Extending into Space: The Materiality of Language and the Arrival of Latina/o Bodies

by Stephanie Rivera Berruz

English Abstract

This paper explores the materiality of language by elucidating the relationship between language, space, and identity. I examine what kind of 'world' or 'social space' is forged through the monolingual expression of philosophical activity and how the linguistic normative assumptions of academic philosophy in the United States affect Latina/o philosophers in the discipline. Drawing on the work of Latin American, Caribbean, and U.S. Latina/o scholars, this paper argues that language functions as more than a tool through which we communicate, but rather as a process through which human beings gain or lose extension into the world. Given the rising presence of Latina/o scholars in philosophy in the United States, this paper interrogates what kind of space is created, sustained, and potentially disoriented through the arrival of new Latina/o subjects into philosophical spaces, and the ways in which their varying linguistic expression converges with the norms of the discipline.

Resumen en español

Este ensayo explora la materialidad del lenguaje para aclarar las relaciones entre el lenguaje, el espacio y la identidad. La pregunta central analiza que tipo de mundo o espacio social resulta de la expresión normativamente mono-lingüística de la profesión filosófica en los EE.UU, y cómo esto afecta a los filósofos Latinos en la disciplina. Tomando el trabajo producido por intelectuales de Latinoamérica, el Caribe, y los EE.UU., este ensayo afirma que el lenguaje funciona de una manera que excede su propósito como herramienta de comunicación, debido a la forma en que el lenguaje determina las formas en que individuos pierden o incrementan su acceso al mundo que los rodea. Debido a la situación de la filosofía académica en los EE.UU, este ensayo interroga que tipo de espacio es creado, sostenido y potencialmente desorientado por la llegada de filósofos Latinos al medio académico y la forma en que sus prácticas lingüísticas convergen con las normas de la disciplina.

Resumo em português

Este ensaio explora a materialidade da linguagem para esclarecer as relações entre linguagem, espaço e identidade. O trabalho investiga que tipo de mundo ou espaço social é moldada pela expressão mono-linguística normativa da atividade filosófica em os EUA. Escritores focada na América Latina, do Caribe e os EUA, este ensaio argumenta que a linguagem funciona de uma forma que excede o seu propósito como uma ferramenta de comunicação por causa da maneira que a linguagem também funciona como um processo que determina as formas que os indivíduos perder ou aumentar o seu acesso ao mundo. Devido ao estado da filosofia acadêmica em os EUA, este ensaio pergunta que tipo de espaço é criado, sustentado e potencialmente

enganar pela chegada desses corpos na disciplina e como suas práticas linguísticas convergem com os padrões de disciplina.

The discipline of philosophy in the United States academy is currently plagued by the underrepresentation of bodies of color, particularly Latinas/os. In 2008 Hispanics made up only 6.8% of all PhD recipients in the Humanities. Drawing on the same data, of the 401 philosophy doctorates awarded in 2008, 10 went to Hispanics, a mere 2.2% percent (Sánchez 2011, 35). In a historical moment where the Latina/o population makes up approximately 15% of the United States population, it is of concern that Latina/o philosophers are barely present in the profession of philosophy. My concern with the underrepresentation of Latinas/os in philosophy is further rooted in George Yancy's astute assessment of the discipline of philosophy in the introduction to *Reframing the Practice of Philosophy*, in which he describes the fact that Latinas/os traverse academic and nonacademic social spaces where the white gaze operates to deform Latina/o subjectivity by figuring us as "spics" and "wetbacks" suited for a "different" type of work, and certainly *not* philosophical work (Yancy 2012, 3). So, Latinas/os exist in an academic world that is entrenched in practices of white supremacy that privilege white bodies and their discursive productions and their primary

linguistic medium: the English language. This disciplinary bodily composition has thus been normalized in such a way that white epidermal sameness has become normative and as a result invisible (Yancy 2012, 8).

Situated in this disciplinary context, this paper seeks to explore the ways in which the production of a disciplinary space, characterized by invisible white epidermal sameness, has also contributed to the construction of a disciplinary space that has normalized the use of the English language. In this sense, the English language is also thereby understood as the only appropriate language for philosophical discourse. I argue that the hegemonic use of the English language has led to a monological expression of philosophical thought that detrimentally impacts the presence of Latinas/os in philosophy because of the deep-rooted relationship language has with identity. This monological expression of philosophical thought is deeply seated in an Anglocentric methodological framework that continues to view Latina/o bodies as suspicious because of the way in which the 'rational' subject of philosophy is configured. In order to make this argument, this paper will use various scholars from Latin American and Caribbean scholarly traditions in an effort to demonstrate the importance of this scholarship for understanding contemporary issues that continue to affect Latina/o subjects in academic philosophy.

