

Epistemological and Aesthetic Dimensions of Transmodernism: Linda Martín Alcoff's and Alejandro Vallega's Readings of Enrique Dussel [1]

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English Abstract

This essay engages Linda Martín Alcoff's and Alejandro Vallega's interpretations of Enrique Dussel. It focuses on Martín Alcoff's political epistemology and Alejandro Vallega's aesthetics of liberation as furthering aspects of Dussel's transmodern project. Specifically, these two approaches allow us to understand the epistemological and aesthetic ways in which cultures denied by European modernity are now in the process of constituting a transmodern cultural horizon. The essay ends by calling for a "transmodern aesthetic turn."

Resumen en español

Este ensayo estudia cómo Linda Martín Alcoff y Alejandro Vallega interpretan a Enrique Dussel. Nos vamos a enfocar en la epistemología política de Martín Alcoff y en la estética de liberación de Vallega, y mostrar cómo ellos desarrollan aspectos de la transmodernidad de Dussel. Específicamente, estos planteamientos nos ayudarán a entender maneras epistemológicas y estéticas por las cuales culturas negadas por la modernidad Europea están ahora en un proceso de constituir un horizonte cultural transmoderno. El ensayo termina proponiendo un "giro estético transmoderno."

Resumo em português

Este ensaio envolve as interpretações de Linda Martín Alcoff e Alejandro Vallega sobre Enrique Dussel. Concentra-se na epistemologia política de Martín Alcoff e na estética da libertação de Alejandro Vallega como aspectos avançados do projeto transmoderno do Dussel. Estas duas abordagens, especificamente, nos permitem compreender as formas epistemológicas e estéticas nas quais as culturas negadas pela modernidade europeia estão atualmente no processo de constituir um horizonte cultural transmoderno. O ensaio termina apontando para uma "volta estética transmoderna."

Noting that European global domination is only two centuries old (Dussel 2002, 221), Enrique Dussel detects a new potency within cultures that have been buried by European modernity but not exhausted. These cultures seem to have overcome their reactive relation to modernity and are now engaged in a different project: constituting a transmodern cultural horizon. He states that the "...planet's multiple cultures...are now erupting on a cultural horizon "beyond" modernity...I call the reality of that fertile

multicultural moment “trans”-modernity” (Ibid.). Rather than reacting in opposition to European modernity, non-Western cultures now find themselves issuing critiques of it that express their own histories, experiences and epistemic perspectives, and exceed modernity as we know it constituting a “cultural horizon” beyond it, as Dussel puts it. This operation does not circumvent European modernity, but emerges out of a relational exteriority toward it, crossing through it. “Transmodernism” names the emergence of this new cultural horizon constituted out of our “fertile multicultural moment” (Ibid.).

This essay explores Transmodernism as the process in which this cultural horizon is being constituted and focuses on the epistemological and aesthetic dimensions of it. Parts 1 and 2 are centered on Linda Martín Alcoff's interpretation of Dussel's Transmodernism in terms of a political epistemology, and part 3 engages Alejandro Vallega's aesthetics of liberation as putting forth transmodern sensibilities and aesthetic forms. The essay ends in part 4, with a critique of Dussel from the perspective of Vallega's aesthetics of liberation that points to a “transmodern aesthetic turn” that engages non-Western aesthetic forms.

I. A Prelude to Martín Alcoff's text “Enrique Dussel's Transmodernism” in terms of Hermeneutic Identities and a Normative, Political Epistemology

I.1. Experiential and Hermeneutic Identities

Martín Alcoff's text “Enrique Dussel's Transmodernism” is a defense of Dussel against postmodern critiques targeting political programs that essentialize identities for their own interests, specifically programs claiming to speak for identities marginalized in social, political and economic systems. Often these political programs not only misrepresent the complexity of the perspectives and positionalities of marginalized groups, but also fall into forms of authoritarianism [2] that uncritically assume the priority of one essentialized identity position over others. In this way they end up reproducing modernity/coloniality,[3] even if they present themselves as liberatory programs.[4]

In order to show that Dussel is not vulnerable to these criticisms, Martín Alcoff interprets the role and conception of marginalized identities in Dussel's philosophy of liberation, like the “poor” and “oppressed,” drawing from her own previous work[5]: “We might define identities more insightfully as positioned or located lived experiences in which both individuals and groups work to construct meaning in relation to historical experience and historical narrative” (Martín Alcoff 2011, 75). She, thus, proposes a particular way of approaching identities in Dussel's writings, one in which identities are not reified but appear as fluid experiential sites for the self-reflective construction of meaning and critique. Thus, she states that “Dussel's use of identity categories is meant to mark the social locations and collective experiences that yield a critical perspective on the excuses and self-justifications made in the metanarratives of world capitalism” (Martín Alcoff 2000, 263).

