central aspect in my interpretation of Anzaldúa's theory of writing is that she draws from the Nahua tradition to challenge Western metaphysics and aesthetics.⁶¹¹ In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa introduces “ethno-poetics” as follows:

⁶¹⁰ Keating writes that Anzaldúa began formulating the concept of “autohistoria-teoría” until 1988, “when she reentered graduate school and began work on a doctoral degree; she was still exploring and shaping this theory at the time of her death. Prior to landing on the term ‘autohistorica,’ Anzaldúa cycled through several other possibilities, including ‘auto canto,’ ‘auto canción,’ and ‘autoretratos.’ Arguably, she selected ‘autohistoria’ because this word, unlike the others, includes the word ‘historia; and thus simultaneously underscores the importance of both story and history—that is, the fictional and collective dimensions: two crucial elements in this theory.” Keating, 2022, 86-87.

⁶¹¹ Keating and Kelli D. Zaytoun also elaborate on Anzaldúa's use of Nahua philosophy to decolonize our Western European metaphysical conceptions. For example, Keating writes that, “Because the Enlightenment-based reality we have inherited is too restrictive and prevents us from enacting (or even envisioning) the radical social change we need, she decolonizes this dominant ontology, draws from

In the ethno-poetics and performance of the shaman, my people, the Indians, did not split the artistic from the functional, the sacred from the secular, art from everyday life. The religious, social and aesthetic purposes of art were all intertwined... The ability of story (prose and poetry) to transform the storyteller and the listener into something or someone else is shamanistic. The writer, as shape-changer, is a *nahual*, a shaman.⁶¹²

This passage is important because it already contains, although in an inchoate way, the central aspects of Anzaldúa's theory of writing. A central aspect regards the metaphysical view implicit in Anzaldúa's ethno-poetics. Contrary to Western metaphysics which, as we saw above, splits reality between the physically objective and the spiritual, the metaphysical view implicit in Anzaldúa's ethno-poetics entails that the personal, the social, and the spiritual realms are interconnected. This metaphysical view implicit in Anzaldúa's ethno-poetics is important because it informs the way in which Anzaldúa conceives of the artist, the work of art, and the world within which the work of art serves a social function. In the following, I expand on the way in which Anzaldúa conceives of these three aesthetic elements.

In the passage above, Anzaldúa describes the artist or the writer as a shape-changer, a *nahual*, and a shaman. Anzaldúa draws these aspects about the function of the artist from the Aztec tradition, where a "*nahual*" is an animal which can change form, including becoming other animals or human beings. This aspect about the function of the artist is important because it regards the transformative potential that Anzaldúa attributes to writing and to art more generally. Kelli D. Zaytoun, for example, argues that

alternative traditions, and develops a more extensive philosophy embracing spirit, indigenous wisdom, alchemy, mythic figures, ancestral guides, and more." AnaLouise Keating, 2015, "Editor's Introduction: Re-envisioning Coyoalxauhqui, Decolonizing Reality: Anzaldúa's Twenty-First-Century Imperative," in Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, xxxii. See also Kelli D. Zaytoun (2022), *Shapeshifting Subjects: Gloria Anzaldúa's Naguala and Border Arte*, Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2.

⁶¹² Anzaldúa, 2012 (1987), 88.

“Anzaldúa’s *la naguala* is a practice of consciousness that leads a person to transform self and subjectivity; part of the practice includes a sense of merger with others and one’s surroundings without being appropriated by them.”⁶¹³ In my interpretation, the transformative process in Anzaldúa’s ethno-poetics involves two looping moments. The first involves transforming experience into symbols or images. Anzaldúa expresses this moment when she writes that “That’s what writing is for me, an endless cycle of making it worse, making it better, but always making meaning out of the experience, whatever it may be.”⁶¹⁴ Importantly, the kind of experience to which Anzaldúa refers here regards the embodied experience that emerges from the split meanings handed down from generation to generation and which inform our social identities. It is for this reason that, for Anzaldúa, autobiography represents an examination not only of the personal, but also a cultural examination. As Keating puts it, “Autohistoria focuses on the author’s personal life story; however, as the autohistorian tells her own life story, she simultaneously (*but not monolithically*) tells the life stories of others as well.”⁶¹⁵ Moreover, the second moment in Anzaldúa’s ethno-poetics regards the looping moment from writing back to embodied experience. Anzaldúa expresses this transformative moment when she writes that “For only through the body, through the pulling of flesh, can the human soul be transformed. And for images, words, stories to have this transformative power, they must arise from the human body.”⁶¹⁶ That is, for Anzaldúa, writing is not only a process through which we capture experience through symbols, but also a process through which the artist re-signifies or recreates embodied experience. I will expand on this aspect of

⁶¹³ Zaytoun, 1-2.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid, 95.

⁶¹⁵ Keating, 2022, 82.

⁶¹⁶ Anzaldúa, 2012 (1987), 97.

Anzaldúa's theory of writing, but, for now, I only aim to draw the transformative aspect of Anzaldúa's ethno-poetics.

Moreover, another important aspect implicit in Anzaldúa's ethno-poetics is her conception of the work of art. In the passage above, we saw that, in Anzaldúa's view, art is not divorced from the personal, social, and spiritual realms. This means that, unlike Western aesthetics where the work of art is reduced to a commodity, for Anzaldúa, the work of art is a personal, social, and spiritual creation. Anzaldúa refers to the work of art as a "personal presence":

My "stories" are acts encapsulated in time, "enacted" every time they are spoken aloud or read silently. I like to think of them as performances and not as inert and "dead" objects "as the aesthetics of Western culture think of art works). Instead, the work has an identity; it is a "who" or a "what" and contains the presences of persons, that is, incarnation of gods or ancestors or natural and cosmic powers. The work manifests the same needs as a person, it needs to be "fed," *la tengo que bañar y vestir*.⁶¹⁷

This aspect of Anzaldúa's theory of writing will become clearer when we introduce her "metaphysics of interconnectedness." What is important to highlight here is that Anzaldúa's view entails that the work of art is not only an object which expresses a mental idea, but a creation that nurtures itself from experience and that, for this reason, is a lively presence much like an animal or a human being. Moreover, since Anzaldúa does not split between the personal, the social, and the spiritual realms, the kind of experience from which the work of art nurtures is also personal, social, and spiritual. As such, the work of art becomes an embodied presence of personal embodied experience, historical meanings, and of spiritual myths. As we shall see, this implies that the artist's activity resembles the creative activity of the divine in Nahua philosophy.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid, 89.

Lastly, the third central aspect of Anzaldúa's ethno-poetics regards the cultural world within which writing serves a social function. We already saw that, for Anzaldúa, the process of writing entails an examination of the cultural world through an examination of personal embodied experience. That is the "ethnographical" aspect in Anzaldúa's ethno-poetics. We also saw that Anzaldúa attributes a transformative and creative power to writing. That is the "poetic" aspect in her ethno-poetics. This entails that, for Anzaldúa, writing has the power to transform or recreate the world. She expresses this aspect of her ethno-poetics as follows:

My "awakened dreams" are about shifts. Thought shifts, reality shifts, gender shifts: one person metamorphoses into another in a world where people fly through the air, heal from mortal wounds. I am playing with my Self, I am playing with the world's soul, I am the dialogue between the Self and *el espíritu del mundo*. I change myself, I change the world.⁶¹⁸

Differently put, since Anzaldúa does not separate between the personal, the social, and the spiritual, transforming the self also entails transforming the social or cultural world.⁶¹⁹ We will see later in more detail how Anzaldúa conceives about the transformative process of writing. What I would like to highlight here is that, in Anzaldúa's view, writing has the power to *bridge* between worlds of meaning as well as between aspects of the self which are split through social meanings. The healing power that Anzaldúa attributes to writing consists in a process of recreating the meanings through which we

⁶¹⁸ Ibid, 92.

⁶¹⁹ Ortega expands on this aspect of Anzaldúa's aesthetics by arguing that artistic expressions by those whom Anzaldúa calls *los atravezados* not only involves the affirmation of one's identity, but also the creation of possible worlds within which those identities become agential. Ortega writes as follows: "I would like to add that such a move is key in the decolonial project of aesthetics as well, because enunciation is the very act of the artist declaring himself into being. In so doing, Zenil affirms his self and his identity as a gay man in the midst of a homophobic, or, more accurately, heterophobic, world, thus creating the possibility of new worlds in which a gay man can put himself on the map of life through an existential aesthetic enunciation." Mariana Ortega (2020), "Queer Autoarte: A Differential Aesthetics of the Limen," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 41:1, 223.

relate to our bodies at the most intimate levels, to others within our cultural communities, and to the world more generally. Anzaldúa's theory of writing thus aims to heal the intimate terrorism that emerges from inhabiting *nepantla*.

5.3. Embodied Experience, Critical Consciousness, and Multiplicitous Agency:

So far then I have provided an expansive account of *nepantla* in Anzaldúa's work, one which captures the intimate terrorism suffered by marginalized communities both at the level of the embodied self and at the level of our intersubjective relationships. I have also offered a sketch of Anzaldúa's ethno-poetics to suggest that her early view contains, in an inchoate way, the central elements of her later theory of writing. My view is that Anzaldúa's theory of writing is meant to heal the racial, gendered, and sexual meanings that inform our embodied and intersubjective relations and thus the intimate terrorism suffered by marginalized communities. In the present section, I discuss the work of contemporary Latinx feminist philosophers who inform my later account of Anzaldúa's "poetics of embodiment" along three main topics. The first one regards Anzaldúa's phenomenology of embodied experience. Above, I showed that Anzaldúa's account of intimate terrorism regards the historical meanings that split the self and the community into subjects and agents of oppression. Jacqueline Martinez not only accounts of the habitual ways in which marginalized communities come to inhabit oppressive meanings, but she also formulates what I call a "critical semiotics" that aims to bring to awareness and transform these oppressive meanings. In this sense, Martinez's phenomenology of habits informs my interpretation of embodied experience in Anzaldúa and her "critical semiotics" offers theoretical tools to develop a critical consciousness that is important for my account of Anzaldúa's "aesthetics of transformation." The second topic regards the

critical consciousness that emerges from Anzaldúa's proposal of a new *mestizx* identity. Ortega's work is important in this sense because she offers an account of the critical consciousness that emerges from Anzaldúa's account of the *nepantlera* self, and because she takes up the ontological issues regarding the plurality of worlds and selves that emerge from Anzaldúa's views. Ortega's work is thus important for my latter accounts of Anzaldúa's "metaphysics of interconnectedness" and her "aesthetics of transformation." The third topic regards the sense of agency implicit in Anzaldúa's theory of writing as a transformative theory of meaning-making. For this, I discuss the recent work of Andrea Pitts. Pitts' work is important because she interprets Anzaldúa's theory of writing as an account of what Pitts calls "multiplicitous agency." Following Ortega, for Pitts, "multiplicitous agency" regards a coalitional effort among differently localized marginalized communities which requires epistemic friction, and therefore also requires continuous transformation of the ways in which we interpret each other's reasons for action. The work of these contemporary philosophers thus informs my later interpretation of Anzaldúa's "metaphysics of interconnectedness" and her "aesthetics of transformation." In this sense, my proposal of a "poetics of embodiment" aims to expand on the critical work by contemporary Latinx feminist philosophers.