In order to support this thesis, this paper will first address the relationship between language, space, and identity using theoretical tools from the work of María Lugones, Linda Martín Alcoff, Walter Mignolo, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Frantz Fanon. From these theorists I garner a robust account of the relationship between the production of space, language, and identity. I argue for the importance of thinking about the discipline of philosophy and its hegemonic use of the English language as bearing considerable weight on what it means to be Latina/o in U.S. philosophy today. I then seek to address how the disciplinary space of philosophy is forged through, not just white epidermal sameness, but also a monolingual hegemonic expression. Understanding language as more than just a mere tool for communication, this project takes language to be a process through which human beings gain or lose extension into the world. Language is a method of 'living in' a particular world. By apprehending language as a facet of racialized embodiment that affects the ways in which we gain or lose access to the world, I contend we can interrogate what kind of space is created, sustained, and potentially disoriented in the discipline of philosophy through the arrival of Latina/o subjectivities.[1]

I The Materiality of Language: Space and its Relationship to Language

In her writings on world traveling, María Lugones describes what it means to be at ease in a world. She argues that part of what it means to be at ease in a world involves being a fluent speaker in a social space of inhabitance (Lugones 2003, 90). This entails having the knowledge of the language, style, and slang that are appropriate for a given world. For instance, part of what it means to be at ease in certain philosophical spaces, like that of a conference, involves not just being invited into the

social space, but having knowledge of the appropriate jargon and linguistic tools to engage in those spaces. If for example, I lack knowledge of terms like “indexicality,” “analyticity,” or “functionalism” at an analytic philosophy conference, it is not the case that I have lost my ability to communicate entirely. Rather, I lack access into this world because of the unfamiliarity with the jargon. Hence, being at ease in this particular world, vis-à-vis Lugones, is not yet a possibility. Viewed this way language has a unique function in social spaces that is more than just a methodology of communication. Rather, Lugones invites us to consider language use as an embodied process that has an intimate relationship to social space.

Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* has stated that “space embodies social relationships” (Lefebvre 1991, 140). In other words, space is not just vacuous, but rather is created and sustained by types of social relationships forged in and through space. For the sake of this project, I want to explore what type of work language does in space. Granting Lefebvre’s claim on the relationship between social relationships and space, I am particularly interested in ascertaining what place language has in the production of space, not just as a mere tool of communication, but rather as method through which we acquire “ease” in worlds, as Lugones describes. I contend that language in this context needs to be apprehended as a method through which human beings orient themselves in space.

According to Sara Ahmed, the concept of orientation functions in a way that "allows us to rethink the phenomenality of space—that is, how space is dependent on bodily inhabitance" (Ahmed 2006, 8). Thinking through the concept of orientation allows us to engage with the relationship between the living body and space. I am suggesting here that we need to think about the discipline of philosophy as a social space, and hence we must also consider how bodies are oriented in the production of such space. Orientation, according to Ahmed, illuminates the complex relationship that exists between bodies and their dwelling places (Ahmed 2006, 8). To inhabit a space entails having orientation in that space such that the body does not feel disoriented, the body has its so-called 'bearings.' Given this methodological framework, I contend that language functions as an orienting process in the spaces of academic philosophy, a process through which some bodies acquire “ease” and others do not.

Language can be understood as an orienting practice for a variety of reasons. First, language use is an embodied practice. That is to say, it requires the use of the mouth, throat, tongue, etc. At times, language use requires more than ‘usual’ body parts to orient. For instance, when I speak, I use my arms and my legs as part of my method of expression and orientation. Furthermore, when I cannot use these parts of my body I feel extremely disoriented. In fact, I find it extremely difficult to imagine what my use of language would be like if I did not have my whole body available to me to communicate. The intimate relationship between language and space is further highlighted by the fact that it is a bidirectional process. I use language through my body as a method of orientation that depends on my interaction with social space. Therefore, we garner ways of being in social spaces by how our bodies are allowed to extend and interact with

space. Lugones speaks to this point as she discusses the importance of loving playfulness in world traveling.[2] As she describes it, playfulness is characterized by uncertainty and openness to surprise (Lugones 2003, 95). However, as she states, there are worlds in which playfulness is thwarted and this extension of the body is lost (Lugones 2003, 94). By highlighting the relationship between space and orientation we can understand playfulness as an orientation that is determined by the relationship between social space and how we are oriented in it, a relationship that may or may not yield possibilities of playfulness. Therefore, language processes can be understood as intimately tied to orientation, because they inform how we engage with social spaces and how those social spaces engage with us.

As aforementioned, language use is embodied, and insofar as it is an embodied practice it is more than a fact about human existence, but rather an orienting embodied process. To this effect Walter Mignolo invites us to move toward an understanding of language use that views "speech and writing as strategies for orienting and manipulating social domains of interaction" (Mignolo 2000, 226). This characteristic of language use is elucidated by the fact that when we hold the appropriate linguistic embodied practices in certain social spaces we are not immediately lost or completely disoriented. This is part of what it means to be at ease in a world. Language discloses the world and its horizons to us. My ability to speak and/or write in a certain language allows my body to extend and use certain social spaces, thus constructing my subjectivity. For instance, Fanon notes that part of learning the French language for the black man involves approximating white ideals in such a way that allows him to become 'whiter' and thus approximate 'humanity', a quality not circumscribed within the non-white body (Fanon 1952, 2). He further notes: "a man who possesses a language possesses as an indirect consequence the world expressed and implied by this language. You can see what I am driving at: there is an extraordinary power in the possession of language" (Fanon 1952, 2). A personal anecdote might prove helpful in elucidating this point a bit further. In the discipline of philosophy in the United States, the standard language for philosophical engagement is English. As an individual who is racially perceived as different because I do not fit the white epidermal sameness of the discipline, people in philosophy are always fascinated to learn that English is not my first language. This surprise is usually followed by an interrogation on how it is possible for someone who is fluent in Spanish and whose first language is Spanish to not have an accent. There is a certain amount of epistemic capital to be gained by the lack of a Spanish accent in my English use because it provides a powerful location of assimilation into the dominant paradigms of philosophy, albeit a problematic assimilation. Nevertheless, possessing the use of English in a particular kind of way provides me with a certain access to the discipline of philosophy that would otherwise be experienced very differently, as many colleagues with Spanish accents have indicated to me. Furthermore, it is understood as a desirable practice, as a native Spanish-speaking colleague recently asked me, "How did you learn to speak like that? I want that non-accent!"