In Martín Alcoff's view, such experiential, hermeneutic and non-essentialized configurations of identities are less vulnerable to being manipulated by forms of authoritarianism. Moreover, in terms of our discussion they are, in principle, openings through which non-Western cultural forms and articulations of experiences are understood as legitimate sources for the generation of critiques. These would be knowledges surging from the ground up in contextualized, self-reflective epistemic processes. In this way, Martín Alcoff's response to postmodern critiques of identity-based philosophies of liberation is effectively a turn toward the cultural horizon that Dussel proposes in his transmodern project.

1.2. A Normative, Political Epistemology

Trying to avoid a postmodern trap of rejecting of any epistemological normativity striving for the assessment and justification of knowledge (Martín Alcoff 2011, 69-71), Martín Alcoff finds in Dussel's Transmodernism, especially in its analectics, a normative claim that values the epistemic perspective of the oppressed. She writes: "Dussel's project of analectics is ultimately an epistemological project... the political urgency of analectics is based in the idea that something about the perspective, experience and knowledge of the oppressed is not making its way into existing discourses" (Martín Alcoff 2011, 71). The epistemic perspective of the oppressed is not only to be valued due to its content, but also because it is readily given to express normative concerns such as: "...how knowledge *should* be produced, who *should* be authorized, how presumptive credibility *should* be distributed, and how we might even gain some politically reflexive purchase on the delimitations of ontology" (Martín Alcoff 2011, 69-70). Martín Alcoff's important insight here is that from the perspective of these groups, the linkages between power and knowledge tend to be acknowledged, not in order to reject the possibility of justifiable knowledge, but to understand political contexts as factors belonging to normative epistemological determinations. This would constitute a "political epistemology."

Martín Alcoff's proposal of a political epistemology grounded in marginalized experiential and hermeneutic identities implies the normative deficiency of universalist epistemologies articulated from dominant loci within modernity/coloniality. Epistemic stances that do not consider situated political factors are often blinded by their privileged dominant positionalities within modernity/coloniality, and mistakenly led to assume universal stances that dismiss the hermeneutic role of identities in the production of knowledge[6] (as if knowledges were not localized, arising from specific experiences and mediated by histories and cultural practices). In this way, Martín Alcoff's call for a political epistemology resonates with Foucault's call for "subjugated knowledges," knowledges that "...are local and partial as opposed to the knowledges that seek global hegemonic status, not just in the sense that they have not achieved dominance but in their refusal to seek dominance" (quoted in Martín Alcoff 2000, 261).

Martín Alcoff's analysis shows that political epistemology is more robust than universal and Eurocentered ones (which is itself an epistemic normative judgment)

because it has a built-in sophisticated normativity that attends to the way power structures contextualize knowledge production. This kind of normative epistemic focus is, in principle, an opening for the incorporation of negated non-Western knowledges that arise out of a reflection on their own positionalities within modernity/coloniality. We have, then, shown that Martín Alcoff's response to postmodern positions in terms of experiential, hermeneutic identities and a political epistemology can be understood as turns toward the kind of cultural horizon Dussel finds in Transmodernism. Martín Alcoff's careful interpretation of Dussel's Transmodernism is a way of effectively carrying out these turns.

II. Martín Alcoff's Text "Enrique Dussel's Transmodernism"

2.1. *Bringing together Martín Alcoff's account of Identity and Dussel's Transmodernism: Multiple Modernities*

Martín Alcoff understands Transmodernism to propose a world historical meta-narrative: "...that claims an even larger reach than the modern, with a more truly global and thus universal reference in place of the exclusivity of modernity to European-based and Eurocentric societies" (Martín Alcoff 2012, 61). In particular, by tracing modernity back to colonialism in the 16th Century, and revealing its hidden, non-Western lineages, Dussel gives a more comprehensive history that releases the determination of the modern from the grips of Eurocentrism.[7] This more "universal reference," however, seems to imply that Dussel is interested in making possible an objective and totalizing perspective of world history, a perspective that would subsume knowledges arising from specific and different sites of experience. Such a perspective appears to go against our discussion of Martín Alcoff so far and specifically disable the critical role that identities assume in her philosophical approach.