In this section, I discuss Martinez's, Ortega's, and Pitts' work along three main questions. The first question regards the critical consciousness that emerges from Anzaldúa's proposal of a new *mestizx* consciousness. For this, I revisit Martinez's "critical semiotics" and Ortega's account of the *nepantlera* self. As we shall see, the work of these philosophers informs my later interpretation of Anzaldúa's "aesthetics of transformation." The second question regards whether Anzaldúa's conception of *nepantla*

leads to an ontological pluralism both in terms of the world and the self. I turn to Ortega's formulation of existential rather than ontological pluralism which accounts for the multiplicity of the self and of the world. Lastly, the third question regards the sense of agency in Anzaldúa's "aesthetics of transformation." For this, I turn to Pitts' formulation of "multiplicitous agency" as a coalitional form of meaning making. As we shall see, the work of these philosophers informs my interpretation of Anzaldúa's "poetics of embodiment."

5.3.1. From a Phenomenology of Habits to a Critical Semiotics:

Although she does not claim to offer an interpretation of Anzaldúa's work, Jackeline Martinez draws from the work of Chicana feminists such as Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga to account both for the habitual ways in which marginalized peoples inhabit racist, sexist, and homophobic meanings and for the possibility for critical agency regarding these meanings. Martinez's analysis then not only informs my account of the intimate terrorism suffered by marginalized peoples but offers theoretical tools for my later formulation of Anzaldúa's "poetics of embodiment." Martinez phenomenology of habits is interested in clarifying the way in which the U.S. dominant culture places a demand on Chicana peoples to assimilate and thus to inhabit the very meanings that mark us along racial, gendered, and sexual lines. Martinez puts this demand by the dominant culture to assimilate as follows:

The free and pervasive circulation of racism, sexism, and homophobia within the dominant culture means that the battle against these discriminations must be located at the level of the preconscious—a difficult battle to engage absent of a critique that illuminates these discriminations at the start. In other words, those who are racially and/or sexually marked within the dominant culture will, as much as anyone, tend to

reproduce the tacitly accepted norms of that culture no matter the degree to which we ourselves are the objects of racism, sexism, and/or homophobia.⁶²⁰

To account for the way in which marginalized peoples come to reproduce the same meanings that marginalize us within the dominant culture, Martinez offers a phenomenological account of embodied communication as the habitual way in which we inhabit social meanings. Martinez argues that communication is made possible within a social and historical context that remains anonymous, but that makes gestures and expressions meaningful.⁶²¹ This means that it is through communication that we come to reproduce social meanings in habitual ways. As she puts it, communication “constitutes a living habitus whereby persons unconsciously and preconsciously reconstitute and constitute the signifying systems that help give form to habitual practices in the first place—in a word, humans exist by way of praxis.”⁶²² Moreover, Martinez argues that it is through the body that the intentionality of consciousness is directed towards objects in a normative way, by which she means that while “the lived-body intends toward one object of consciousness, it necessarily turns *away* from another. Thus, a *choice* is made, a *value* ascribed and inscribed.”⁶²³ These two aspects of Martinez’s phenomenological analysis entail that, through communication, we take up historical meanings and that these meanings orient our embodied relations to the self and others in normative ways. Martinez offers as an example the case of racism, which she traces to colonial meanings of superiority and inferiority. Through communication, we come to inhabit these

⁶²⁰ Jackeline Martinez (2000), *Phenomenology of Chicana Experience and Identity: Communication and Transformation in Praxis*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., xiii.

⁶²¹ Ibid, 6.

⁶²² Ibid, 7.

⁶²³ Ibid, 10.

historical meanings and we reproduce them by orienting ourselves towards white bodies in terms of *superiority* and towards dark skinned bodies in terms of *inferiority*.⁶²⁴

Importantly, however, Martinez is not only interested in accounting for the ways in which marginalized peoples come to inhabit oppressive meanings in a habitual way, but in offering an account of the way in which marginalized peoples might take a critical stance regarding these meanings. For this, Martinez offers what I call a “critical semiotics.” Martinez’s critical semiotics consists in the ability to “*see oneself seeing what one sees by virtue of them* [racist, sexist, and homophobic meanings]—is to have the capacity to change them as they are created and lived in experience.”⁶²⁵ This means that, in Martinez’s view, human beings have the capacity of bringing to view the meanings that orient our embodied normative relations. However, since the meanings we inhabit through communication are world-directed, Martinez argues that the critical bringing to view of oppressive meanings does not take place through *reflection*, but through *reflexivity*. As she writes, “what we are interrogating is not simply introspective self-reflection, where a consciousness reflects on what one is conscious of, but a self-reflexivity where the immediate linkages that allow for particular contents of consciousness to manifest in the first place are discovered.”⁶²⁶ Martinez borrows Charles Pierce’s notion of the “interpretant” as a second order representation which allows us to represent what we consciously intent at the embodied level.⁶²⁷ Yet, Martinez is not naïve

⁶²⁴ Martinez puts it as follows: “As long as history operates from, yet denies, a sense of racial difference and therefore (white, European) ‘superiority,’ it will be possible for culture, groups, and persons from a wide variety of racial and ethnic heritages to identify with white, European superiority and thus guarantee the perpetuation of a cultural sickness whereby there must always be some (dark-skinned primitive others) who are known and believed to be inferior humans, if they are ever recognized as human at all.” Ibid, 12.

⁶²⁵ Ibid, 7.

⁶²⁶ Ibid, 14.

⁶²⁷ Martinez describes the notion of the “interpretant” as follows: “In semiotic terms, I am interested in Pierce’s *interpretant* as a hidden but enabling representation that makes possible the more commonly

about the clarity that we can accomplish regarding oppressive meanings through this process of reflexivity, but argues instead that reflexivity entails an infinite process where for each interpretant we might posit another interpretant, and so on at infinitum. For this reason, Martinez argues that her critical semiotics does not involve a linear temporality but a spiraling temporality that entails questioning meanings by means of an interpretant which in turn opens the possibility of questioning the second interpretant by means of another.⁶²⁸

Martinez clarifies her critical semiotics by analyzing her own experience as a Chicana and her relationship with her Mexican American ancestry along three moments of consciousness which she calls “*unknowing-knowing*,” “*preknowing-knowing*,” and “*knowing-unknown*.” An important background for understanding Martinez’s critical exploration of her experience is her relationship with her father, a Chicano who became successful in the U.S. by assimilating to the dominant culture. This is important because it means that Martinez grew up lacking knowledge about her Mexican American heritage. As such, the moment that she calls “unknowing-knowing” means that “I *knew* I had Mexican American ancestry from my father, but my family’s fairly affluent southern California lifestyle made the knowledge of my Mexican American heritage, something *unknown*, remain irrelevant—a message I got from my father.”⁶²⁹ This first moment then corresponds to her representation of her knowledge about her Mexican American heritage as a form of *ignorance* regarding her ancestry. Moreover, the second moment that

knowable sign and its meaning. The interpretant does not function like a stabilizing or undergirding code that once revealed tells us ‘exactly what really is.’ Rather, interrogating the interpretant as it makes meaningfulness manifest in human experience (similar to interrogating intentionality) locates us in a realm of *unlimited semiosis* where every sign requires an interpretant, which is itself a sign requiring an interpretant, and so on at infinitum.” Ibid, 14.

⁶²⁸ Ibid, 15.

⁶²⁹ Ibid, 36.

Martinez calls “preknowing-knowing” involves “a reverberation back and forth between what is unknown but sensed as a possible knowing and what is known.”⁶³⁰ Martinez recounts that this moment took place for her when she began inquiring about her Mexican American heritage and about her relation to other Chicanx, Mexican American, and Latinx peoples. At this moment then the knowledge she was gaining about her ancestry turned the unknown into a possibility for further knowledge. Lastly, the third moment that Martinez calls “knowing-unknowing” refers to the moment “where one knows precisely that there is a field of unknowingness that is directly relevant to oneself. It involves *explicit asking of questions*, first of myself and my family history and then of the history of the Chicano people.”⁶³¹ The third moment entails that Martinez’s knowledge about her Mexican American ancestry at the same time involves knowing that there is an infinite realm of the *unknown*. In this sense, Martinez argues that the third moment of consciousness opens another spiraling cycle. As she puts it, “Our liberatory praxis must return again to the first and second modes of consciousness to avoid the easy slip into an arrogantly assumed *knowing what is unknown*.”⁶³²

Martinez’s work in *Phenomenology of Chicana Experience and Identity* is important for my present account for two reasons. The first reason is that Martinez’s phenomenology of habits has helped in clarifying Anzaldúa’s views on embodied experience. Not only does Martinez’s analysis account for the ways in which, through embodied communication, we take up historical meanings that orient our embodied relations in normative ways at the subjective and intersubjective levels, but she also

⁶³⁰ Ibid, 37.

⁶³¹ Ibid.

⁶³² Ibid, 39.

accounts for the demand to assimilate to the dominant culture placed on marginalized communities. The problem is not only that this demand to assimilate is the condition *sine qua non* for marginalized peoples to count as agents within the dominant culture, but also that through the process of assimilation we also reproduce the same meanings that serve to marginalize us. To put it differently, assimilation is the process through which we become the agents and the objects of our own oppression. The second reason that Martinez's work is important for my later account of Anzaldúa's "poetics of embodiment" regards her critical semiotics. As we saw, Martinez's critical semiotics employs the notion of the interpretant as a second order representation which allows us to gain a critical perspective regarding the historical meanings we inhabit at the embodied level. For Martinez, this critical perspective allows us to reorient and transform our embodied relations towards the self and others. As we will see, Ortega and Pitts expand on this account of a critical consciousness by appealing to the world-perspectives of differently localized peoples. It is from these different perspectives that we can not only criticize but effectively transform our subjective and intersubjective relations at the embodied level. In the following then I turn to Ortega's and Pitts' work to develop on Martinez's initial account of critical consciousness.

