

## INTERVIEW

**ENRIQUE DUSSEL (Mexico)**  
**YVANKA B. RAYNOVA (Sofia/Vienna)**  
**Philosophy as Commitment to Reality<sup>1</sup>**

**Raynova:** Professor Dussel, I know that my question will sound too general, but still, what is the aim and what are the basic propositions of the philosophy of liberation?<sup>2</sup>

**Dussel:** Philosophy of liberation was born at the end of the 1960s in Latin America. It came as an immediate echo of the 1968 movements, which arose nearly everywhere in the world. It is also the result of a social-political movement that developed in Argentina as well as of a certain maturing of philosophical thought as such. In the Third World, we had no philosophy of our own. That is why the issue of the philosophy of peripheral countries does not display itself in claims to have discovered a philosophical field but in the discovery of the problems themselves and in interpreting them in a strictly philosophical way. I think the philosophy of liberation answered a question raised by Professor Salazar Bondy<sup>3</sup>, a very erudite philosopher from Peru, who asked whether a Latin American philosophy is at all possible<sup>1</sup>. According to him, a dominated culture cannot have a philosophy of its own, because it does not have awareness of its own dimensions. Therefore, if it is to have some kind of philosophy of its own, it has to become conscious that it is dominated. I adopted this idea in saying that the first step such a philosophy should take is to interpret its own processes of liberation from the dominant culture. Thus, it would be also a realist

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<sup>1</sup> This interview was realized in 1993 during the 19<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Philosophy in Moscow. It was firstly published in Bulgarian language. (see Raynova 1995, 46-62) The interview was conducted in French, but I decided to publish it here in English, in order to reach a broader audience. The explaining footnotes, which follow, as well as the bibliographical references are added by me – Y.R.

<sup>2</sup> As the interview was realized primary for a Bulgarian audience, which had no idea about Latin-American philosophy, the beginning question I posed to Dussel was an invitation for a brief presentation of the main topics of the philosophy of liberation.

<sup>3</sup> Dussel is referring to Augusto Salazar Bondy (1925-1974), who, in a series of lectures given in 1968, raised the question as to whether there exists a Latin American philosophy; he charged it with inauthenticity, with being an epigone and imitation of European philosophy (see Bondy 1969).

philosophy, because it will be thinking its own reality. All this, of course, was a result of many other questions, raised prior to that.

**Raynova:** And what were the further steps?

**Dussel:** You see, for a European the autobiographical question is an anecdotal question. But for a person who must express his whole thinking from outside of European thought, this is an exceptionally important, an essential question. As a student, I was interested in classical philosophy: in Ancient Greek and Latin philosophy, in Thomas of Aquinas, in Augustine, then in modern philosophy beginning with Descartes. Thus, I found that philosophy is exceptionally *Europocentric*, I would say Hellenocentric. That is why, after I graduated, I decided to study all that "on the spot", and in 1957 I left for Europe. I thought I would stay a little while, just long enough to prepare my doctorate, but I remained there about ten years. First, I went to Spain, which was ruled by Franco at that time. Everything was too traditional there. Then I went to Israel for two years, where I expected to discover the roots of my culture, studying Hebrew and being transported to the world of the Middle East. The first book I wrote was called *Semitic Humanism* (see Dussel 1969). It became for me the starting point of the deconstruction of the totality of European philosophy in relation to Latin America. For me, the problem consisted primarily in what Latin America is, how we can think Latin America. In order to do this, I had to deconstruct European thought completely, taking the Greeks as my starting point. In Israel and the Middle East – I spent quite a long time in Egypt, two years – I discovered the ethic complexity of the Middle Eastern world, which is far more complex than the Greek world. The ancient Greeks have contributed considerably to philosophy, but the life experience of the Semitic nations and of the Egyptians is much more complex. Hence, my book proved to be a critique of Ancient Greek thought, which was the basis of Western thought, and at the same time I tried to show that Greek thought is not "European". That was my "Israeli phase", after which I returned to France. There I began to work on phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty passed away and I studied under Ricoeur, who was already doing hermeneutics. That stage, which I would call the "hermeneutical stage", continued for me from 1961 to 1970. Nearly ten years I spent in nursing the idea that a concrete hermeneutics of Latin American culture should be developed in order for us to discover ourselves. During that time, I wrote many works on the hermeneutics of the Latin Americans' symbols. But upon returning to Argentina, I came up against the events of 1966 related to the dictatorship that had been established there. The popular movements demanding the return of Perón involved me in the political movement. Then the question arose for me what does philosophy have to do with politics? Just then, people even in Argentina started reading Herbert Marcuse's *One-*