Perhaps the most important step in Martín Alcoff's interpretation is to suggest that, more than a historical metanarrative, Transmodernism is a *critical idea*: "The *idea* of the transmodern is thus designed in part to retell the story of Europe itself with an incorporation of the Other in its formation... it is more inclusive of multiple modernities without signifying these under the sign of the same..." (Martín Alcoff 2012, 63). Dussel's historical meta-narrative as a critical idea implies that reflexive, critical reasoning (assuming a "modern" epistemic stance) is not European and does not posit a universal structure of reasoning. This kind of reasoning is, rather, disseminated across the modern/colonial system as a field where marginalized, localized and multiple modernities flourish through processes of contextualized self-critique. In Martín Alcoff's analysis, these differential modernities are rooted in particular historical and cultural loci, including non-Western ones, and are concrete manifestations of marginalized identities as experiential and hermeneutic sites. These multiple modernities are differential given their contextual determinations, and they are also different from European Modernity because they are not articulated from its universal epistemic stance and cultural axes. [8]

This recognition of non-Eurocentric multiple modernities is informed by Martín Alcoff's study of Latin American philosophy, in which identities appear as hermeneutic loci that "make visible the context in which knowledge occurs" (Martín Alcoff 2013, 6). In this regard, one can also point to Dussel's quoting of Al-Yabri as an example of a hermeneutic reflection from a specific marginalized locus of experience (or identity) that yields a modern, situated critique[9]: "How can Arab thought recuperate and assimilate its own cultural legacy and bring it to life again, with a perspective similar to that of our ancestors: to struggle against feudalism, against Gnosticism, against fatalism, and to install the city of reason and justice, a free Arab city, democratic and socialist?" (Dussel 2012, 24). In this way, a cultural horizon of knowledge production that transcends European Modernity is enabled by Transmodernism as a critical idea.

II.2. The Ego Conquero and the Epistemic Limits of European Modernity

Once Europe's claim over modernity is debunked, Transmodernism as a critical idea also sheds light on the limits of the specific epistemic stance of Eurocentered modernity. Alcoff states:

For Dussel, the philosophy of the modern period is not characterized by a reflexive attitude toward one's own conventional beliefs and practices, a la the standard normative (and Eurocentric) account, but by the development of a constituting, differentiated, masterful ego, the *I conquer* ego of Descartes' individualist epistemic foundationalism... For Dussel, epistemic reflexivity in European modernity is less about putting one's own beliefs on firm grounds... than about deflating all possible reasons to listen to the other, or to accept the authority of others, or to consider alternative approaches different than those I myself have produced: the knowing I is imagined to be both universal arbiter and neutral or perspectiveless observer and as such need not give an account of its own prejudices or accord presumptive authority to others (Martín Alcoff 2012, 62-63).

Challenging usual accounts of European modernity, implying an epistemic critical, reflective and "enlightened" stance, the transmodern critique of the dominant Eurocentric historical narrative in which modernity spawns from Europe, and only Europe, reveals the epistemic stance of the *Ego Conquero*, one that articulates knowledge from an assumed and unjustified universal and "neutral" position that decontextualizes its own knowledge production.

For Dussel and Martín Alcoff, the *Ego Conquero* defines a dominant epistemic disposition of European modernity. As Martín Alcoff indicates, this epistemic stance undermines the modern epistemic emphasis on critical self-reflection, and conforms to the political and economic interests of coloniality and imperialism by silencing other, marginalized knowledges. The reason for this is that this particular epistemic stance arises from a politically dominant positionality within modernity/coloniality that does not understand itself as relational and, thus, is not submitted to critical reflection about the structures of power that make it possible. This limits the range of the epistemologically

normative self-critiques available to Eurocentric universal knowledges. In other words, the primary epistemic stance of European modernity is not constituted as a political epistemology and, thus, suffers from a normative epistemic deficiency.

In Martín Alcoff's interpretation, Transmodernism as a historical meta-narrative and critical idea makes explicit the *Ego Conquero* at the core of the power dynamics of modernity/coloniality, and shows the limits of Eurocentric epistemic assumptions of universality based on it. In this way, Transmodernism allows for the epistemic normative evaluation and affirmation of marginal knowledges that are non-Eurocentric, but transmodern, reflexive and situated, such as Al-Yabri's, and Rigoberta Menchu's (among others that Dussel is engaged with). Transmodernism, thus, discerns between the epistemic deficiencies of knowledges sustained by the *Ego Conquero*, and the strengths of knowledges arising from marginalized identities as situated, experiential and hermeneutic that elude its grasp. In this way, Transmodernism as a normative epistemic approach effects the turn away from Eurocentrism and the universalist, neutral *Ego Conquero*, to political-epistemological forms arising from marginalized differential modernities (this could be a turn toward a strand of Latin American philosophy, for example) and, thus, it turns toward experiences and knowledges that are grounded in non-Western cultural forms denied by European modernity.