5.3.2. *Nepantla, Critical Consciousness, and the Multiplicitous Self:*

The central concern driving Ortega's work in *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self* (2016) regards the critical consciousness that those who inhabit *nepantla* can develop and the ontological status of the *nepantlera* self. In the previous section, I offered an expansive analysis of *nepantla* which draws from Anzaldúa's earlier and later work. I argued that *nepantla* not only refers to the space in-

between geographical and cultural worlds, but also to the meanings which split the self and the community into agents and objects of oppression. Although Ortega's formulation of the *nepantlera* self employs in-betweenness as a spatial metaphor, she aims to capture both the material situatedness as well as the psychic state of the *nepantlera* self without sacrificing one for the other. As Ortega puts it:

While her account of the new *mestiza*—Anzaldúa's account captures both material as well as metaphorical aspects of a life in the borderlands. The metaphorical and theoretical aspects of Anzaldúa's account, however, cannot be considered as the most important ones, either, as they might lead to theories that lack specificity and materiality, thus allowing for the erasure of the importance of the actual conditions of those who inhabit the borderlands.⁶³³

For Ortega then *nepantla* refers material and existential situation of finding oneself in-between worlds of meaning. Moreover, for Ortega, inhabiting *nepantla* leads the self to two moments that she captures with Anzaldúa's notion of "Coatlicue states." "Coatlicue states" refer to the existential situation of finding oneself in-between worlds of meaning, and they involve two moments. While the first moment involves a disorientation a paralysis regarding our agential possibilities within hostile worlds, the second moment involves a critical consciousness regarding the meanings that inform our embodied relations within those worlds. As Ortega writes, Coatlicue states involve "ruptures in the everyday world that include a double movement, including moments of fear and inability to move but also moments of creativity and transformation, of crossing and acquiring a new identity."⁶³⁴ That is, the first moment corresponds to the experience of finding oneself in a foreign or hostile world and lacking the normative resources to act or the

⁶³³ Mariana Ortega (2016), *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 25-26.

⁶³⁴ *Ibid*, 27.

ability to protect oneself. This state of psychic paralysis, however, might also lead to what I call a “critical consciousness.” That is because “While being in this space, the new *mestiza* develops a *mestiza* consciousness that, according to Anzaldúa, can reflect critically and see from different perspectives.”⁶³⁵ Differently put, since the *nepantlera* self occupies different material and existential locations, she can gain a critical perspective regarding different worlds of meaning. That is the case of Anzaldúa’s critical perspective regarding sexist norms within her Mexican culture and racist norms within her feminist community. As such, Ortega argues that what characterizes the new *mestiza* is a critical perspective that allows for “tolerance for ambiguity” regarding different worlds of meaning.⁶³⁶

The central problem that emerges from this account of Anzaldúa’s new *mestiza*, however, regards both the ontological status of the worlds of meaning within which the *nepantlera* moves as well as the ontological status of the *nepantlera* self. The problem regarding the ontological status of the world and of the *nepantlera* self emerges for Ortega for two reasons. The first reason regards Ortega’s engagement with María Lugones’ conception of “world-traveling.” Following on Anzaldúa’s work, Lugones argues that marginalized selves can “travel” between worlds from which they can gain a critical perspective regarding oppressive norms. The problem, however, is that Lugones posits an ontological pluralism that entails “positing a multiplicity of selves as well as a multiplicity of worlds anchored in multiple realities.”⁶³⁷ Lugones thus posits

⁶³⁵ Ibid, 26.

⁶³⁶ Ibid, 29. Commenting on a similar aspect in Latinx feminist María Lugones’ work, Ortega writes that “Lugones sees the possibility for resistance arising out of the new *mestiza*’s tolerance for ambiguity and contradiction but also from her transgression of rigid conceptual boundaries and her breaking of the unitary aspect of new and old paradigms that lead her to create a new value system through the uprooting of dualistic thinking.” Ibid, 28.

⁶³⁷ Ibid, 88.

incommensurable worlds between which the new *mestiza* moves and therefore also posits a plurality of selves who inhabit those worlds at different times. Moreover, the second reason that the ontological issue emerges for Ortega is that she draws from Martin Heidegger's analysis of being in the world to capture the sense in which the new *mestiza* inhabits *nepantla* as being in-between worlds of meaning. Ortega draws from Heidegger's notion of "being-at-ease" in the world.⁶³⁸ However, the difference between Ortega's phenomenology of the new *mestiza* and Heidegger's phenomenology of *Dasein* is that while the latter is characterized, for the most part, by its being-at-ease in the world, the new *mestiza* who travels across worlds experiences continuous existential ruptures within these worlds. As Ortega writes, "the experience of the selves described by Latina feminists shows a life of constant ruptures and a persistent breaking down of equipment, both in terms of everyday norms and practices and in terms of deeper existential and societal issues."⁶³⁹ Ortega captures the sense of experiencing continuous ruptures in the world in terms of a *thin* and a *thick* sense of being-at-ease. She argues that while a *think* sense of not being-at-ease regards ruptures in the norms that are usually taken for granted, a *thick* sense of not being-at-ease regards ruptures in norms that regard existential crises regarding the self's identity.⁶⁴⁰ The problem regarding the ontological status of the new *mestiza* self thus emerges from the *thick* sense of not being-at-ease because it involves her conception of self-identity within the different worlds she inhabits.

⁶³⁸ Ibid, 52-56.

⁶³⁹ Ibid, 61.

⁶⁴⁰ Ortega puts it as follows: "A *thin* sense of not being-at-ease is the result of ruptures of everyday norms of practices that are usually transparent and taken for granted by those familiar with the culture and environment, while a *thick* sense of not being-at-ease arises from ruptures in everyday norms, practices, and experiences that are more meaningful for the self and thus lead to existential crises regarding identity and other features of the self." Ibid, 63.

Ortega's solution to the problem regarding the ontological status of the self and of the world takes the form of an existential rather than an ontological pluralism. Ortega expresses her view as follows: "Rather than appealing to *ontological pluralism*, as Lugones does, I appeal to *existential pluralism*, a view that captures both the existential sense of being an 'I' as well as the multiplicity of the self while being-in-worlds."⁶⁴¹ Important to understand Ortega's position is the *existential* way in which she conceives of the "world." In Ortega's view, the world is not simply the total sum of objects, but her conception of the world is inextricably connected to the self who inhabits the world. As she puts it, "when we think about worlds... we have to think about the ways in which such worlds are connected to the self and the ways in which the self *is* in them, the way in which the self fares in them."⁶⁴² This means that, for Ortega, the world refers to the set of historical meanings, norms, and self-projections, such that, given their histories, norms, and self-projections two people might share the same space but inhabit a different world.⁶⁴³ This means that Ortega understands the multiplicity of worlds which the new *mestiza* inhabits in an existential rather than ontological way. Similarly, unlike Lugones' ontological pluralism regarding self-identity, Ortega conceives of the "multiplicitous self," as she calls it, in an existential rather than an ontological way.⁶⁴⁴ This means that, for Ortega, the new *mestiza* self is ontologically one but existentially multiple. Ortega accounts for the multiplicitous self through an account of temporality which ensures the

⁶⁴¹ Ibid, 12.

⁶⁴² Ibid, 66.

⁶⁴³ Ortega puts it as follows: "my account introduces an ontological element that makes it possible to see how the multiplicitous self can share specific spatial regions with others and also be in various worlds... That is, we can occupy the same space, but given our different social identities, we will *be* in that space in many different ways depending on the dominant norms, practices, and relations of power at work." Ibid, 93.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid, 49.

temporal continuity of the self. As she puts it, “Temporality makes it possible for the self to project toward the future while being in a particular present situation and being informed by a particular past, and it thus grounds the continuity of the present, past, and future.”⁶⁴⁵ Ortega argues that this sense of temporality ensures the “*mineness*” of experience at each time, which means that although the self might undergo divergent and event contradictory experiences in different worlds, temporality ensures that those experiences are experiences of the *same* self.⁶⁴⁶ Important to note here is that Ortega’s account of the mineness of experience does not involve a second-level activity of recollection, but mineness is the pre-reflective self-awareness which I introduced in Chapter 1 of this dissertation and which makes recollection possible.

Ortega’s account regarding existential pluralism thus entails that while the new *mestiza* might experience herself in multiplicitous ways within different worlds of meaning, her multiplicitous experience correspond to the temporal continuity of the self. In this sense, Ortega’s account of the new *mestiza* is important for my account of Anzaldúa’s “poetics of embodiment” for two reasons. The first reason is that Ortega develops on Martinez’s initial account of critical consciousness by accounting for the different perspectives the *nepantlera* self acquires from the different material and existential worlds of meaning she inhabits, and her account of subjective temporality ensures the continuity of experience despite multiplicity. Importantly, different from Martinez’s account of critical consciousness, rather than appealing to a second order interpretant, Ortega’s account of critical consciousness appeals to the different

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid, 79.

⁶⁴⁶ Ortega puts it as follows: “Mineness has to do with the individual character of the self in the sense that it registers the self’s awareness of its own being, or how the self is faring. Mineness thus captures the existential dimension of being an ‘I’ that is always situated in particular contexts.” Ibid, 81.

perspectives that the self acquires from inhabiting different material and existential worlds of meaning. This aspect of Ortega's account is important for my later interpretation of Anzaldúa's "aesthetics of transformation" because, as we shall see, it is through the juxtaposition of different perspectives that we can transform the meanings which inform our embodied relations. The second reason that Ortega's account is important for my later interpretation of Anzaldúa's poetics of embodiment regards her account of existential rather than ontological pluralism. That is because, as we will see in the next section, Anzaldúa's "metaphysics of interconnectedness" relies on an ontological monism which would be at odds with the claim that the new *mestiza* inhabits different worlds of meaning. Ortega's account regarding existential rather than ontological pluralism can thus help in making sense of a view which, at the same time, posits an ontological monism and multiple worlds of meaning. Ortega's accounts of critical consciousness and existential pluralism thus inform my later interpretations regarding Anzaldúa's "aesthetics of transformation" and "metaphysics of interconnectedness."

5.3.3. *Anzaldúa's Theory of Writing and Multiplicitous Agency:*

Although the previous two contributions by Latinx feminist philosophers contribute to my own project, the work of Andrea Pitts in *Nos/Otras: Gloria E. Anzaldúa, Multiplicitous Agency, and Resistance* is central to my interpretation of Anzaldúa's "poetics of embodiment." That is because Pitts offers an interpretation of Anzaldúa's theory of writing as allowing for the possibility of what Pitt's calls "multiplicitous agency," which regards the capacity for coalitional meaning-making. As Pitts writes, "this book is interested in interrogating projects of collective meaning-making that do not reify individualism or the tropes of a homogenizing paradigm that seeks uniformity and

smooth congruence.”⁶⁴⁷ For this, Pitts must show that although Anzaldúa’s theory of writing as “autohistoria-teoría” departs from Anzaldúa’s biographical narrative, while also allowing for a plurality of voices to make sense of their own experience. Pitts puts it as follows:

Autohistoria-teoría is characterized by several important features: it is collaborative, sensuously embodied, and productive of critical self-reflection, which can be both harmful and enabling. These features illustrate deep relational facets of Anzaldúa’s approach to self-writing, as well as offer a way to avoid the reification of an insular, individualistic, and isolationist positioning.⁶⁴⁸

Particularly important is Pitts’ account about the relational aspect of Anzaldúa’s theory of writing. That is because Pitts interprets Anzaldúa’s theory of writing through the latter’s “metaphysics of interrelatedness” and “aesthetics of transformation.” Much like I do in the following section, Pitts traces these aspects of Anzaldúa’s theory of writing to the influence of Nahua philosophy. Drawing from the work of James Maffie, Pitts writes that, “in English, we should consider *teotl* a verb, ‘as ever-flowing and ever-changing energy-in-motion rather than as a static entity or being.’ Regarding this process, *teotl* is also an ‘artistic-creative process’ and ‘the cosmos and its contents are *teotl*’s ongoing work of performance.”⁶⁴⁹ That is, Pitts’ interprets Anzaldúa’s theory of writing through the metaphysical principle of “*teotl*” as the creative process that creates and recreates reality. Moreover, Pitts also argues that through poetry or writing human beings can participate in the creative activity of “*teotl*” as an activity of meaning-making.⁶⁵⁰ Pitts argues, however, that the process of meaning-making requires a confrontation with

⁶⁴⁷ Andrea Pitts (2021), *Nos/Otras: Gloria E. Anzaldúa, Multiplicitous Agency, and Resistance*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 9.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid, 44.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid, 50.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid, 51.