Beyond its embodied quality, language processes are also embedded in politics and power dynamics. Processes of language acquisition and language use are not just mere means to ends on the communicative spectrum. The acquisition of language is embedded in political frameworks that value certain languages over others, and hence make learning certain languages more or less accessible to learn. If we consider the case of philosophy, the Spanish language continues to be undervalued and underused because of the way in which Hispanicity[3] is read in our current milieu in the United States. To be socially perceived as Latina/o entails suspicion that is intimately tied to citizenship, or better yet, to a lack of citizenship. José Medina notes this point when he writes: "The general presumption in most contexts is that being perceived as a Hispanic is risky and can potentially bring negative implications…it has at least the danger of diminishing or compromising your status and cultural capital" (Medina 2012, 355). Furthermore, we also have hierarchical values placed on which stylistic enunciations are more 'appropriate' and deemed more 'professional'. There is a certain type of professional capital that is gained when you speak a certain way, and this capital can potentially be lost if you let your language display signs of foreignness that could be linked to stylistic acts of the Spanish language. This process is also caught up in racialization and gendering processes, whereby how we speak is socially read as being indicative of race, gender, and class categories. Living in a world where race, gender, and class are sites of radical discrimination and violence (physical, emotional, and epistemic) this facet of language cannot remain unexplored.

Until this moment I have been considering how language use orients bodies in space, but I want to further argue that the orientation of language can also come from its intimate ties to embodied identity. That is to say that language is also inextricably linked to our identities, and insofar as this is case, language functions as an orienting factor in how we think about ourselves in the world and our relationships to others. One of the most notable figures that supports this argument is Gloria Anzaldúa. Her pioneering writing in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* deeply theorizes the ties between language and identity. On this point she writes: "For some of us language is a homeland closer than the Southwest" (Anzaldúa 1999, 77). She further notes: "Ethnic Identity is twin skin with linguistic identity—I am my language" (Anzaldúa 1999, 81). What this elucidates is the fact that language is more than just its use, more than just a fact of communication, but rather deeply tied to the interpretative horizons of our identities.

In her book *Visible Identities*, Linda Martín Alcoff adopts the concept of horizon in order to better explicate how identities work. She writes: "The horizon is just the individual or particular substantive perspective that each person has, that makes up who that person is, consisting of his or her background assumptions, form of life, and social location or position within the social structure and hierarchy" (Alcoff 2006, 96). Using the concept of horizon to inform how we understand identities entails that we understand identities as fluid and not as determinants of all facets of our being. This can be so while still holding on to the importance that identity has for shaping our sense of self and the world. In light of Anzaldúa's position on the relationship between language

and identity I argue that language, being twin skin to ethnic identity, functions as part of our interpretative horizons, and that language influences how we navigate ourselves in the world. Therefore, language's intimate ties to identity can be understood here as constitutive of identity insofar as it mediates our perspectives in and on the world. This fact is made clear in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skins White Masks* when he writes: "To speak a language is to appropriate its world and culture" (Fanon 1952, 21). Fanon and Anzaldúa, consider the importance of language for personal identity and its encounter with other dominant cultures. Functioning as part of our interpretative horizon these authors indicate that language is more than a mere fact, but rather an embodied process through which we access and orient ourselves in the world, a world that can be, in many instances, hostile.

The question that follows from this point is: What does language orient us toward or what does language orient us around? To be oriented 'toward' something entails having to face it, confront it, and grapple with its existence at the forefront of perception. However, to be oriented 'around' something entails that it need not present itself as commanding our attention (Ahmed 2006, 8). My primary concern with the orientation of language involves considering how the use of the English language in academic spaces of philosophy in the United States affects the identities of Latina/o scholars, especially when the use of Spanish nearly becomes an impossible act. In other words, what happens to Latina/o philosophers when the possibilities for communication, orientation, and philosophical exploration are mitigated by the hegemonic use of the English language? It is this question that is addressed in the section that follows.

II The Master Tongue

Spaces of philosophical discourse in the United States are ones in which the English language stands in as a global 'standard.' My concern with the creation of a dominant linguistic standard is that philosophy does not exist in a vacuum. Given that languages are embedded in power dynamics, I take grave concern with the fact that standard academic English has become the normative language through which to engage in philosophical discourse in the United States, a location that is home to many linguistic practices. The problem is that philosophy in the U.S. has become normatively determined by standards of academic English that prescribe that if you are to be an appropriately philosophical subject you must express yourself in a specific way. Namely, this means that one must express oneself through the use of a form of academic English that, at times, can fail to capture the experiences of marginalized subjects in philosophy. This is especially true for some individuals who might be more attuned at capturing their own experiences through different linguistic modes of expression.