II.3. Transmodernism as a Critical Dialogical Process

In Martín Alcoff's interpretation, Transmodernism as a *critical idea* unfolds in a way that not only de-centers the Eurocentric account of modernity but also the fixation of its own totalizing determination as a historical meta-narrative. This self-supersession offers differential histories that have important implications for her epistemological project. She writes that Transmodernism gives us:

...provisional meta-narratives of global history that can illuminate local conditions and relations. *What provides the normative criterion within pluriversality is just this meta-narrative of an interconnected history.* This is not a transcendent criterion of rationality...but a more dynamic and decentered notion *of the developments of reason in relationality.* (Martín Alcoff 2012 65, Italics mine)

In Martín Alcoff's account, Transmodernism first appears as a historical meta-narrative that reveals and incorporates the "other" into modernity, then becomes a critical idea that affirms marginalized experiential and hermeneutic identity positions as sources for multiple modernities. The articulation of knowledges from these positionalities, however, decenter and make provisional the very historical meta-narratives that reveal them and relate them to one another. In this sense, Transmodernism appears *as a continuous critical self-superseding process* in which *provisional* historical meta-narratives reveal and relate marginalized loci generating situated knowledges.

This process is a permanent exposure of relationalities between loci of experience and interpretation, and this exposure is the epistemic condition for the emergence of multiple modernities that include articulations of non-Western cultural forms. The capacity for Transmodernism to reveal the “developments of reason in relationality” (Ibid.) is essential to Martín Alcoff's interpretation of Dussel because it undermines epistemologies that present themselves as non-relational, dominant and universal, and also because it shows that the multiple modernities that arise from non-Western cultural forms and experiences are not absolutely exterior to one another, or absolutely exterior to the frame of modernity/coloniality they critique. They hold a relational exteriority that is crucial to articulate the cultural horizon that Transmodernity brings forth.

Transmodernism as the critical process just described re-articulates and diversifies historical lineages, enabling a horizontal dialogue and interconnectedness between marginalized experiential and hermeneutic identity positions. In this pluriversal dialogue, Martín Alcoff argues, the evaluation of knowledges is organic and comparative, necessarily including situated political considerations (such as “who?” and “where?”) as part of epistemological normativity. In this sense, Transmodernism involves “...an analysis of how and where cultural dialogues occur most productively given the way in which the current global discursive regimes have been affected by colonialism” (Martín Alcoff 2012, 65-66). At issue here is a non-transcendent epistemic normativity that arises out of dialogical relations between situated knowledges that justify themselves and one another in their relationality, drawn together and able to form a non-Eurocentric, transmodern front that is evoked by Dussel's account of Transmodernity as a cultural horizon that exceeds European modernity.

III. Transmodernism and Alejandro Vallega's Aesthetics of Liberation

I will analyze Vallega's interpretation of Dussel in *Latin American Philosophy From Identity to Radical Exteriority*, and focus on “radical exteriority” as a transmodern sensibility. By “sensibility” Vallega means factors that structure experiences and undergird processes of reflection without necessarily becoming thematic, mostly escaping voluntary and conscious processes (like temporal and spatial configurations of subjectivity, habits and emotive dispositions). Turning to sensibility, Vallega does not emphasize reflection (as Martín Alcoff does) but the assumed corporeal dispositions and meaning making that sustains it.[10][11]

For Vallega, “radical exteriority” expresses the way in which humans are always open to others in their difference from them in the plane of sensibility, exposed to unbridgeable alterities, as part of dynamic constitutive processes of the self that undermine fixed identities. In my view, radical exteriority as a configuration of sensibility becomes most explicit in Vallega's reading of César Vallejo's poem “El Buen Sentido.” In the words of a son to his mother, Vallega finds “...a relationship of memory and of loss: the memory of a proximity that is always tacitly there, and the loss of an origin that cannot be recovered in the encounter with the other who does not belong to

him" (Vallega 2014, 95). "Radical exteriority" then, can be thought as a relational sensibility that does not subsume the other, or, more precisely, as the very relational de-centered opening to the other in sensibility that makes all other relationalities with others possible. He finds that this opening makes identities be paradoxically always in-between:

The emphasis here is not on local identity but on the actual experience of existing in that double space and time of identities wrought with a sense of proximate exteriority, such that one remains in between cultures, histories, lineages, and memories in a play of unsettling, diverse, and thereby diversifying origins (Vallega 2014, 60).

These border identities are formed through indeterminate and dynamic subjective configurations and re-configurations in which "the other situates me"[12] at the level of sensibility.