*dimensional Man* (Marcuse 1964). Marcuse had politicized philosophy, which from Rickertian had become Heideggerian and even Hegelian. In general, in the late 1960s Heidegger's conception of the world and being-in-the-world was much discussed, and for me that meant raising the question of the Latin American world. The confrontation between the worlds and the European domination were already visible to me, but there was yet no clarity on these questions. In 1959 ontology was being politicized by the discovery that, with the transformation of the Hellenic ontological totality into a political one, the world had become totalitarian, subordinated to the unifying Reason. Then I began to elaborate an ontological ethics proceeding from Heidegger. I wrote two small works on ethics for my students and precisely then I made the great leap – I found that Heidegger's and Ricoeur's hermeneutics were not sufficient for revealing cultural reality.

**Raynova:** And how did you discover Levinas?

**Dussel:** In Argentina I moved in a circle of philosophers, one of whom, Scannone<sup>4</sup>, drew our attention to Levinas' book *Totality and Infinity* (Levinas 1961). Though I had spent so much time in France and Germany, I was not familiar with his work. Levinas enabled us to discover the exteriority of the Other by means of a Husserlian and even Heideggerian terminology, through the category of totality. And we Latin Americans were the Others in terms of culture, and even Latin American philosophy remained outside, in a kind of nothingness of meaning, with respect to hegemonic European and North American thought. Levinas helped us, on the one hand, to understand our exteriority, and on the other, he was the first phenomenologist to raise the question of otherness in the terms of the poor. For instance, when I was in Louvain in 1972 and spoke about otherness, Jean Ladrière did not understand anything about it and made several objections to what I said. Today, when he talks himself about this problem, I would like to say to him: "Monsieur Ladrière, I see that you have advanced now and you believe that the question of otherness is what really matters." The important point in Levinas' conception is that he conceives the Other not only as "some other" who is interpellated, but as the poor. Levinas was the first philosopher, the first phenomenologist, to talk about the other not only as someone exterior but also as poor. And since poverty was an obsession for one group, for our nation, which is poor, that was the first time we saw this problem formulated with exceptional clarity in philosophy. During the 1970s, when I wrote the third part of my ethical theory,

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<sup>4</sup> Juan Carlos Scannone is Professor Emeritus and Director of the Institute of Philosophical Research in the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy of San Miguel, Argentina. He was one of the founder figures of the Philosophy and Theology of Liberation and main teachers of Jorge Bergoglio who became Pope Francis.

ethics was transformed from ontological ethics into an ethics of liberation. At that time, people began to talk about the sociology of liberation, about independence, and I understood that the Other in the erotic aspect is the dominated woman, that the Other in pedagogy is the child, that the Other in politics is the worker or the peoples in peripheral countries. Thus, from 1970 to 1975, I wrote an ethics in five volumes, which passed unnoticed, because it was written in Spanish, not in English or French. My ethics did not come under international discussion, nobody talked about it.