“one’s own forms of ignorance” and, for this reason, she argues, following José Medina, that the collaborative process of meaning making requires “epistemic friction.” By “epistemic friction,” Pitts means “epistemic motivations that lead individuals and groups to reassess their own positions or views, to consider viewpoints that they do not hold.”⁶⁵¹ That is, in Pitts’ interpretation, Anzaldúa’s theory of writing has the capacity to participate in the creation and recreation of reality, and the process of meaning making requires epistemic friction, which allows us to transform our racial, gendered, and sexual identities.

Moreover, in Pitts’ view, this openness to the viewpoints of others provides the basis for her account of “multiplicitous agency.” By “multiplicitous agency,” Pitts means “how the meanings of actions—or the reasons we attribute to individual and collective agents—may be interpreted through an Anzaldúan multiplicitous lens.”⁶⁵² This is to say that Anzaldúa’s theory of writing provides a narrative ambivalent enough to accommodate the reasons for action of differently situated peoples and therefore also allows for the possibility of coalition building. Pitts elaborates on her view of multiplicitous agency by drawing from the work of critical philosopher of race Leonard Harris and Black feminist philosopher Kristie Dotson. Pitts develops on Dotson’s challenge to what Harris calls “representative heuristics,” which is a framework “of agency, institutional organization, historiography, and so on that honor the commitments of oppressed peoples have to eradicating the terms and sometimes peoples who are oppressing them.”⁶⁵³ For this, Harris proposes that oppressed peoples employ the social

⁶⁵¹ Ibid, 53.

⁶⁵² Ibid, 59.

⁶⁵³ Ibid, 63.

identities that serve to oppress them as a heuristic tool of representation to interpret the ethical commitments implicit the actions of oppressed peoples. Dotson challenges Harris' representative heuristics by adding that it further requires "the ability to provoke when necessary the epistemic demand to situate oppression so as to better approximate the bonds of oppression and the range of oppressors that one faces."⁶⁵⁴ Differently put, Dotson's challenge to Harris means that we need to expand the representative heuristics along multiple dimensions of oppression, so as to better interpret the ethical implications implicit in oppressed peoples' reasons for action. For example, Pitts analyzes the example provided by Dotson about the case of Margaret Garner, a Black slave who, while seeking passage on the Underground Railroad was surrounded by a white mob and she decided to kill her youngest daughter instead of allowing her to return to slavery.⁶⁵⁵ Dotson's challenge to Harris' representative heuristic regards the representative identity through which we might interpret Garner's reasons for action. Dotson argues that in Harris' original account, we might interpret Garner's reasons for action from the perspective of her condition as a Black slave who aims to end racism and slavery, but that this is not the only possible interpretation. That is because we might also interpret Garner's action from the perspective of her being a Black slave mother, and thus "I wonder if it is reasonable to impute upon her the hope for the end of the categories 'woman' or 'mother.'"⁶⁵⁶ This sort of ambivalence in the ways that we interpret differently situated peoples' reasons for action is the epistemic friction that, in Pitts' view, Anzaldúa's theory of writing allows towards the formation of multiplicitous agency.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid, 65.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid, 70.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid, 72.

Lastly, Pitts develops on her account of multiplicitous agency by engaging coalition building with movements such as the critical transgender movement and the indigenous sovereignty movement. Important for my purposes is Pitts' case in relation to the indigenous sovereignty movement because she addresses criticism about the ways in which Anzaldúa appropriates indigenous identity as her own, and about the ways in which Anzaldúa portrays a romanticized version of indigenous peoples in her work. Pitts describes these criticisms as follows:

The three primary areas of critique are (1) the primitivization of Indigeneity and lack of dialogue with contemporary Indigenous writers, activists, and movements; (2) the romanticization and appropriation of Indigenous histories and cultures, practices that ignore the violent existence of the settler state; and (3) the risk of "subjectless" framings of agency/identity for Indigenous communities and the threats such framings may pose to Indigenous relations to land.⁶⁵⁷

To address these criticisms, Pitts introduces Anzaldúa's notion of "*nos/otras*" as the kind of multiplicitous agency for which Pitts advocates. Pitts writes that, "I propose that her conception of *nos/otras*, when read as a form of multiplicitous agency, may support an interpretation of the stakes of inclusion and exclusion within resistant projects."⁶⁵⁸ That is, "*nos/otras*" entails a kind of social identity which captures peoples' participation in oppressing practices and the way in which those oppressing practices also exclude the same people. In this sense, Pitts interprets indigenous peoples' claim for land sovereignty and Anzaldúa's and other Chicana peoples' identification with indigenous heritage as responding to the logic of settler colonialism since the U.S. annexation of the northern parts of Mexico in 1848. Pitts draws from historical accounts to show that part of these settler practices included requiring inhabitants of those territories to disidentify with their

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid, 130.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid, 149.

indigenous heritage to maintain private property rights.⁶⁵⁹ In this sense, Pitts interprets Chicane peoples' claim to an indigenous heritage as a form of "mestizo mourning," which entails "a form of mourning of those lost filial relations, rather than simply an appropriative attempt to include themselves within Native tribal identities."⁶⁶⁰ This means that both Indigenous movements for land sovereignty and Chicane peoples' claim to an indigenous heritage respond to the oppressive logic of settler colonialism, and thus that we can interpret the actions of resistance from these movements as a form of coalition building. By appealing to Anzaldúa's notion of "*nos/otras*" then Pitts captures practices of inclusion/exclusion through which settler colonialism positions indigenous and Chicane peoples against one another, which also highlights the possibility of coalition building.

Pitts' work is important for my interpretation of Anzaldúa's "poetics of embodiment" for two reasons. The two reasons regard Anzaldúa's "metaphysics of interconnectedness" and "aesthetics of transformation." The first reason that Pitts' work is important for my interpretation is that they trace Anzaldúa's "metaphysics of interconnectedness" to the influence of Nahua philosophy and, more particularly, to the concepts of "*teotl*" and "*in xochitl in cuicatl*." Important about Anzaldúa's "metaphysics of interrelatedness" is the world-transforming function that Anzaldúa attributes to her theory of writing. As I showed in the first section of this chapter, Anzaldúa does not separate between the work of art and its social function, but attributes to the work of art the capacity to create and recreate reality. Thus, much like through "*in xochitl in cuicatl*" Nahua philosophers had access to the creative and recreative activity of "*teotl*," Anzaldúa

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid, 152.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

attributes to her theory of writing the capacity to create and recreate reality. The second reason that Pitts' work is important for my interpretation of Anzaldúa's "poetics of embodiment" regards her view of multiplicitous agency. Throughout this section, I have traced the development of a critical consciousness in Martinez's and Ortega's work. As we saw, while Martinez's critical semiotics appeals to the interpretant to acquire a critical perspective regarding oppressive meanings, Ortega appeals to the different material and existential worlds of meaning that the new *mestiza* inhabits, and from which she can develop a critical perspective. Pitts' formulation of multiplicitous agency develops these accounts of critical consciousness by arguing that coalitional meaning making requires epistemic friction in the way in which we interpret the reasons for action of differently localized peoples. This means that Pitts' account of critical consciousness appeals to the different perspectives of differently localized peoples as a condition for coalitional meaning making. As we shall see, this aspect of Pitts' work is important for my interpretation of Anzaldúa's "aesthetics of transformation" as juxtaposing or bridging the different aspects of our social identities, which allows us to reconceive our embodied and intersubjective relations.

5.4. Anzaldúa's Poetics of Embodiment:

So far then I have offered an interpretation of *nepantla* in Anzaldúa's work as referring both to the space in-between worlds of meaning and to social meanings which split our embodied and intersubjective relations. I also discussed the work of contemporary Latinx feminist philosophers as it relates to the development of a critical consciousness and the metaphysical issues that might emerge from Anzaldúa's view of the new *mestizx*. In this section, I offer an interpretation of Anzaldúa's theory of writing as a "poetics of

embodiment.” We already saw that Anzaldúa’s ethno-poetics aims to heal marginalized peoples from the intimate terrorism to which inhabiting splitting meanings lead. This section does two things. First, I expand Anzaldúa’s theory of ethno-poetics by developing on her metaphysics of interrelatedness and aesthetics of transformation in her later work *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro*. Much like Pitts, I trace Anzaldúa’s metaphysics of interrelatedness to the Nahua metaphysical concept of “*teotl*” and her aesthetics of transformation to the concept of “*in xochitl in cuicatl*.” I show not only that “*in xochitl in cuicatl*” represents an aesthetic process through which human beings participate in the creative and recreative activity of “*teotl*,” but also that it consists in a process of *juxtaposing* unrelated meanings to generate a new semantic content. For this reason, I argue that, in Nahua philosophy, “*in xochitl in cuicatl*” functions as *poiesis*, or as the creation of new meanings. Second, I interpret Anzaldúa’s later theory of writing that she calls “autohistoria-teoría” through the lens of my interpretation of “*in xochitl in cuicatl*.” I argue that Anzaldúa’s “poetics of embodiment” consists in juxtaposing or *bridging* the splitting meanings to generate a new conception of the colonized body.

The section is divided into three subsections. The first subsection interprets Anzaldúa’s metaphysics of interrelatedness and her aesthetics of transformation through the Nahua concept of “*teotl*” as a monistic metaphysical principle and through the concept of “*in xochitl in cuicatl*” as an aesthetic principle in Nahua philosophy. My aim is to show that “*in xochitl in cuicatl*” serves a *poietic* function in Nahua philosophy which consists in the production of new meanings. The second subsection interprets Anzaldúa’s “autohistoria-teoría” through the lens of my interpretation of her metaphysics of interrelatedness and her aesthetics of transformation. I aim to show that Anzaldúa’s

“autohistoria-teoría” shares the poetic function of “*in xochitl in cuicatl*.” Lastly, in the third section, I introduce Anzaldúa’s conception of a new *mestizx* identity that she calls “*nos/otras*,” which is an identity that juxtaposes or bridges both between different aspects of the split self and therefore also between worlds of meaning.