Vallega reads Dussel as thinking from the concrete experience of the sensibility of radical exteriority in the presence of other bodies, particularly those that are open to others outside dominant dispositions. In such encounters Vallega finds the possibility of profound alterations of our sensibilities, of our structures of experience defined by specific environments, of our senses of self and belonging, of ingrained habits and prejudices, and of the ways we project our bodies spatially and temporally. It is as if radical exteriority shows that our corporealities change in their exposure to others. These corporeal transformations occur at an "aesthetic" level that is not subsumed under self-reflection.

This does not mean, however, that sensibility is outside of rationality. Rather, it always already informs reason as its very opening to sense. The following text is key in this regard:

Aesthesis for the Greeks has to do with bodily experience and with affect and sensibility. For them these were not irrational parts of being human and not separate from knowing; rather, they were constitutive of the sense of being human and fundamental to human knowledge. In the *Poetics* Aristotle is clear about the fact that, just as humans are the living beings that have *logos*...and are political by nature...they are also mimetic by nature. "Mimetic" here means able to mimic, to copy. To copy is to represent in the form of a confrontation with our limit...This is not the experience of a pure, rational order but the undergoing and going under of one's identity through a confrontation with chance, the uncontrollable, the unexpected, the uncanny, that which is strange beyond measure (Vallega 2014, 198).

Vallega is here embracing an expansive mode of reasoning that incorporates not only the very opening of sense from our corporealities, but also is submitted to transformations that begin with them, especially in the experience of "that which is strange beyond measure" which, for him, is primarily the embodied presence of another human being.

Radical exteriority is the experience of being given to such transformations that undergird and find articulation in meaning making processes and, thus, render modes of rationality that are not trapped in static structures that underpin abstract and universal meanings, like those determined by the *Ego Conquero* within European modernity. I understand that in this respect Vallega has Rodolfo Kusch's analysis of "estar" as a mode of sensibility (Kusch develops the notion of "estar" as a way of disentangling "being" from instrumental reasoning and grounding it in Andean cosmology and ritual[13]) as an essential referent. I think Gloria Anzaldúa is another referent. She focuses on transformations of sensibility in processes such as Coyolxauhqui, drawing from Aztec myths and ritual practices (see Anzaldúa 2015, 85-94).

The question for us is how this account of sensibility fits within Transmodernism as an aesthetic approach. In this regard, Vallega understands Dussel's Transmodernism as implying a "...a twofold task, on the one hand, it involves the interruption of the colonized consciousness and colonizing structures that oppress us, and on the other hand, it seeks the concrete recognition and articulation of Latin American experience and thought" (Vallega 2014, 55). For Vallega, the sensibility of radical exteriority is at the center of this double operation.

III.1. Aesthesis and Transmodernism: Disrupting the Ego Conquero at the level of Sensibility

In my view, both Vallega and Martín Alcoff find Dussel's Transmodernity valuable because it disrupts the *Ego Conquero*, the hidden ground of European modernity. As we have seen, Martín Alcoff centers on normative epistemological implications of this disruption. Vallega, on the other hand, turns to the disruption of the *Ego Conquero* as a form of sensibility that subtends a Eurocentered "modern" and "instrumental" subjectivity. Alcoff is aware of this issue. She even states that European modernity is characterized "...by the development of a constituting, differentiated, masterful ego, the *I conquer* ego of Descartes..." (Martín Alcoff 2012, 62-63) and understands this ego as a "consciousness" or "experience of subjectivity" (Ibid.). While for Alcoff the disruption of these dimensions of the *Ego Conquero* remains tangential to her normative epistemological project, for Vallega it points to the possibility of an aesthetic critique.

Focusing on temporality as a primary determinant of sensibility and as a possible site of interruption of the *Ego Conquero* as a "masterful ego," Vallega turns to the progressive, futurally oriented, temporal structure that underpins the *Ego Conquero* both in its oppressive and colonized subjective manifestations. This temporality determines modes of perception and bodily dispositions (beyond the scope of reflective processes) that support domination and the denial of the humanity of racialized, colonized peoples insofar as it constructs them as always being in the past, lagging behind, and, therefore, as already fully known, totalized, fixed.[14] Through this temporal determination of sensibility, dominant positionalities within modernity/coloniality become forms of subjectivity. A form of colonized consciousness also internalizes this temporality and,

thus, is a manifestation of the *Ego Conquero* as a mode of sensibility. This is a form of colonized consciousness that is pulled toward mastery and becomes entrenched in oppositional reified identities as definitive of experience and reflection. This sensibility is manifest when oppressed subjectivities assume an oppositional stance against both their oppressors and one another, negating a relational opening toward others.