George Yancy has discussed his experiences of language in his piece "The Social Ontology of African American Language, the Power of *Nommo*, and the Dynamics of Resistance and Identity Through Language" in which he notes that: "My experiences were in excess of what Standard American English (SAE) could capture. Some forms of knowledge become substantially truncated and distorted, indeed erased,

if not expressed through the familiar linguistic media of those who have possession of such knowledge" (Yancy 2012, 297). The claim that academic philosophy normatively prescribes a certain type of 'voice' as the appropriate philosophical voice is further supported by the experiences that Yancy shares in this essay. Specifically, Yancy describes the experience of presenting a philosophical piece that explored the relationship between life and philosophy. In order to best illustrate his point Yancy decided to use the language of his *nurture*, meaning that he used African American Language in order to best capture his life experiences (Yancy 2012, 296). Yancy describes African American Language [AAL] as "the linguistic expression of my life-world, the language that helped to capture the mood and texture of what it was like for me to live within the heart of North Philadelphia, one of America's black ghettos" (Yancy 2012, 296). What is most notable about his narrative is the reception of the piece by a white philosopher acquainted with Yancy. He tells this moment in the following words describing the colleague's response: "I really enjoyed it, but why did you use *that language* [meaning AAL]. You write very well [meaning in Standard American English: SAE]. You don't have to use that language to make your point" (Yancy 2012, 296). What is gravely highlighted by this anecdote is the fact that any use of a language (even a language associated with English) that is not a Standard American English or an academic English to express philosophical thought questions the very content of what is being expressed. Furthermore, as Yancy notes, "To write in this language is to reproduce the professional culture of philosophy, to perpetuate lines of power, and to show that you have been "properly" educated and worthy of hire" (Yancy 2012, 298). Hence, the very act of using Standard American English in philosophy reproduces and sustains a space that identifies this mode of communication as the 'right' one, while simultaneously excluding other forms of linguistic expression that can enrich the content of philosophy.

As previously noted, the discipline of philosophy in the United States has undergone a normalization of epidermal sameness that has made the space of the discipline a predominantly white male space, but a white male space that remains largely uncontested because part of the normalizing process has entailed the creation of an unnoticed norm—that philosophy is a practice by white men and for white men. What Yancy's piece deeply highlights is the fact that when scholars engage in traditional philosophical practices they reproduce structures of white privilege in academic philosophy not just through their mere presence, but through all of their facets of embodiment, including language practices.[4] Non-white subjects in the spaces of philosophy in the U.S. are marked bodies that stand against a background of unmarked normative white bodies (Yancy 2012, 10). This marking is further extended if we understand language practice as part of the normalizing process. If normalized epidermal sameness has yielded the privileging of white men in the discipline, it has also entailed the privileging of an English language practice that constitutes what it means to be an "appropriate" philosophical subject.

In order to better shed light on how the English language has become the normative form of expression within academic philosophical spaces in the United States

I look to the scholarship of José Medina. Medina argues that English has become the hegemonic language of the world (Medina 2012, 343). In other words, the use of the English language has become exclusionary and directly contributing to an unequal distribution of symbolic power. He writes: "In academia, English has become the lingua franca of the world....Speakers whose native languages are other than English are—whether explicitly or implicitly—forbidden to use their native tongues; and if they speak English with an accent, no matter how fluently, they are perceived as not owning the language in which they speak" (Medina 2012, 343). For Medina, a language becomes hegemonic if it dominates a vast array of linguistic contexts and if speakers in those spaces are forced to adopt that language (Medina 2012, 344). Hence, while Medina may be considering the ways in which English has extended beyond the U.S. to become hegemonic, it suffices to claim that it is precisely this same mechanism of hegemonic language production that explains how it can be read as part of the philosophical academic practices of the United States.

Of utmost insight is Medina's claim that given the way in which hegemonic languages function we can speak of linguistic oppression or dispossession. Linguistic oppression occurs when particular linguistic models (grammar/style) become established as the proper and only legitimate ways of using language. Thus, any difference in this linguistic context is read as linguistic deviation. As Audre Lorde has noted in her essay "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference", difference in the United States is coated in power dynamics such that to speak of difference is necessarily speak of deviance. Imposing a dominant standard of linguistic expression necessarily entails that other variations of linguistic expression will be deemed less valuable, usable, or important, precisely because they deviate from a dominant norm. The concern I am driving at here is that English has come to be the *only* linguistic mechanism available to do philosophy in the United States and as such it has produced a normalized voice that identifies what one must sound like in order to be philosophical. This is the crux of my concern. English has come to dominate the discipline of philosophy in a manner that necessarily excludes the use of other languages as appropriate philosophical voices. It is because of this that dominant philosophy has rarely considered the work of Gloria Anzaldúa philosophical. The linguistic content of her work is understood as literary, certainly, but not as making an argument. This is so, because "appropriate" arguments cannot be made through the use of Spanish and English, a practice that Anzaldúa often employs in her work.