**Raynova:** Nevertheless, it was published...

**Dussel:** Yes, it went through four editions in Argentina, in Mexico. The first volume outlines the starting points of Latin American ethics; the second volume, the great categories of totality, exteriority, alienation, liberation; the third, the erotics of Latin America, respectively, the roads to the liberation of woman; the fourth, the pedagogy and politics of liberation; and finally the fifth, the fetishization of the system, the atheism of the system, and the need to go beyond the established world order. This is an integral ethics. When I completed it, Perón returned to Argentina, the pressure of popular movements brought an end to the military dictatorship. But returning to Argentina, Perón betrayed the people and began to persecute those who had committed themselves the most to the popular movement. Then they started to also persecute philosophers who professed liberation. Thus, my Argentinian experience, which had begun in 1968, came to an end in 1975, and after spending seven years in my native land, I entered a new stage.

**Raynova:** Before I ask you about this new stage could you please clarify this very important question: How your conception of the Other differs from the Levinasian one?

**Dussel:** When Levinas talked about the Other, I understood right away that we had a very clear example of the Other. Because the first Other of modernity was the American Indian. The Indian was the Absolute Other, because Europe had no notion of his existence. When the Europeans encountered the Indians in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, they did not discover them, they covered them, placed them under domination. The experience of Mexico and Latin America – I'm not talking about North America, which was conquered later, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century – was the first experience of European expansion. Until then, Europe had not been a center but always a periphery; the Roman Empire, central in history, had only been a corner in the direction of India, China and other countries, in other words a projection. The outstanding example of the Other, of otherness, was precisely the fact of the conquest of America, where the Europeans, arriving in Mexico, denied the exteriority of the Indian and, along with that, included the Indian dialectically in a new dominating totality. That is

why I began to study the history of the late 15<sup>th</sup> – early 16<sup>th</sup> century, as I saw a practical process going on in it. "I conquer," for instance, I rape the Indian woman, is *ego practice*, *ego conquiro* as a starting point for Descartes's later ontological formulation. So modernity does not begin with Descartes's *ego cogito*, or with Bacon's new empirical method, or with the discoveries of Galileo or Newton. All these are manifestations of the paradigm of modernity, which calls into question precisely the paradigm of the Middle Ages. And the paradigm of the Middle Ages is that of provincial, regional Europe, peripheral with respect to the Arabic or Muslim world. To the contrary, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, after a century and a half of modernity, new paradigms were formulated, in which Europe was now the center of the world, because it was creating history. Thus, the centrality of Europe turned into the basic fact of modernity. In my view, the modernity that has a center and has those who are modernized, the barbarians, that is, the Latin Americans, the African slaves, the Asians, etc., constitutes a new dialectic. None of those now studying modernity, for instance Charles Taylor, Stephen Toulmin or Jürgen Habermas, include in their definitions of modernity these absolutely Europocentric, provincial and regional beings. Thus, in 1971-1972, I was already quite clearly aware that modernity is a world phenomenon in which Europe dominates the periphery, man dominates woman – and in quite a specific way: The Spaniards dominated the Indian women, so that the metises are a unique race born out of modernity; the Sambo mulattos, who are a combination of white and black, or the metises, are the races of modernity that suffered the clash. That is why, unlike Levinas, I claim that *ego practico* is the basis that makes possible *ego cogito*. Along with this, the categories of totality, of exteriority, of alienation and of liberation have become much better defined philosophical categories, which show the difference between architectonics and ethics.

**Raynova:** Could you describe more precisely the architectonics as it is in fact the foundation of the philosophy of liberation.

**Dussel:** I expressed my view on this question in the book *Philosophy of Liberation* (see Dussel 1985), which I gave you as a present and which was published in English in 1985. I wrote it in Mexico, but it is the result of my whole previous experience. Indeed, architectonics seems strange here because the first category is proximity, "face to face", which in Hebrew is "*pnim el pnim*", meaning "one next to the other". This is a practical, locutionary category, as Habermas says, but he is not interested in it. And what in fact is the practical? It is the encounter with the Other as a person. Hence, I place the world as a second moment, which is a taking distance from the Other due to the fact that I find myself in the world. What follows is the understanding of being, the meaning and the concept as mediation until we reach the totality as a product of the distancing. But in any case, the