5.4.1. *The Nahua Influence in Anzaldúa’s Work:*⁶⁶¹

In section 1 of this chapter, I suggested that Anzaldúa’s later theory of writing develops on her original ethno-poetics by supplementing it with what Keating calls a metaphysics of interrelatedness and an esthetics of transformation. As Keating puts it, “Anzaldúa excavates her creative process (‘her gestures of the body’) and uses this excavation to develop an aesthetics of transformation, grounded in her metaphysics of interrelatedness.”⁶⁶² Moreover, with Pitts, we saw that Anzaldúa draws her metaphysics of interrelatedness to the Nahua metaphysical principle of “*teotl*” and that she draws her aesthetics of transformation to the concept of “*in xochitl in cuicatl*.” Unlike the Western philosophical tradition, however, which dissects and treats different aspects of reality separately under the headings of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics, in the Nahua philosophical tradition, these different aspects are intimately connected.⁶⁶³ That is primarily because the conception of reality in Nahua philosophy raises important questions not only regarding the possibility of human knowledge, but also regarding the

⁶⁶¹ The account I offer here regarding the metaphysical and aesthetic views of the Nahua draws from my paper: Jorge Montiel (2019), “Aztec Metaphysics—Two Interpretations of an Evanescent World,” *Genealogy*, 3, 59-70.

⁶⁶² Keating, 2015, ix.

⁶⁶³ As Zaytoun argues, we Anzaldúa’s appeal to Nahua philosophy is an effort to decolonize the Western metaphysical tradition that continues to inform our conceptions of reality and subjectivity. As Zaytoun puts it, “Because Anzaldúa summons nagualismo ontology and metaphysics as a personal and political move, with the intention of resisting colonial conceptions of selfhood and collective struggle, I suggest that we read her nagualismo as a decolonial practice... Far from a naïve, nostalgic, nativist, or primitivist approach, in her Indigenismo, Anzaldúa was seeking ways to articulate forms of belonging and resistance that weren’t bound to colonialist logic.” Zaytoun, 59.

possibility of living stable and meaningful lives. Central to the Nahua conception of reality is the principle of “*teotl*,” which is the impersonal divine principle that generates and regenerates reality. More precisely, in *Aztec Metaphysics: Understanding a World in Motion* (2014), James Maffie argues that “*teotl*” is a metaphysical principle involving two main features. The first feature is that “*teotl*” entails what Maffie calls an “ontological” and “constitutional” monism.⁶⁶⁴ “Ontological monism” is the view that reality is reducible to only one thing, namely “*teotl*.” This means that “*teotl*” is identical with individual things and with the whole of reality. “Constitutional monism” is the view that reality is made of only one kind of stuff, namely, “*teotl*.” As such, the multiplicity of things we encounter in the world is not only identical with “*teotl*,” but it is also made of “*teotl*.” Moreover, the second feature of Nahua metaphysics is that “*teotl*” is a dynamic, ever-changing principle which has no stable origin or end. In this sense, “*teotl*” is a perpetual process of self-becoming. Maffie refers to this aspect of Nahua philosophy as a “process metaphysics,” where the stability of objects is only a pattern in a continuous process of change and becoming.⁶⁶⁵ As such, things are not stable, substantial objects, but they are continuously changing, fading, and re-emerging. Given these features of “*teotl*,” Miguel León Portilla argues that the Nahua conceived of “*teotl*” as “*Tloque Nahuaque*” or “the giver of life,” that is, as the non-personal, divine force of reality.”⁶⁶⁶

Importantly, given the dynamic feature of *teotl*, the Nahua characterize it in two seemingly deceptive ways which raise issues pertaining the possibility of knowing

⁶⁶⁴ James Maffie (2014), *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion*, Boulder, CO: University of Colorado Press, 22.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid, 27.

⁶⁶⁶ Miguel León Portilla (1992), *Fifteen Poets of the Aztec World*, Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 82.

reality. One of these ways is through the creative, aesthetic concept of “*in xochitl in cuicatl*” or “flower and song.” That is, the Nahua conceive the generating and regenerating activity of *teotl* as an artistic creation. The world and entities within it are thus the artistic creation and recreation of *teotl*. King and poet Nezahualcoyotl, for example, expresses this view through the metaphor of a “book of paintings” that is the world in which we live.⁶⁶⁷ Entities in the world, including human beings, are thus paintings in the book of *teotl*. Moreover, the second seemingly deceptive way in which the Nahua conceive the generating and regenerating activity of *teotl* is through the notion of the “*nahual*,” which is a shamanic form-changing transformation. Maffie explains that “the word *nahual* derives from *nahualli* meaning both form-changing and the being into which a shaman transforms.”⁶⁶⁸ *Teotl* transforms and re-transforms itself into different guises such as animals, human beings, and other entities in the world. This seemingly deceptive artistic and shamanic conceptions of *teotl* raise questions regarding one’s epistemic access to reality. That is because *teotl* not only appears as illusory, as in the case of paintings, but it also appears as disguising, as in the case of its shamanic transformations. Consider, for example, the following poem in which Nezahualcoyotl expresses sorrow regarding our inability to know reality: “Is it true one really lives on the earth?/ Not forever on earth,/ only a little while here.”⁶⁶⁹ Maffie explains the seemingly deceptive aspects of *teotl* by arguing that they can be understood through the epistemological distinction between *de re* perception and *de dicto* perception.⁶⁷⁰ *De re* perception is perception of a thing as it is itself and *de dicto* perception is perception of a

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁸ Maffie, 2014, 39.

⁶⁶⁹ Portilla, 1992, 81.

⁶⁷⁰ Maffie, 2014, 41-42.

thing under some description. For example, I might *de dicto* perceive a man entering a building, without *de re* perceiving that it was my friend Luis. Similarly, one *de dicto* perceives *teotl* through its multiple manifestations without *de re* perceiving *teotl* as *teotl*. This means that the illusoriness and disguise arise from *de dicto* perceived reality.

Different from Maffie's epistemological interpretation of the illusory and deceptive aspects of *teotl*, León Portilla offers an *existential* interpretation, one where the metaphysical aspect of reality is intimately linked to existential questions about the meaning of human life. By an "existential" interpretation, I mean that reality does not consist of stable, essential meanings, but meaning requires creative human activity. As Portilla puts it interpreting Nezahualcoyotl's poem, his thinking "encompassed the problems of an instinctively metaphysical thinking that includes anguish and doubt as attributes of one's existence."⁶⁷¹ That is, in León Portilla's interpretation, the seemingly illusory and disguising nature of reality leads not only to epistemological questions for Nezahualcoyotl, but to existential questions regarding the meaning of human life. Moreover, Portilla argues that Nahua philosophers such as Nezahualcoyotl rejected two solutions to the problem about the meaning of human life. The first solution has to do with religious offerings, a response that, León Portilla argues, was rejected by Nahua philosophers. As he puts it, "The popular and public cult of the gods as expressed in sacrifice and mystical militaristic vision of the Aztecs was differentiated from the *tlamatinime*'s search for a new form of knowledge which might embody the truth."⁶⁷² The second option that Nahua philosophers rejected is the hedonistic one. León Portilla

⁶⁷¹ León Portilla, 1992, 79.

⁶⁷² Miguel León Portilla (1963), *Aztec Thought and Culture: A Study of the Ancient Nahua Mind*, translated by Jack Emory Davis, Norman, OK: Oklahoma University Press, 74.

suggests that “This reaction to the possibility of arriving at transcendent truth at least mentally was not the only answer suggested by the Nahuas, nor was it the one that most intensely imbedded in their spirit.”⁶⁷³ Rather, León Portilla argues that Nezahualcoyotl finds a way of making sense of human life in an evanescent world, “He proclaims he has discovered the ultimate meaning of ‘flower and song,’ the Nahua metaphor for art and symbolism.”⁶⁷⁴ “Flower and song” or “*in xochitl in cuicatl*” is the Nahua concept of poetry and art generally, and through it the Nahua found a way of giving meaning to human life in an evanescent world.

Unlike the Western view of aesthetics as art for art’s sake, *in xochitl in cuicatl*, or the Nahua conception of art aims to respond to the necessity of making human life meaningful. As Portilla writes, their metaphysical views make the Nahua “aware of the problems involved in an attempt to establish values in a changing world.”⁶⁷⁵ More precisely, León Portilla argues that *in xochitl in cuicatl* allows the Nahua to approximate the divine in two ways. One way in which *in xochitl in cuicatl* approximates the divine is by allowing artists to perceive beyond what one ordinarily sees. León Portilla writes that, for Nahua philosophers, “Poetry ‘enraptures man,’ and by intensifying his emotions and his perceptive powers, it enables him to perceive what he ordinarily would not.”⁶⁷⁶ *In xochitl in cuicatl* allows the Nahua to perceive beyond immediate perception and to perceive beyond particular guises of *teotl* as individual objects and thus to approximate *teotl* as *teotl*. The second way in which the Nahua approximated the divine through *in*

⁶⁷³ Ibid, 73.

⁶⁷⁴ León Portilla, 1992, 82.

⁶⁷⁵ León Portilla, 1963, 82.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid, 77.

xochitl in cuicatl is by becoming divine themselves, that is, by engaging in the activity of creation and recreation that they attributed to *teotl*. León Portilla puts it as follows:

Their final answer was that “flower and song” placed God in man’s heart, making it true and causing it to create what today we call art. So, for instance, in the description of the painter, the artist appears as a man with God in his heart, a man in possession of the truth and of the very roots of his being. Having a deified heart, he converses with it so that he can ‘give a divine quality to things.’⁶⁷⁷

One might be tempted to think about artistic creation in representational terms.⁶⁷⁸ León Portilla, however, rejects this view based on the linguistic construction that Ángel María Garibay calls “*difrasismo*.” *Difrasismo* consists in the conjunction of unrelated words that express a new, metaphoric meaning.⁶⁷⁹ Linguistic constructions in Nahua poetry then do not aim at mapping onto individual things, as if names were tags, but at generating a new symbol and thus a new meaning. León Portilla attributes metaphoric constructions such as “*in xochitl in cuicatl*” the power to generate a new meaning which cannot be reduced to either one of its terms. For example, *in xochitl in cuicatl* does not refer only to flower nor does it refer only to song. Rather, *in xochitl in cuicatl* refers to a new semantic construction, namely, poetry. The *difrasismo* aspect of *in xochitl in cuicatl* then allows the Nahua to transcend their perceptions of individual things and thus the disguising perception of *teotl* through individual guises while, at the same time, it allows them to generate new meanings. In León Portilla’s interpretation then *in xochitl in cuicatl* functions as *poiesis*, or as the creative activity through which Nahua philosophers gave

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid, 180.