The arrival of bodies of color in academic philosophical space over the past thirty years has contested this linguistic domination. Yet, there is still a very present concern that Latinas/os in philosophy lose what Medina terms "linguistic capital" if they speak with an accent (Medina 2012, 345). Given that linguistic practices racialize and gender bodies, speaking with an accent becomes a site of loss in spaces of philosophy. One loses the possibility of credibility and respectability because of an inability to completely 'pass' as the standard white male body with the 'appropriate' manner of speech. The hegemonic mono-linguistic expression of philosophical discourse continues to create and sustain a space where only certain types of bodies get a 'badge of respectability'

and only certain modes of speaking attain philosophical worth. This process then becomes intimately tied to one's success in philosophy. For instance, it has been continuously noted to me by advisors and colleagues alike, that my lack of a Spanish accent is itself a positive and respectable characteristic because it will help me attain a job. These types of conversations cannot be understood as independent events when philosophers have also referred to Spanish accents, in my presence, as something that needs to be lost, as opposed to a site of pride in one's ability to speak more than one language.[5]

This is further problematized by the fact that the mono-linguistic expression of philosophical discourse is tied to a monological framework that informs what it means to do philosophy appropriately in the U.S. Alfred Arteaga notes in "An Other Tongue" that the United States is a location of polyglossia, that is a site of interaction for multiple voices. However, the culture of the United States espouses a "single language ethos; it strives very actively to assert a monolingual identity" (Arteaga 1994, 13). The concern is then that monolingual identity leads to monological methodologies for apprehending the world. One assumption of a monolingual identity ethos is that there is only one way of seeing the world and one appropriate way for expressing our orientations in the world. This logic is itself soaked in a history of colonialism that takes the western subject to be an all-knowing universal subject, and requires that all others must justify and demonstrate their rationality. In what I am describing, this demonstration must also come packaged in a certain linguistic style and performance.

This is a predicament for the world of philosophy. I find the deepest concern the fact that the continual use of English as a dominant language thwarts the possibility of opening philosophy to other worldly positions, and this sustains a vision of philosophy that values only one type of linguistic expression. Language is a central facet of a lot of Latina/o identities, and this of course has many manifestations. For instance, consider my own personal use of Spanglish as a primary method of communication with my parents. I continuously switch back and forth between two languages and in this practice I feel the most at ease or at home. How we speak and how we communicate are integral parts to how we interact with social spaces, as I argued in the first part of this essay. However, when the possibilities of polyglossia are thwarted by an imposition of one particular type of linguistic expression we have now created a linguistic hegemonic space. It is my argument that philosophy is one of these spaces.

As previously argued, language is intimately tied to our interpretive horizons of identity as well as our methods for orienting ourselves in the world, but in the spaces of academic philosophy it is the case that polyglossic possibilities of language use are eschewed by the hegemonic use of the English language. Orienting your philosophical practices through the use of Spanish, Spanglish, Portuguese, or AAL becomes a mere impossibility and any attempt to engage in a subversion of this normative academic standard seems to be met with a suspicion of one's philosophical prowess. I have experienced this phenomenon first hand. This past year I taught Latin American philosophy for the second time at a small liberal arts college in Buffalo, New York. As

part of my syllabus, I decided to include Gloria Anzaldúa's book *Borderlands/La Frontera*. This semester also included the presence of a philosophy major in the course, something that up until that moment had never happened in my courses. After dedicating a week of the class to discussing several chapters from the text, students were asked to turn in written reading responses. While most of the students seemed to appreciate Anzaldúa's insight into the relationships between language, territory, and identity, the philosophy major in the course felt that her work was not philosophical. Using terms like 'feeling' and 'emotive' to describe Anzaldúa's work, this student argued in their response that language and identity could not possibly be related, and the fact remained that Anzaldúa was simply writing to exclude people from her text. That is to say, this student's experience of feeling excluded from *Borderlands/La Frontera* entailed that the text was not appropriately philosophical. What is of utmost importance and insight from this anecdote is the fact that Anzaldúa's use of English and Spanish, in a myriad of ways, was not perceived as philosophical or suitable for a class that used the term "philosophy" in its course description. The hegemonic use of English in philosophical discourse oriented my student around a different set of linguistic assumptions that required not facing the biases or violence that this monolingual perspective might carry. Hence, the student assumed a monological understanding of philosophy and continued to argue that Anzaldúa's work could not be categorized as philosophical.

Furthermore, this moment cannot be understood without deep consideration of the fact that this student's understanding of philosophy was not an isolated event. Rather, it was, and continues to be the product of normalization forces that create and sustain this student's vision for what is and what is not philosophy. Given the normalizing of epidermal sameness and linguistic sameness, it should not be surprising that this student took concern with Anzaldúa's work. The important point to be highlighted here is that the student is the product of a discipline that has normalized whiteness as part of its constitutive elements, and part of this white paradigm entails the impossibility of philosophy, in this instance, in Spanish.

Yet, it remains the case that not every Latina/o philosopher in philosophy speaks Spanish fluently or even ties their identity to the language. However, what does remain the case is that philosophy is plagued by what Carlos Alberto Sánchez has termed a "post immigrant fear," which entails that if you are perceived as Latina/o you are to some extent associated with the immigrant experience. To this effect Sánchez notes: "the post immigrant experience belongs to those who are shaped, or effected, by an experience of immigration through communal or familial memory. It is real, concrete, and localized experience—just as the immigrant experience is real, concrete, and localized experience" (Sánchez 2011, 38). The experience of immigration in the United States whether first hand or through collective memory shapes Latina/o identity as it does the space of academic disciplines. Part of having a history or memory of immigration is the acquisition of a world knowledge that involves learning that in the United States, Latinas/os are coded as intruders. This is an epistemology that teaches us Latinas/os to hide from the authorities because we know we are second-class