first human experience is the Other. A human being is born of man and woman, he is met from the very start by the Other and is educated by the Other through culture and the world. The world is a secondary fact and that is why the relationship nature-world is secondary. The primary is the person-person relationship. From a historical, ontogenetic, psychological and psychoanalytic viewpoint, Freud had a very good understanding of the fact that the other is constitutive of subjectivity. This is a very strong position. The architectonics of proximity–totality–mediation–exteriority–alienation–liberation is composed of categories that I not only explain but also apply to erotics: the man–woman relationship, proximity, distancing, woman as exteriority, the alienation of woman, the active constitution of *ego phallico* as domination over woman, and the liberation of woman. These categories I apply to pedagogy as well: the "face to face" position of the father-mother-son, Paulo Freire's pedagogical world of banking domination, the genesis of the external nation and culture, the alienation of the other from the dominant culture, and pedagogical liberation (see Freire 1970, 1976). I applied the meta-categories at different levels, and philosophy of liberation spread to nearly all universities in Argentina. And that is when the bomb attack at my home happened.

**Raynova:** How did things come to this attack and to your expulsion from Argentina?

**Dussel:** When they started persecuting the left wing in Argentina, after the end of Peronism and the beginning of the military dictatorship, they started persecuting teachers. Many were thrown out of the universities, tortured, killed. All this was called the "dirty war", because more than 50'000 people were killed. I did not want to escape to Europe or North America as many people did. So, when they couldn't scare me with a trial, they carried out this attack and then they chased me away. Since I wanted to remain in Latin America, I left for Mexico.

**Raynova:** Did your settling in Mexico change anything?

**Dussel:** Some people think Latin America is a single whole. That's true, but the situation in Mexico was very different. One felt the monopoly of Marxism in the universities, foremost the Althusserian type of Marxism. So everything that, before that, I had interpreted proceeding from Heidegger, from the Frankfurt School (Adorno and Horkheimer), from Levinas, seemed completely incomprehensible, even though I was still in Latin America. I had to completely rework my categories in order to be heard. Since Marxism was predominant, and I was not a Marxist, I was obliged to become familiar with the works of Marx, and in the original, not through Marcuse or Korsch. I began a seminar on his works, which I have been conducting nearly fifteen years now. When in the 1980s I discovered his

*Grundrisse*, I said to myself that Marx starts precisely here, with the discovery he made in 1857. I wrote my first theoretical reconstruction of production in Marx, which was in opposition to the widespread Althusserian view. After reading *Grundrisse* (Marx 1972), I continued and made a commentary on his manuscripts of 1861-1863 (see Dussel 1988). In the German edition published in MEGA, *The Capital* is presented in three volumes (Marx 1972-1982). My commentary is the only one in the world that is based on the second manuscript of *Capital*. But after I had finished, I found that there was also a third manuscript, which was kept in the archives in Amsterdam. I went to Amsterdam, where I worked on the unpublished works of Marx, and I made the first commentary on the manuscripts of 1863- 1865 (see Dussel 1990). No one in North America, not even in Russia, has done such a thing. After that, I wrote a commentary on the well-known version of *The Capital*, which is the fourth editing. This familiarity with the texts helped me, because I found in Marx the same categories of totality, exteriority, I found the poor as the starting point for his analyses. What I achieved was a completely new interpretation that proceeds from the philosophy of liberation.