⁶⁷⁸ Zaytoun further argues that rather than representing reality, Anzaldúa’s aesthetics aims to transform reality. As Zaytoun puts it, “I see Anzaldúa’s writing, as border arte and shamanic process, not as an attempt to revive or represent a precolonial process but to enunciate, in Mignolo’s sense, to create something new that resists humanism and modernism, that is enaction decoloniality.” Zaytoun, 113.

⁶⁷⁹ León Portilla, 1963, 75.

meaning to human life. As Portilla puts it, “poetry, as a vehicle of metaphysical expression relying on metaphors, is an attempt to vitiate the transitoriness of earthly things, the dream of *tlalticpac*.”⁶⁸⁰

5.4.2. Anzaldúa’s *Metaphysics of Interrelatedness and Aesthetics of Transformation*:

In section 1 of this chapter, I suggested that, in Anzaldúa’s view, racial, gendered, and sexual meanings split not only our relation to our bodies and our communities, but that they also split our conception of reality, and that Anzaldúa’s theory of writing aims at healing the splitting of reality at different levels. Above, I also introduced the notions of *teotl* as the monistic principle of Nahua philosophy and *in xochitl in cuicatl* as the aesthetic function of *poiesis*. Although Anzaldúa does not refer explicitly to *teotl* and only mentions *in xochitl in cuicatl* one time, my view is that in *Light in the Dark/Luz en los Oscuro*, Anzaldúa introduces metaphysical and aesthetic views that resemble those of the Nahua.⁶⁸¹ In *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro*, Anzaldúa introduces her metaphysical view by employing the metaphor of the three of life as follows:

The three is a link between worlds, just as the cosmic tree connects under, middle, and upper world, I’ll connect this essay’s sections: from the roots to the ground and up its trunk to the branches and to the sky, a journey from the depths of the underworld that ascends to the concrete physical world, and then to the upper realities of spirit, in a constant descend/ascend movement. But the problem with this up/down, linear description is that these three worlds aren’t separate. Interconnected and overlapping, they occupy the same place.⁶⁸²

That is, Anzaldúa’s description of reality through the metaphor of the three of life implies not only that the different realms of reality are interconnected but also that they communicate themselves. The three main realms that Anzaldúa distinguishes here are

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid, 79.

⁶⁸¹ For a similar interpretation of the Nahua influence in Anzaldúa’s aesthetics see Zaytoun, 31-37.

⁶⁸² Anzaldúa, 2015, 25.

what she calls the “underworld,” the “middle world,” and the “upper world.” The “underworld” refers to the “realm of Earth energies, animal spirits, and the dead who have not moved on to the next level of existence.”⁶⁸³ That is, the underworld is the realm of earthly realities, including human bodies, from which, Anzaldúa argues, we derive “knowledge of seasons, weather, animal and plant life, and the dead, as well as healing techniques for illness and disease.”⁶⁸⁴ The “middle world” refers to the realm of “the physical plane where we live our ordinary lives, is symbolized by the trunk; it is the realms of the planet and the outer reaches of the universe.”⁶⁸⁵ Differently put, the middle world is the realm of social life, including our scientific knowledge about the world. Anzaldúa further argues that from this realm we gain “ordinary reality’s actual conditions and spiritual aspects.”⁶⁸⁶ In the middle world then we can gain knowledge about the spiritual condition of our communities and about society more broadly. Lastly, the “upper world” is the realm of “noncorporeal energies, spirits who are gods and goddesses, spirits of the dead who have progressed beyond the land of the dead.”⁶⁸⁷ Anzaldúa further argues that “knowledge and help from the upper world instruct us in our roles as spiritual beings who participate in a larger, more cosmic existence.”⁶⁸⁸ As such, knowledge from the upper world allows us to realize our interconnectedness with the earthly realm, with our society, and with the spiritual realm.

Above, we saw that in the Nahua metaphysical conception, *teotl* is a monistic principle of reality in the sense that everything is identical with it and that everything is

⁶⁸³ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid, 26.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid.

made of it, but that *teotl* appears in different guises such as animals and human beings. We also saw that the Nahua refer to this shamanic quality as *nahual*, and that through art human beings become *nahual* in the sense that they acquire a divine quality. Anzaldúa explicitly employs the notion of the “*nagual*” to refer to the movement between different realms of reality and she refers to the person who moves between realms of reality as a “*chamana*”:

A type of Mesoamerican magic supernaturalism, nagualismo is an alternative epistemology, a folk theory of knowledge conditioned by long-standing ideology and belief system, Nagualismo’s basic assumptions (worldview) are shapeshifting (the ability to become an animal or thing) and traveling to other realities. These journeys require a different kind of “seeing”: the ability to perceive the world in a different way, the perceptual experience of what Carlos Castaneda calls “nonordinary” reality.⁶⁸⁹

“Nagualismo” refers not only to the movement between different realms of reality from which we can gain knowledge of ordinary and non-ordinary realities but also to the ability to transform both the self and reality. On this point, Zaytoun offers an important interpretation of Anzaldúa’s use of the *nagual* figure. Given Anzaldúa’s metaphysics of interconnectedness and her employment of *nagualismo*, Zaytoun argues that Anzaldúa offers an expansive conception of selfhood, one which is interconnected to its surroundings. As Zaytoun writes, “By taking up the image and concept of la *naguala* in her discussion of self-transformation, Anzaldúa calls for a way of thinking about the individual human body that is more expansive yet also more decentralized with relationship to its surroundings than traditional humanist conceptions.”⁶⁹⁰ This means that Anzaldúa does not only posit a metaphysical view according to which reality is

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid, 32.

⁶⁹⁰ Zaytoun, 36.

interconnected, but one where we can shift from different realms of reality as a way of healing the split in our conception of reality. The “*chamana*” is precisely the person who can travel between realms of reality to heal our split views. Anzaldúa thus writes that, “Chamanas, curanderas, artistas, and spiritual activists, like *nepantleras*, are liminal people, at the thresholds of form, forever betwixt and between. They move along different realities and psychic states, journeying beyond the natural order or status quo and into other worlds.”⁶⁹¹ Differently put, much like for the Nahua, the artist acquires the ability to move between guises of reality, *chamanas* acquire a similar quality. Important for Anzaldúa is that, by moving between realities, *chamanas* can *bridge* between realities, thereby healing us from our split conceptions about the objective and the spiritual worlds.

Anzaldúa refers to the process of healing as the “Coyolxauhqui imperative.” Above, we saw that, for the Nahua, *in xochitl in cuicatl* is a poietic or meaning-making process which consists in juxtaposing two unrelated meanings to generate a new semantic content. Although she does not employ the notion of *in xochitl in cuicatl*, Anzaldúa draws the notion of the “Coyolxauhqui imperative” from Nahua mythology and it serves a similar poetic function as *in xochitl in cuicatl*. In Nahua mythology, Coyolxauhqui is a goddess who was dismembered by her brother Huitzilopochtli, the god of war, and whose limbs were scattered. For this reason, Coyolxauhqui is represented as a fragmented goddess whose limbs are juxtaposed.⁶⁹² Anzaldúa takes Coyolxauhqui as a symbol of the healing process, which she describes as follows:

I call this impulse the “Coyolxauhqui imperative”: a struggle to reconstruct oneself and heal the *sustos* resulting from woundings, traumas, racism, and other acts of

⁶⁹¹ Anzaldúa, 2015, 31.

⁶⁹² Ibid, 107. See also, Keating, 2022, 118-124.

violation que hechan pedazos nuestras almas, split us, scatter our energies and haunt us. The Coyolxauqui imperative is the act of calling back those pieces of the self/soul that have been dispersed or lost, the act of mourning the losses that haunt us.⁶⁹³

Two things are important to highlight here. The first is that although by the time of *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro*, Anzaldúa seems to have abandoned the earlier term of intimate terrorism, the “*sustos*” she describes as emerging from racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of violence regard the intimate terrorism that I described above. As I showed, intimate terrorism refers to the violence self-inflicted by marginalized peoples at the level of the body, at the level of our communities and, more generally, at the level of our conception of reality. The Coyolxauhqui imperative precisely aims to heal the violence that we inflict on ourselves and on the world by bringing different aspects of ourselves together. Thus, at the level of the body, Anzaldúa aims to bring together the split self who is both the object and the subject of our own racist violence. Similarly, at the level of the community, Anzaldúa aims to bring together the different identities that make up our communal life. Such that our Mexican culture, for example, does not marginalize women and those whom we consider as sexually deviant. Lastly, at the level of the world, Anzaldúa aims to bring together the objective physical realm as well as the earthly and spiritual realms. However, much like *in xochitl in cuicatl* involves a process of juxtaposition rather than synthesis, the process of healing does not result in a synthetic, unified identity. Rather, Anzaldúa writes that, “The shamanic balance is not achieved by synthesis; it is not a static condition acquired by

⁶⁹³ Anzaldúa, 2015, 1-2.

resolving opposition, a tension that exists when two forces encounter each other headlong and are not reconciled but teeter on the edge of chaos.”⁶⁹⁴

Importantly, for Anzaldúa, the process of healing takes place through writing. Above, I showed that Anzaldúa’s refers to her earlier theory of writing as ethno-poetics. In *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro*, Anzaldúa abandons the term of ethno-poetics and adopts, instead, “autohistoria-teoría” to refer to her theory of writing. Two aspects about Anzaldúa’s characterization of “autohistoria-teoría” are important for my purposes. The first is that much like her ethno-poetics, autohistoria-teoría examines the social meanings that constitute the self to examine broader cultural meanings. This entails that by examining violence at the level of the self, we can also examine social and cultural violence. Anzaldúa puts this aspect as follows:

I fuse personal narrative with theoretical discourse, autobiographical vignettes with theoretical prose. I create a hybrid genre, a new discursive mode, which I call “autohistoria” and “autohistoria-teoría.” Conectando experiencias personales con realidades sociales results in autohistoria, and theorizing about this activity results in autohistoria-teoría. It’s a way of inventing and making knowledge, meaning, and identity through self-inscriptions. By making certain personal experiences the subject of this study, I also blur the private/public borders.⁶⁹⁵

The second important aspect about Anzaldúa’s autohistoria-teoría regards the *poietic* aspect that I attributed to *in xochitl in cuicatl*. In this sense, Anzaldúa’s adoption of the term “*historia*” is significant. That is because, as Keating suggests, “*historia*” encompasses both history and story or history and fiction. As Keating puts it, for Anzaldúa, fiction “does not represent lies, falsehoods, or misconceptions. Rather, fictionalized elements function as doorways inviting both writer and readers into

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid, 31.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid, 6.

additional, previously unrecognized dimensions of reality... ‘Fiction is not an unreality, but a different reality—the movement of imagination.’”⁶⁹⁶ The poietic function in Anzaldúa’s theory of writing then does not consist only in examining our culture through an examination of the self, but in *reconceiving* both the self and our culture. Importantly, much like in the Nahua conception of art as participating in the creation and recreation of reality, for Anzaldúa, the process of writing also involves bringing about a new world-reality at the level of the body. As she puts it, “In rewriting narratives of identity, nationalism, ethnicity, race, class, gender, sexuality, and aesthetics, I attempt to show (and not just tell) how transformation happens. My job is not just to interpret or describe realities, but to create them through language and action, symbols and images.”⁶⁹⁷ In this sense, Anzaldúa’s theory of writing aims to effectively *recreate* our conception of the body, our communities, and the world.