citizens even though we may hold U.S. passports. Sánchez describes this knowledge as a basis for his childhood, hiding from authorities, knowing full well he was citizen; a consistent presence of fear because one knows that one's very being is an invasion and unwelcomed (Sánchez 2011, 38). What this post immigrant fear highlights is the fact that any association with Hispanicity or Latin American ethnicities suffices to create an ethos that views Latina/o embodied subjectivities as out of place, and any time you show your Latin American cultural ties through the use of language (or any other means) you become associated with the immigrant experience and all of the stereotypes that come with it. Therefore, any expression of Latina/o identity, linguistic or not, may come with a detrimental price. Medina speaks to this point when he writes: "There is considerable pressure for *passing* as Anglo if one can, or at least for not calling attention to those aspects of oneself that can make one deviant and marginal, resulting in the loss of linguistic and cultural capital" (Medina 2012, 354).

What is of keen insight in Sánchez's piece, as well as Medina's, is that contemporary discourses of immigration, as a result of large migrations from Central America, South America, and the Caribbean, have constructed Latinas/os as a threat to the U.S. national imaginary.[6] This has meant several things for the category of Latina/o. First, we have witnessed the aggregation of identities under one category in a manner that homogenizes differences within the category. For instance, not all Latinas/os are racially non-white. However, it remains the case that the category of Latina/o is a racialized term.[7] Furthermore, the category has come to be associated with Spanish linguistic practices, regardless of whether or not Latina/o people actually speak Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French, Aymara, Quechua, or other Latin American languages. This is a further homogenizing process in so far as people from Central America, South America, and the Caribbean display a vast array of linguistic practices that may not include the use of Spanish. So, while I am very well aware that not all Latina/o speak Spanish, or that the category Latina/o refers to one particular type of group, it does remain the case that our current narrative in the United States about immigration sustains a vision of the immigrant that is intimately tied to Mexican identity "and thus the arsenal of attacks on immigrants is largely aimed at Latinos, especially those who look like Mexicans" (Alcoff 2012, 108). The narrative of the immigrant in U.S. society is one that is tied to a construction of Latina/o identity that is racial, has class dimensions as well as linguistic ties, and that are at times conflated with Mexican identity, since these particular individuals pose the most imminent threat to the U.S. cultural imagination.

Being Latina/o in U.S. philosophy today means learning to navigate a variety of particular experiences and it entails having to disavow certain aspects of identity, specifically the ties to identity that are linked to language, which can be a tool for survival in graduate/professional spaces. The growing presence of Latina/o subjects (which is still very minuscule, but significantly more present than in the past) has certainly meant that the very problems I have described thus far have been and continue to be contested. Our presence in the spaces of philosophy has certainly meant the disorientation of philosophical spaces through our ways of speaking, being, our

studies, as well as, through our activism, travels, teaching, and writing. However, philosophy needs more than a few tokenized Latina/o scholars if we are ever to expect a change in the monological ordering of a philosophical discipline that privileges one language, one type of body, and one type of way of seeing the world.[8]

This claim is further augmented by the fact that Latin American philosophy or Latin American thought as a philosophical enterprise continues to sit on the margins of the philosophical canon. This is certainly due to the fact that the linguistic model of academic philosophy in the United States does not include Spanish or any indigenous languages for that matter. The fact that the academic world of philosophy in the United States privileges English, to the point of excluding any linguistic practice that is not Germanic in origin, constructs a discipline with one particular notion of what it means to be philosophical. According to Leopoldo Zea, one of the primary claims of Latin American philosophy is that it starts with Latin American circumstances. However, this goal is impeded by the very dynamics of U.S. philosophical space, which renders linguistic elements of Latin American circumstances as 'incorrect' or 'inappropriate' methods of philosophical expression. The question of identity in philosophical space now becomes a question of how power dynamics dictate which subjects can speak, how they can speak, and which subjects are simply rendered extraneous or irrelevant to the body of philosophical scholarship. It is also important to note here that the Spanish language is not the only language of Caribbean, Central America, and South America. Furthermore, the fact that it is so prevalent is itself a colonial outcome, a linguistic imposition by Spanish colonial dominance. Hence, there are many concerns with the Spanish language itself and the way in which it has come to stand in as the "native" language of Latin America, when, in reality, it is not.[9] Yet, what I want to emphasize here is the fact that we cannot yet begin a conversation about the coloniality of Spanish in the U.S. philosophical discipline as it currently stands. The fact that the discipline of philosophy privileges, above all else, the use of English (and its ties to Europe), does not leave room for a discussion about other linguistic practices and their histories. As I sit and write this piece about language and philosophy, this already signals a form of non-philosophical content. This observation is the larger concern of my project.

Language is material in the space of philosophy. That is to say that language, because of its central role in identity is embodied, and influences how spaces are constructed, sustained, and reproduced. Projects of Latin American scholars that seek to justify a presence in the space of philosophy and an engagement with Latin American philosophy (or any subject matter that does not take the "rational subject" as its departing locus) indicates the ways in which even linguistically speaking, the space of the discipline was never intended to account for the myriad expressive modes that come from Latin American circumstances. This, however, certainly does not mean that it ought not do this.