The sensibility of radical exteriority in its relational alterity as “being situated by the other” cannot be temporally structured in this way, and can disrupt temporally progressive subjective formations and their static constructions of oppressed subjectivities trapped in essentialized identities. Its openness to others is not structured by temporalities that sustain hierarchies and identity reifications. Radical exteriority is structured, rather, by temporalities that issue encounters with others within co-eval relational identity positions in simultaneous temporalities. Vallega calls these kinds temporal configurations that enable non-progressive relationalities across shifting border identity positions “anachronic temporalities.” The specific articulation of the disruptive power of sensibilities structured by anachronic temporalities takes us to an aesthetics of liberation, and to the constitution of the transmodern cultural horizon that we are seeking here in the plane of aesthesis rather than epistemology.

Before we pursue this path, it is important to note that our discussions of Martín Alcoff and Vallega bring us to the same place: the concrete experience of corporealities embodying contextualized epistemic positionalities and articulating critiques of modernity/coloniality in dialogical proximity and from a relational exteriority. They both give us different cross-sections of the same event in different registers. Martín Alcoff attends to concrete dialogical encounters from which political epistemic normativities arise in order to yield critical positions grounded in identities as experiential and hermeneutic. Vallega attends to a corporeal dimension of this, the fact that in these encounters sensibilities change, as well as the structures of experience, dispositions and habits that they underpin, out of bodily exposures. These are two complementary aspects of the same concrete phenomenon. After all, how can we engage with epistemologies that proliferate dialogically from different cultural loci if they are not embodied in sensibilities that take shape outside the purview of the *Ego Conquero* as a masterful ego? How can these epistemologies arise in relational exteriority to modernity/coloniality without being subtended by a mode of sensibility that sustains such relational exteriority as the very opening of sense?

III.2. Toward a Transmodern Aesthetics of Liberation

An inquiry into, and eliciting of, forms of sensibility of radical exteriority[15] as temporally structured through anachronic temporalities, is a compelling philosophical opening that I find in Vallega's interpretation of Transmodernism in an aesthetic register. He, thus, opens a field of liberatory praxis that does not counter Martín Alcoff's political epistemologies (in fact, it gives them support), but that can be differentiated from them in terms of its aesthetic reach. In my view this implies the attestation of transmodern aesthetic processes that interrupt the linear temporal structure of the sensibility of the

Ego Conquero, and speaks to the second aspect of Transmodernity's two-fold task, namely, the "recognition and articulation of marginalized experience and thought" (Vallega 2014, 55). Radical exteriority, in Vallega's analysis, stands as a tentative delineation of a transmodern sensibility that comes to be explicit in specific historical configurations within marginalized historical, social, cultural and geopolitical contexts of modernity/coloniality. It is a sensibility that can be recognized arising in differentiated configurations from marginalized loci of experience and reflection, from border identities like the "Latin American" one. Thus, in relation to radical exteriority, and the experiences sustained by it, Vallega writes about "...the recovery of living culture through a conceptual sensibility informed directly by such experiences" (Vallega 2014, 70). Non-Western cultures oppressed by modernity/coloniality can provide specific configurations of the sensibility of radical exteriority that do not conform to the *Ego Conquero* as a masterful ego, and can even interrupt it in an aesthetic plane. The recovery of these sensibilities contributes, then, to the constitution of Dussel's cultural transmodern horizon.

As an example of this, Vallega turns to the disruption of progressive time in Nelly Richard's interpretation of Alfredo Castro's *Theater of Memory*. Richard shows in Castro's work the univocality of the meaning of the experience of political violence in Chile (supported by modernity/coloniality in its imperial manifestations) interrupted by alternative temporalities that elicit differential experiences and memories. Furthermore, Vallega's reading of César Vallejo's poem "Good Sense," which we touched on earlier, should be read as articulating a specific determination of radical exteriority. In my view, it brings to light how "the other situates me" in a spatio/temporal register from an Andean context. In this poem, the de-centering pull of the "remoteness of Paris" that affects those displaced by modernity/coloniality breaks through in the intimate gaze of the mother. The remoteness of Paris (Paris being far away both spatially and temporally, further along in progressive time) is interrupted, and transformed by the mother's gaze into an exilic yet intimate feeling of human proximity in alterity that is not centered in Europe. Vallega's reading of Vallejo through radical exteriority as a guiding lens lets me recover long lasting Andean sensibilities in this poem (perhaps even the tense indigenous nostalgia that Mariátegui finds in Vallejo's words[16]). I glean from Vallega's evocation of this poem a call to find the sensibility of radical exteriority emerging from border identities in the Andes as a transformative force that interrupts the subjective formations of the *Ego Conquero*.