5.4.3. *Reconceiving Identity: New Tribalism and Nos/Otras:*

So far then I have argued that, in Anzaldúa’s early account, intimate terrorism results from the split meanings that inform our most intimate relations to our own bodies, to our communities, and to the world. And I have also argued that Anzaldúa’s theory of writing aims to heal both the self and our communities from intimate terrorism by juxtaposing or *bridging* as she also calls it, the different aspects that inform our social identities. In chapter 4 of *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro* titled “Geographies of Selves—Reimagining Identity,” Anzaldúa argues that we need to reimagine the way in which we conceive of our social identities. She writes that, “conventional, traditional identity labels are stuck in binaries, trapped in jaulas (cages) that limit the growth of our individual and

⁶⁹⁶ Keating, 2022, 85.

⁶⁹⁷ Anzaldúa, 2015, 7.

collective lives. We need fresh terms and open-ended tags that portray us in all our complexities and potentialities.”⁶⁹⁸ Anzaldúa situates her project of reconceiving identity between two prongs, where the first prong entails rejecting social identities as markers of our communities and of our bodies. Anzaldúa rejects this option because she finds that social identities are not only markers that lead to violence, but they also root us to communities within which we find a sense of agency. As she puts it, “It’s vital that we maintain our heritages’ useful, nurturing aspects but release the unproductive and harmful components”⁶⁹⁹ Rather than rejecting social identities then Anzaldúa’s project of reconceiving identity entails taking a critical stance regarding the norms imposed by our cultures, which is the form of critical consciousness that I developed from the work of contemporary Latinx feminist philosophers. Moreover, Anzaldúa also rejects the prong which would lead to a synthesized conception of the different social identities that inform our embodied experience and our communities. That is because this view of identity would lead to a homogeneous conception of the self and of our communities, which might lead to further forms of violence. Anzaldúa expresses this concern in the case of the Chicana community when she writes that, “to protect ourselves from oppressors, we idealize and hesitate to criticize Raza. We exclude from the vast geographies, from the round disk of wholeness, the concerns of the smaller groups and the issues of women.”⁷⁰⁰ The project of a synthesized identity leads to a homogenization of our communities that excludes aspects of our social identities that do not fit within the community. Thus, Anzaldúa’s project of reconceiving our identities takes the form of a hybrid identity, one

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid, 66.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid, 75.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid.

that can reconcile the different aspects that inform our embodied and communal experience.

More precisely, in “Geographies of Selves—Reimagining Identity,” Anzaldúa introduces two notions that capture the hybrid identity she proposes. The first term is what she refers to as “new tribalism,” and which entails a hybrid sense of relating to the community. Anzaldúa describes “new tribalism” as follows:

El árbol de la vida (the tree of life) symbolizes my “story” of the new tribalism. Roots represent ancestral/racial origins and biological attributes; branches and leaves represent the characteristics, communities, and cultures that surround us, that we’ve adopted, and that we’re in intimate conversation with. Onto the trunk de mi árbol de la vida I graft a new tribalism. This new tribalism, like other new Chicano/Latino narratives, recognizes that we are responsible participants in the ecosystems (complete set of interrelationships between a network of living organisms and their physical inhabitants) in whose web we’re individual strands.⁷⁰¹

Notice that Anzaldúa’s conception of new tribalism involves three outward-reaching moments. The first moment regards our most intimate communities. Again, Anzaldúa’s view is not one that rejects our communities, but one which *roots* us in our communities. The second outward-reaching movement regards other communities with whom we interact and form political coalitions. It is important to remember that for Anzaldúa, neither the self nor the community are homogeneous entities, but that we are an *amazamiento* of the racial, gendered, and sexual meanings that we inhabit.⁷⁰² This means that our communities are not isolated islands, but that we move across communities, and that we must take responsibility for the different forms of exclusion and violence within those communities. Lastly, the third outward-reaching movement implicit in Anzaldúa’s new tribalism regards the world more generally, including our relations with other

⁷⁰¹ Ibid, 67.

⁷⁰² Ortega, 2016, 49.

animals and living beings. Anzaldúa's point here is to heal the world from the violence to which our dualistic conception of reality lead. Hence, new tribalism entails a hybrid sense of relating to the self, to our communities, and to the world.⁷⁰³

Moreover, the second notion that Anzaldúa introduces in "Geographies of Selves—Reimagining Identity" and which captures her hybrid sense of identity is that of "*nos/otras*." Generally, "*nos/otras*" refers to the sense of being an outsider/insider and oppressed/oppressor in our communities. Anzaldúa puts it as follows:

The Spanish word "nosotras" means "us." I see this word with a slash (rajadura) between "nos" (us) and "otros" (others) and use it to theorize my identity narrative of "nos/otras."

La rajadura gives us a third point of view, a perspective from the cracks and a way to reconfigure ourselves as subjects outside binary oppositions, outside existing dominant relations. By disrupting binary oppositions that reinforce relations of subordination and dominance, *nos/otras* suggests a position of being simultaneously insider/outsider, internal/external exile... An identity born of negotiating the cracks between worlds, *nos/otras* accommodates contradictory identities and social positions, creating a hybrid consciousness that transcends the us versus them mentality of irreconcilable oppositions, blurring the boundary between us and others.⁷⁰⁴

Two things are important to highlight about Anzaldúa's notion of *nos/otras*. The first is that contrary to critical theory based on dialectical relations, and which leads to conceiving of our social identities in oppositional terms, Anzaldúa's notion of *nos/otras* does not lead to an oppositional way of conceiving identities. That is because, in Anzaldúa's view, the oppositional way of conceiving identities not only replicate the oppressor/oppressed dichotomy, but also leads to further forms of violence. In this sense, the second aspect important to highlight regarding Anzaldúa's notion of *nos/otras* is that it juxtaposes the sense that we are both subjects of oppression and agents of our own

⁷⁰³ For a similar account of Anzaldúa's sense of expansive consciousness, see, Cynthia M Paccacerqua (2016), "Gloria Anzaldúa's Affective Logic of 'Volverse Una,' *Hypatia*, 3:2, 334-351.

⁷⁰⁴ Anzaldúa, 2015, 79.

oppression. In the previous section, I developed a sense of critical consciousness from the work of Latinx feminist philosophers. I particularly argued that Pitts' account of multiplicitous agency requires epistemic friction regarding the reasons for action of differently situated subjects. Regarding her interpretation of Anzaldúa's notion of *nos/otras*, Pitts writes that, "Although such an epistemic position cannot normatively map out the ways in which we ought to act in a given situation, it does prescriptively call us to remain attentive to the groups of *nos/us* and *otras/others* in which we find our own self-understanding made available."⁷⁰⁵ This means that, for Anzaldúa, *nos/otras* represents a hybrid identity which requires epistemic friction regarding our conception of the self and others. In this way, Anzaldúa's hybrid notion of *nos/otras* aims to heal the self and society from our self-inflicted forms of intimate terrorism.

In short, Anzaldúa's theory of writing which I refer to as her poetics of embodiment aims to heal the violence that emerges from the split meanings through which we relate to our embodied selves, our communities, and the world. At the level of the embodied self, this implies critically reconceiving the self as inhabiting racist, sexist, and homophobic meanings both in the sense that we enforce them on others and in the sense that we enforce them on the embodied self. In Anzaldúa's view, the hybrid sense of being oppressed/oppressor should thus lead to a critical consciousness regarding the violence that we perform on our own bodies. Similarly, at the level of the community, Anzaldúa aims to heal the intimate terrorism that we enact against those members that our community marks as deviant. This entails taking a critical stance regarding social identities as being heterogeneous and hybrid rather than homogeneous. The critical

⁷⁰⁵ Pitts, 2021, 58.

consciousness for which Anzaldúa advocates entails epistemic friction regarding the norms that marginalize others and conceiving of our communities in expansive ways. Lastly, Anzaldúa aims to heal the violence that we perform on the natural world. For Anzaldúa, Western rationalism entails a split conception which leads to the destruction of the world. In this sense, Anzaldúa aims to bridge between the physically objective and the spiritual to recognize that human beings are not the masters of nature, but that nature as well as human beings are interconnected at the ontological level. Anzaldúa's view is that the violence that we perform on the world is also the violence we perform on ourselves. Anzaldúa's poetics of embodiment thus leads to an expansive conception of consciousness, one which interconnects the self, our communities, and the world.

5.5. Conclusion:

The account regarding Anzaldúa's poetics of embodiment that I offered in this chapter thus involves three main elements. The first element has to do with the broader interpretation of *nepantla* I offered by drawing from Anzaldúa's earlier and later work. I showed that, rather than referring only to the geographical and cultural borderlands, Anzaldúa employs *nepantla* to refer both to the space in-between worlds of meaning and to the split meanings that we inhabit at the embodied and communal levels. In this sense, I argued that inhabiting *nepantla* leads to intimate terrorism, by which Anzaldúa means a split in the self, such that we become both the objects and the agents of our own oppression. At the embodied level, I showed that intimate terrorism takes the form of the habitual practices through which we relate to our own bodies in racist, sexist, and homophobic ways. Drawing from Anzaldúa's early work, I showed that, for example, through practices of bathing and cleaning, we embody the racist meanings that mark the

dark body as *dirty*. Moreover, I also showed that intimate terrorism also plays an important role in splitting our communities into objects and agents of exclusion. In this case, however, intimate terrorism takes the form of violent and exclusionary practices against those members of the community that our culture marks as deviant. I showed that this is the case with Anzaldúa's lesbian sexuality. More broadly, I suggested that Anzaldúa finds that our Western conception of reality is split because it distinguishes between the physically objective and the spiritual, and that Anzaldúa traces different forms of violence to this split conception of reality. The purpose of this analysis of *nepantla* is thus to show the way in which racist, sexist, and homophobic meanings lead to multilayered forms of intimate violence.