A further point of importance with regard to the "rational subject" is necessary here. The concept of the "rational subject" is one, which is indebted to enlightenment thought. Hence, it does have ties to Europe. However, this is not to shift focus away

from the United States, as this is the main focus of the paper. The issue at large here is the fact that cultural ties (linguistically in particular) with Europe in the United States are privileged ties and constitute appropriate philosophical material in a way in which Aztec Philosophy, for instance, does not, precisely because of the assumption of the non-rational status associated with the indigenous peoples of the Americas.[10]

III Taming Wild Tongues

I have argued that philosophy has created a space that hegemonically uses the English language and thus makes the use of Spanish linguistic practices deviant and inappropriate for philosophical inquiry. The result of this fact has meant that the presence of Latina/o bodies in philosophical spaces has been met with resistance and suspicion. Consequently, this has created a state of affairs that has been violent toward Latina/o scholars, and further prevents the expression of identities, especially when associated with Latin American ethnicities.[11] In this section, I aim to highlight the material effects of the marginalization I have described. I am specifically interested in assessing what the options for our Latina/o voices are within the space of philosophy, especially as we seek to establish ourselves as scholars in light of the orientations of the discipline with respect to linguistic expression.

In her essay "Alien and Alienated," Linda Martín Alcoff discusses the process by which Latina/o scholars in academic philosophy experience alienation and the push toward assimilation. The alienation that Latina/o scholars experience is one that is not just felt within the space of philosophy, but certainly becomes a lack of "the sort of cultural and social recognition that would provide uptake or confirmation of our interior lives" (Alcoff 2012, 23). Given the focus of this paper, I argue that some Latinas/os in philosophy experience linguistic alienation, an alienation from other forms of speaking that affects their senses of identity as well as their ability to commensurate their personal lived experiences with their academic work. This is not to say that Latinas/os do not experience other types of alienation, quite the contrary. However, the structure of philosophical space in the U.S. and its relationship to language has a deep impact on how Latina/o scholars experience philosophy and are experienced by philosophy. Not having the ability to express oneself in Spanish, Creole, or Spanglish alienates some Latinas/os from their culture, ethnicity, and daily experiences. Furthermore, it constricts what it means to do philosophy to one method, a method that as Yancy has described, is not sufficient for those of us who have varying linguistic practices and different linguistic "nurtures."

So, one might wonder how Latina/o scholars have survived in spaces of philosophy. In her essay, Alcoff discusses how often times the only avenue out of extreme alienation is assimilation. A problem with assimilation stems from the fact that one is absorbed or incorporated into a larger body (Alcoff 2012, 27). Linguistically speaking, the orientation of identity becomes consumed by the desire to 'pass' as Anglo in spaces of philosophy. As Yancy's anecdote above indicates, there was no rhetorical space to render his own use of African American Language meaningful; it could only

have been made that way if he had *not spoken in that voice*, as his colleague indicated. It also follows from this that the experiences that comprise his interpretive horizon of identity could not be appropriately shared and explained.

Tejaswini Niranjana's piece "Colonialism and Translation" discusses how methods of translation function to create subjectivity. Niranjana defines subjectification as "the construction of a subject through technologies or practices of power/knowledge, technologies necessarily involving some notion of translation" (Niranjana 1994, 35).[12] This means that processes of subjectification requires translation through linguistic exchange and linguistic practice. However, a problem with these linguistic exchanges occurs when the act of translation can only be done through assimilation into dominant linguistic practices. Hence, something is severely lost in this process when the only way a Latina/o scholar can be meaningfully understood requires an assimilationist translation that can only understand identity in terms of some dominant culture. In the context of this project, what is of concern is the way in which Latina/o identity in academic philosophy in the United States can only be successful, as an identity, if it translates itself through the white imaginary lens. So, for many Latinas/os in philosophy this has meant the attempted loss of an accent or a change in bodily comportment while speaking, which serves as a method of not being apprehended as *too* Latina/o. For instance, I have been asked if I can distance my Latina identity from my projects in Latin American philosophy. The individual who asked the question applauded this call to distance, since it was understood as a commendable part of my professionalism. It is a high price to pay when it is clear to me that my Hispanicity is something that I have to distance myself from as a way of becoming more "marketable."

But what if we do not linguistically assimilate? What options beyond alienation do Latina/o philosophers have? One other option, though not more desirable, is to engage in linguistic duplicity, a deceit for survival that may attempt to resist assimilation, but actively refuses being consumed by the dominant whole. This has been the fate of some Latina/o scholars in philosophy, we attempt to lie about ties to Latin America or underplay those aspects of ourselves, while still trying to hold onto them. In Gloria Anzaldúa's terms it requires straddling the process of "desconocimiento" and "conocimiento" She describes conocimiento as: "the aspect of consciousness urging you to act on the knowledge gained" (Anzaldúa 2002, 577). She contrasts the concept of conocimiento to desconocimiento, which is a wounding willful ignorance of knowledge gained. In an attempt to refuse assimilation, Latina/o philosophers might opt for a movement between knowing ones linguistic identity and its effects and willfully forgetting the importance of our identity and simply checking it at the door when we enter the world of philosophy. The overarching concern with this methodology is that at some point the lies and the losses of the self become the norm and we lose access to who we might have been before the process.[13] In short, we assimilate or integrate the best we can. These cannot be the only options available to Latina/o scholars in spaces of philosophy. Otherwise, I suspect our presence in the field will remain marginal and may continue to plummet in years to come.