The way that sensibilities of radical exteriority, with their "anachronic temporalities," appear in Vallega's text stimulates us to engage in the recognition and subtle exploration of disavowed, localized cultural forms, seeking singular manifestations of radical exteriority as an interruptive transmodern sensibility. In this way Vallega begins to uncover an *aesthetics of liberation* that furthers Dussel's Transmodernism in an aesthetic register.

There is a second sense in which Vallega's aesthetic of liberation is transmodern, and it becomes apparent when we focus on his claim that sensibilities are submitted to

profound corporeal transformations (transformations of structures of experience, perception, emotions and habits) through aesthetic processes. This understanding of aesthetics as transformative departs from the modern determination of aesthetics. Vallega writes:

Following the inheritance of the coloniality of power, knowledge and time as well as the epistemic prejudice and racism of modernity and the separation of body from mind, Baumgarten inaugurates aesthetics (after Kant) as the science or study of taste and the beautiful (Vallega 2014, 198).

This modern determination of aesthetics corresponds to the *Ego Conquero*, to its determination of reason as universal, and to the prioritization of an abstract epistemic stance that demotes the particularity of experience. Instead, Vallega calls for rethinking art "...in terms of oral traditions and popular expression, including festivals, traditional dance and music, food, indigenous rituals, etc." (Ibid.). This re-thinking of art is a turn toward non-Western conceptions of aesthetic forms that align with Vallega's account of aesthetics and, thus, constitute a singular contribution to the cultural horizon of Transmodernity.

Gloria Anzaldúa's account of "Invoked Art" that draws from indigenous traditions is an important referent here. She captures the sense of aesthetic phenomena beyond European modernity with the example of storytelling: "The ability of story (prose and poetry) to transform the storyteller and the listener into something or someone else is shamanistic" (Anzaldúa 2007, 88). This shamanic ability is manifested mainly in rituals, festivals and performances. She, like Vallega, recognizes in this shamanic power the possibility of disrupting dominant Western structures of sensibility, like those attached to the *Ego Conquero*, and finds in this disruption a fundamental aesthetic aspect of liberatory struggles that has to be engaged in its own potency. Moreover, for Anzaldúa and for Vallega the recovery of non-Western aesthetic forms is crucial for envisioning aesthetics beyond its modern European framing.

IV. Dussel's "Popular Culture" and Vallega's Critique

Dussel's determination of "popular culture" touches on the aesthetic field that Vallega opens up. It implies knowledges "...along the path of the historico-cultural tradition of the oppressed, the current revolutionary protagonists" (2), and it grows out of already existing, localized and marginalized cultural forms.

Dussel explains the meaning of "popular" in "popular culture" as:

...an entire sector of the nation, insofar as they were exploited and oppressed, but who moreover retained a certain "exteriority" ... This sector is oppressed in the state system, but maintains its alterity, difference, and freedom in those cultural moments scorned by the oppressor, *like folklore, music, food, dress, and festivals, the memory of their heroes, their emancipatory moments, their social and political organizations, etc.* (Dussel 2012, 36. Italics mine).

In “popular culture” oppressed peoples find sources for the expression of knowledges from a relational exteriority encoded in the specificity of their scorned cultural forms. “Exteriority” is a fundamental aspect of Dussel’s determination of “popular culture,” naming the way in which marginalized knowledges become interwoven with one another and with epistemic structures enforced by the modern/colonial system, yet keeping a relational externality that is irreducible to this system. This point is well developed in Martín Alcoff’s account of multiple modernities.

I italicized the concrete cultural forms that Dussel enumerates as examples of popular culture because they are sources for the marginalized, multiple modernities attested by Transmodernism. Recalling Martín Alcoff, they are the basis for localized, experiential and hermeneutic processes that constitute identities, out of which knowledges and epistemic normativities arise dialogically. Here, I want to focus on forms of popular culture that are not defined by articulated reflective processes, involving, for example, ritual and aesthetic performances. What resources do Martín Alcoff and Dussel give us to understand how these aesthetic forms contribute to the dialogical configuration of Transmodernism’s multiple modernities? A straightforward answer to this would be to think of these aesthetic forms as culturally mediated experiences from which knowledges are drawn hermeneutically. Once submitted to such a reflection, they can be seen as harboring knowledges beyond the epistemic constraints of the *Ego Conquero* and constituted in dialogical relationalities. Rituals and aesthetic performances, then, would be kinds of experiences in need of further reflective articulation. This answer, however, does not delve into the transmodern aesthetic dimension that Vallega opens up.