The second important element in my account of Anzaldúa's poetics of embodiment regards her theory of writing. I showed that while the main aspects of Anzaldúa's theory of writing are already present in an inchoate way in her early account of ethno-poetics, Anzaldúa later supplements this theory with a metaphysics of interconnectedness and with an aesthetics of transformation. Following Zaytoun and Pitts, I traced these aspects of Anzaldúa's later work to the Nahua notions of *teotl* and *in xochitl in cuicatl*. I showed that, in Nahua metaphysics, *teotl* is a monistic metaphysical principle which entails that reality is made off and identical with *teotl*. In this sense, *teotl* is the principle of generation and regeneration of reality. Similarly, *in xochitl in cuicatl* is an aesthetic principle of Nahua metaphysics through which human beings can participate in the creating and recreating activity of *teotl*. Important for my purposes, however, is that, for the Nahua, the creation of art is not representational, but that it consists in the juxtaposition of unrelated meanings to generate a new semantic content. I call this aspect

of Nahua aesthetics a *poetics* in the sense that it regards the production of new meanings. I showed that these aspects are present in Anzaldúa's theory of writing in two ways. The first is that, in her later work, Anzaldúa introduces a conception of reality through the metaphor of the tree of life, where the earthly, the social, and the spiritual aspects of reality are interconnected. Moreover, I also showed that Anzaldúa conceives of her theory of writing as *juxtaposing* or *bridging* both between worlds of meaning and between split meanings. In this sense, I argued that Anzaldúa aims to heal the self, our communities, and the world from the split meanings that lead to different forms of violence. Ultimately, I showed that Anzaldúa conceives of her theory of writing as producing a new way of conceiving of the embodied self, our communities, and the world. And, for this reason, I refer to Anzaldúa's theory of writing as a poetics of embodiment.

Lastly, the third element in my account of Anzaldúa's poetics of embodiment regards the new identity to which it leads. I argued that Anzaldúa situates her project of a new, hybrid identity between two prongs, namely, between the project of rejecting social identities and the project of a synthetic, unified identity. I showed that Anzaldúa rejects the project of abandoning social identifications because, for her, social identities nurture our agential capacities, which is the role that the community serves. Similarly, Anzaldúa rejects the project of a synthetic and unified identity because it leads to a homogeneous conception of the community, and therefore to further forms of violence. Instead, Anzaldúa introduces her view of a hybrid identity through the notions of new tribalism and *nos/otras*. The notion of new tribalism entails an expansive conception of the community in an outward-reaching movement, that is, from our intimate communities to

other oppressed communities, and to the world more broadly. The notion of new tribalism then rejects the view of a homogeneous community and represents a movement towards understanding it in a plural way. Similarly, the notion of *nos/otras* regards Anzaldúa's rejection of social identifications in oppositional ways, as between oppressed and oppressors. Rather, as in my account of *nepantla*, Anzaldúa's conception of *nos/otras* requires epistemic friction as a form of critical consciousness regarding the social positions of others. In this sense, I Anzaldúa's notion of *nos/otras* entails a critical consciousness regarding the racist, sexist, and homophobic meanings that we contribute to reproducing and for the different forms of violence we perpetrate against ourselves and others.

Ultimately, my view is that Anzaldúa's conception of *mestizaje* or *mestizx* identity represents an alternative to conceive Latinx and Latin American identities—that is, an alternative to the biological-spiritual project introduced by José Vasconcelos and an alternative to the historical-liberatory project introduced by Leopoldo Zea. As I showed in chapter 4 of this dissertation, the problem with Vasconcelos' and Zea's project is that, while they are anti-imperialistic projects, they relegate indigenous peoples to the past and relegate Afro-Latinx peoples to the realm of nature, and thus to the realm of the non-historical. In this sense, Vasconcelos' and Zea's projects of *mestizaje* continue to reproduce what in chapter 3 I referred to as the colonality of history. In my view, Anzaldúa's conception of *mestizaje* represents an alternative to these projects because of the hybrid way in which she formulates social identities. As I showed in this chapter, Anzaldúa's notions of new tribalism and *nos/otras* entails not only a more expansive conception of the community, but also a conception of our social identities where we are

both objects and agents of oppression. In this sense, Anzaldúa's conception of *mestizaje* is neither homogeneous nor exclusive, but one which can include the different aspects of our Latinx identities, including white, *mestizx*, indigenous, and Afro-Latinx peoples and, more generally, *los atravezados*.

Conclusion

This dissertation offered a phenomenological analysis of the limits and possibilities of the project of *mestizaje* as a liberatory project in the work of Leopoldo Zea and Gloria Anzaldúa. The main results of this analysis are two. The first regards the notion of the ideal of humanity both in the work of Edmund Husserl and Zea. In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, I defended Husserl's appeal to the ideal of humanity as a principle of normative critique for our historical projects against Michel Foucault's anti-teleological critique. Although I still think that it is a worthwhile project to formulate social and historical critique by appealing to values generally and to the ideal of humanity in particular, Husserl's formulation of the ideal of humanity is problematic for two reasons. The first, and most obvious reason, is that Husserl's formulation of the ideal of humanity reflects the Eurocentric way of conceiving universality. As we saw, while Husserl's conceptual apparatus should have led him to formulate a dialogical conception of universality, one which transcends the subjective experience of Europe, he develops a one-sided conception of humanity, one which relegates non-European peoples as historically backwards. The second problem with Husserl's formulation of the ideal of humanity is that he posits an originary point which, while historically contingent, can also serve to re-orient our historical projects. The problem, in my view, is that this positing of an originary point is a project from the perspective of the present, which means that it serves the historical projects of the present. As we saw, although Zea is critical and offers an alternative to the Eurocentric conception of universality, his formulation of an authentic Latin American identity suffers from the same problem as Husserl. That is, much like Husserl's, Zea's historical formulation of a Latin American

identity also posits an originary point which can re-orient the historical projects of Latin American peoples. Unlike Husserl, who appeals to the Greek discovery of the world, however, Zea traces the originary point of Latin American history to the indigenous and colonial *past*. The problem is that although Zea's project of *mestizaje* is an anti-imperialistic project, he also relegates indigenous peoples as the *past* identity of *present* Latin America and relegates Afro-Latinx peoples to the realm of the unhistorical. I thus traced the limits and possibilities of the project of *mestizaje* as a historical-liberatory project.

Nevertheless, the second main result that emerged from this dissertation represents an alternative to Husserl's and Zea's formulation of the ideal of humanity. In Chapter 3, while discussing the debate between Samuel Ramos and Emilio Uranga, I introduced what I referred to as Uranga's "radical humanism." Much like Zea, Uranga is critical of the Eurocentric humanism to which European thinkers appeal. Different from Zea, however, Uranga proposes an ontological-existential conception of humanity, one which represents an alternative to Eurocentrism. In Uranga's analysis, different from the substantial way in which Eurocentric thinkers conceive of humanity, humanity is marked by the character of accidentality, or the character of lacking a given meaning. For Uranga, this means that instead of appealing to a universal and substantial ideal, we should investigate the humanity of the concrete human being. By doing so, Uranga thinks, we will not find a substantial idea, but the anxiety of not knowing what to depend on. Uranga thinks that it is precisely this accidental condition that human beings share with one another. This means that, for Uranga, *authentic* humanity would consist not only in sharing the anxiety of not knowing what to depend on but also in giving meaning to

our own humanity in solidarity with others. In this sense, Uranga view of an authentic humanity is not only an ontological-existential project, but also an ethical one. That is because Uranga's radical humanism involves an alternative way to relate to others, one which entails making humanity together, as opposed to the Eurocentric view which negates the humanity of those who do not conform to the archetype. As decolonial philosopher Sylvia Wynter has shown, a central task for decolonial projects is to offer alternatives to the Eurocentric representation of the "idea of man." In a future project, I aim to return to the Eurocentric ideal of humanity and to draw from the radical views of thinkers like Uranga to offer alternatives to the Eurocentric view.

Moreover, an important limitation of this project regards my interpretation of Gloria Anzaldúa's metaphysics of interconnectedness and of her aesthetics of transformation. As Pitts, Zaytoun, and I have shown, Anzaldúa's later formulation of her metaphysical and aesthetic views draws from Nahua philosophy. Particularly, Anzaldúa's metaphysical views draws from the Nahua monistic principle of *teotl*, and that her aesthetic views draw from *in xochitl in cuicatl* as the poietic function of Nahua philosophy through which human beings participate in the creative and recreative activity of *teotl*. Nevertheless, not only does Anzaldúa not appeal to the notions of *teotl* or *in xochitl in cuicatl*, but her metaphor of the tree of life offers a metaphysical taxonomy which is not present in the sources from which I draw. This does not mean, however, that Anzaldúa's metaphysical views are incompatible with the monistic views of the Nahua, but only that she draws her metaphysical views from different sources. A future project that I would like to pursue would consists in looking more extensively into Anzaldúa's writings on metaphysics and aesthetics both to clarify the sources from which she derives

her view and to expand on my analysis regarding the transformative potential of her later views. In this sense, I am particularly interested in exploring Anzaldúa's metaphysics of interconnectedness as offering an alternative to the metaphysics of the subject on which this dissertation still relies. As Mariana Ortega has pointed out, this dissertation still relies on a Cartesian model of subjectivity, one that traces meaning making to the individual subject. Although I think this is a productive view for the political reason that *we* are the subjects of social and historical change, it is ultimately an individualistic conception of the subject. In this sense, I think that Anzaldúa's later metaphysical views might help in providing an alternative to the individualistic conception.

Not only that, but I also think that further clarifying Anzaldúa's later metaphysical views can help in clarifying other aspects of her work, particularly the epistemic and spiritual aspects. For example, an aspect of Anzaldúa's later work that I did not expand on is the epistemic concept that she refers to as "*conocimiento*," and which entails a deeper epistemic view than the correspondence theory of truth on which Western epistemology relies. Unlike the Western view which leads to treating reality as an object, for Anzaldúa, "*conocimiento*" entails an intimate form of knowledge, one which she sometimes refers to as a loving relation. It is thus not coincidental that Anzaldúa chooses the Spanish word "*conocimiento*" to refer to her alternative epistemology, since the word connotes a relation of intimacy between the knower and reality, indeed a familiar intimacy. For this reason, I think that Anzaldúa's development of *conocimiento* as an alternative epistemology is closely related to her later metaphysical views. Moreover, related to her epistemology of *conocimiento*, in her later work, Anzaldúa also develops the view of a *spirituality*. It would be difficult to situate

Anzaldúa's view of spirituality within the Western philosophical taxonomy which distinguishes between metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. That is because *spirituality* seems to involve all these domains while also transcending them. For Anzaldúa, spirituality seems to refer to the intimate connectedness between different aspects of reality such as the earthly, the social and historical, and the divine. In this sense, spirituality seems to encompass the intimate relation between human and non-human realities. Expanding on Anzaldúa's views on *conocimiento* and *spirituality* would thus also contribute to the project of offering a radical alternative to the individualistic idea of humanity.

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