IV Closing Words: Fortified Voices

So, where do we go from here? There has been a notable effort by several Latina/o scholars in philosophy to look to the scholarship of Gloria Anzaldúa not just to describe the state of affairs in philosophy, but to find models of resistance that can be applicable in the world of philosophy. Anzaldúa's conceptualization of border identities and her linguistic use of English, Spanish, and Chicano Spanish are some of the methods that often draw Latina/o scholars to her work. Linguistically speaking, Anzaldúa excellently demonstrates the polyglossia of her world in her work and should be commended for her contributions. However, when considering the materiality of language in the world of philosophy it seems like even attempts of subversion are rarely understood precisely because the structures of the discipline normatively dictate that these modes of expression are not philosophical. What I have intended to highlight with this project are precisely the ways in which the academic discipline of philosophy in the United States has become normatively determined by not only epidermal sameness, but linguistic hegemony, such that even our linguistic practices in philosophy have problematic norms that dictate what can and cannot be appropriately philosophical. The result of this condition for Latinas/os in philosophy in the U.S. has meant the loss of a certain amount of ease in spaces of philosophy. This is due to the variety of factors that I have tried to highlight. On the one hand, those of us who speak Spanish have had to navigate identities—identities that are intimately tied to our embodied linguistic practices—in a manner that has required distancing ourselves from aspects of our identities that we hold dear. On the other hand, the conditions that I have described in academic philosophy have necessitated this distancing from anyone who is tied, even if not linguistically, to Latina/o identities because of the discipline's normative structures. Therefore, Latina/o embodied subjects that enter the world of academic philosophy in the United States are presented with a very hostile environment to Hispanicity. This happens in such a way that language and its relationship to identity become ruptured, and any association with Latina/o embodied identity becomes something we must detach ourselves from in order to be appropriate philosophical subjects.

Yet, it also remains the case that we need to have a real concrete awareness of what we are up against. So in closing, I would like to offer this essay as a building block toward a true awareness of our place in philosophy. This is a call to fortify the need for more speaking and more voices, and for Latinas/os to develop our own translations and our own meanings in spaces of philosophy. We attempt this so that we can start to pave a route to a place of ease within our own identities in academic philosophy.

Notes

[1] While the focus of this paper is primarily the relationship between language, embodiment, identity, and space, I recognize that this project has implications that

exceed the body; that is to say the project lends itself for considerations about the languages in which we write, read, and publish. However, an examination of this sort is not within the scope of this paper. For the sake of space, I will be looking at spoken language and its relationship to identity in this paper.

[2] A very many thanks to Andrea Pitts for highlighting this point to me.

[3] I am using the term "Hispanicity" here, as opposed to "Latinity," because the focus of the paper is linguistic practices that more often than not are associated with the use of the Spanish language. This locus of investigation makes it such that its considerations stem beyond just Latin America to places where Spanish is spoken more broadly (e.g on the Iberian Peninsula). The term "Hispanic" thus incorporates this extension in a way that "Latinity" does not.

[4] It is also important to note that our linguistic practices also denote class dimensions. That is to say that the way we speak is also coded in our assumptions about class. Exploring the class dimension of linguistic practices is beyond the scope of this paper, but the essay "Stupidity Deconstructed" by Joanna Kadi is really useful for theorizing class dimensions with regard to the construction of intelligence and intelligibility.

[5] Accents further highlight some problematic power relationships, because not all accents are created equal. Accents that indicate cultural ties to Europe are perceptively apprehended as acceptable precisely because of European cultural ties. This is not the case when your accent reveals different points of origin, locations that are not often considered part of the Western philosophical tradition.

[6] It is important to note that immigration in the United States has come to be constructed as an invasion in the political narrative, an invasion largely associated with Mexican immigrants, who want to "take our jobs." This narrative has coded what it means to be an immigrant in the United States whereby the category has become racialized as non-white even though it remains the case that not all immigrants are non-white.

[7] I am operating under Linda Alcoff's reading of the Latino/a category as an ethno-race. This means that the category is at once a location of ethnic identity, as well as, racial identity. Hence, it can operate along both axes in the construction of political narratives. See, "Anti-Latino Racism" in *Decolonizing Epistemologies* (2012).

[8] I think there is a lot that can be said here about the way in which the discipline of philosophy is structured in general—i.e. the distinctions between traditions that serve to marginalize some and privilege others. This is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is certainly a present concern.

[9] See Retamar, *Caliban and Other Essays* on this point.

[10] See James Maffie, *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2014).

[11] As I have noted earlier, this is not an experience that is unique to Latina/o scholars. The hegemonic use of the English language in philosophy has detrimental effects on people with varying linguistic practices that deviate from the norm—African Americans being a prime example. I focus on Latinas/os in this paper, but I think this project has far reaching implications as it addresses a general problem with the discipline of philosophy in the United States.

[12] In using the concept of technologies, I am particularly interested in reading linguistic practices, as I have described them, as a technology that forms the subject in space. The value of the term technology here is the manner in which it assumes the importance of power dynamics in the formation of subjectivity.

[13] We might also want to consider why this even seems like a good alternative. Why can't our identities be something we value so much so that we are not willing to check them at the door, so to speak? Furthermore, I recognize that checking identity at the door is not something we can all do, especially in regard to linguistic practice—some accents just can't be lost. However, the more important point here is that there ought not to be an imperative to lose an accent, and there ought to be value in the difference, not the deviance.

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