Here, thinking with Dussel, one could identify the aesthetic forms in this dimension as “symbolic enunciations” or “mythological.” At this juncture, one of Vallega’s critiques of Dussel becomes pressing. He writes:

...for Dussel the rationality in myths is not explicit. Myths speak in symbols that remain to be interpreted and deciphered. Therefore, the rationality in myth becomes evident only when “fully elucidated through a hermeneutical process that uncovers layers of reasoning behind them.” Here one finds that the recognition of other ways of articulating existence is founded and depends on rational, conceptual, logical patterns of knowledge...Thus, the memories, stories, practices, and experiences gathered from outside the Western rationalist world by the indigenous, the African, will gain their significance only when they are brought under reason (Vallega 2014, 89).

I understand Vallega’s critique to be that in Dussel’s Transmodernism practices that are not primarily reflective and that belong to “popular culture” come to be subsumed under a more fully developed form of hermeneutic reasoning. This disengages us from the aesthetic transformation of sensibilities that happens in rituals, performances and artworks in their specific eventuations and in their own terms. I also understand from Vallega’s critique that Dussel’s approach to myth and the symbolic is determined by a tacit influence of the progressive temporality that sustains the *Ego Conquero*. There is a

progressive structure implied in a hermeneutic reasoning that “uncovers layers of rationality,” as if some cultural forms were awaiting a culminating hermeneutic development to move them toward their full rational realization. Drawing from Fernet-Betancourt, we could note that Dussel's Transmodernism appears, despite its critical edge, to maintain some Western determinations of rationality as the standard for evaluating aspects of “popular cultures,” which reveals the perniciousness of the *Ego Conquero* as an epistemic stance.[17] Vallega's is, however, a specific critique coming from his particular aesthetic development of Transmodernism, and does not deny Dussel's openness to the inclusion of non-Western cultural forms in the cultural horizon of Transmodernity. This openness is clearly attested by Martín Alcoff's epistemological approach to Transmodernism. Yet, a transmodern aesthetic turn seems to be at stake here beyond the frame of Dussel's and Martín Alcoff's Transmodernism, one that is a significant dimension of the cultural horizon of Transmodernity.

Notes

[1] I want to thank the anonymous reviewer for strengthening this essay.

[2] See Martín Alcoff 2000, 258.

[3] I understand by “modernity/coloniality” the historical and geopolitical configuration in which modern values such as self-reflection, critiques of authoritarianism and individual freedom, as well as the institutions that sustain them, are embedded in global systems articulated by racism, totalizing Eurocentric epistemic forms, and capitalist economic forms.

[4] See, for example, Walter Mignolo's discussion of the Latin American creole elite in Mignolo 2011, 51-94.

[5] See, for example, Walter Mignolo's discussion of the Latin American creole elite in Mignolo 2011, 51-94.

[6] See Martín Alcoff, 2013.

[7] Dussel's “Anti-Cartesian Meditations” is the essential text in this regard. Another text that explores the historical meta-narrative of Transmodernity more fully is World System and “Trans”-modernity (cf. Dussel 2002, 227-233. See also Dussel 1995).

[8] It would be productive to contrast Martín Alcoff's multiple modernities here with Walter Mignolo's five trajectories of the global order. Martín Alcoff's approach does not fit into these five (see Mignolo, 35).

[9] In this text, Menchú is also a referent.

[10] This plane of sensibility, however, is something that Martín Alcoff engages in other works. See Martín Alcoff 2006, 84-129.

[11] The following analysis will be schematic and does not intend to give a comprehensive account of Vallega's determination of “radical exteriority” (especially as it pertains to the relationship between Dussel and Levinas). See Dussel 2013, 215-90, in order to trace the relation between “radical exteriority” and his “Ethical-Critical principle.”

[12] "The other situates me" is the phrase I will use in this paper to evoke the sensibility of radical exteriority.

[13] For this analysis see Kusch 2010, 158-164.

[14] Two figures are important referents for this analysis of temporality in Vallega's thought: Aníbal Quijano, whose critique of the modern structure of temporality is the direct source of Vallega's analysis (cf. Quijano 2008, 191-97; see also Quijano 1993), and Frantz Fanon, who discusses subjective and embodied accounts of racialization through temporality (Fanon 1967, 120-38).

[15] Not creating but eliciting is emphasized here.

[16] In some ways, Mariátegui's reading of Vallejo in the *Seven Essays*, traces the turn in sensibility we have been analyzing here. (cf. Mariátegui 2005, 277-283; and Rivera 2008, 142-145).

[17] See Fernet-Betancourt 2004, 44-53. His is a detailed discussion that complements Vallega's well.

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