**Raynova:** What does it consist in?

**Dussel:** Let us take the poor for example. The poor person, the pauper, as Marx writes, using the Latin word, in the concrete historical situation is someone who owns nothing, who can only sell his body, and whose money is only objectified labor. The confrontation between the poor person, who owns nothing, and the rich, who has money, is the starting point of *Capital*. Not the working class but the poor person. The other, as well as the poor person, is "included in," subsumptio, and this inclusion is the basis of Marx's ontological category, which has gone unnoticed by all of Marxism. This category, however, would not be possible without exteriority, because without the exteriority of totality, where would I find something that is not in the totality in order to include it there? It was precisely this category of exteriority that Lukács lacked. In opposition to him, I claim that the great Marxian category is precisely exteriority, and not totality. Totality is a category that has been known since Hegel. An inversion occurs here, which stems from Schelling. And this is of special significance for Latin American thought, because we have more poor people than workers. We have marginal people, unemployed, semi-unemployed and peasants who do not form any kind of rural category. So the definition of people turns into the plural of poor. For Marxism, the people is not a political category, but for Marx, yes, it is, because he correlates the poor with capital. When the serf comes out of the age of feudalism, he finds himself in nothing, he is a poor man, he is not yet a worker. At that moment, when the peasant serfs are not yet workers, they are a people, a people of paupers. Marx un-

derstands that the people is a political category that intersects with the mode of production. This category has a much richer content than the category of class. I cannot speak here about my whole interpretation. I will only say that this is an example that shows that Marx can be seen from another angle, as a great representative of the philosophy of liberation.

**Raynova:** And what brought you to the much-talked-about dialogues with Karl-Otto Apel and Rorty?

**Dussel:** With the creation and dissemination of the philosophy of liberation, we had difficulties expressing this new way of seeing things. Because the other schools of philosophy, especially those of the hegemonic philosophical community in North America and Europe, had no understanding of this, and even those who did understood something, attached no importance to it because it was coming from a region that had no philosophy of its own. The only tactical means to make them hear us was the dialogue project. With the help of the German philosopher Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, through whom we began a dialogue with Apel in Freiburg in 1989 (see Fornet-Betancourt 1990). This dialogue was possible only in the language of the Frankfurt School, in the categories of Habermas, etc. The second Frankfurt School is connected with the inclusion of the so-called linguistic turn, with the turn to all the linguistic and pragmatic problems. It is very precise, complex and extremely interesting. What I attempted to do was to penetrate into the thought of Apel and, proceeding from it, to pose the questions of the philosophy of liberation. After that first meeting, which was more difficult, full of many objections – the papers from it were published in Germany, you can see them – a second meeting was held in Mainz in 1992. Things were much clearer to Apel then and I took as a starting point a speech-act that I called "interpellation".<sup>5</sup>

Basing myself upon the whole category range of the Frankfurt School, I said that I wanted to analyze a fact: a poor person who interpellates an assertion through a speech-act and says, "I have rights that you are not fulfilling" or "I am hungry due to your injustice". Then I began analyzing how it was possible to speak from the outside with regard to a given system. I showed that the claims to validity, such as intelligibility, truth, verisimilitude, justice, etc., do not function here. Because I do not understand that person outside who speaks to me about justice, even if he is speaking in my language – his speech is unintelligible or semi-intelligible. What is needed is diachronicity, familiarization with, and getting used to, what he is saying. Moreover, his speech cannot lay claim to truth validity

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<sup>5</sup> By interpellation, or interpellating, Dussel means a questioning or verbal intervention by which the "excluded" or the person who has suffered and being damaged demands his rights.



because it comes from another world; what remains is truthfulness – "I believe that what he says is true". Hence, the basic problems of the philosophy of liberation raised to a theoretical level, is not understanding but sincerity and faith. When the Other speaks from the outside about meaning – for instance, an Englishman speaks to a Spaniard –, there is no comprehension, but it seems to the Spaniard that the Other is sincere, that he is telling the truth. I can try to acquaint myself with the world of the Other in order to attain intelligibility, to understand what he is telling me. In that case, a new world is created, where that which was outside comes inside. Apel understood very well what this was about. Once he used to talk about "ethics in the age of science". Now he says that the great ethical problem of our age is ecology as related to poverty in the world – this is something entirely new in his case. I may say the basic outcome of our dialogue was that he started talking about the third world. And what's more, we developed our stances, we reached an understanding of the poor person not only as excluded but also as affected. What I object to, not only in Apel, but also in Rorty and Ricoeur, is that all of them, whether they talk about communicative practice or about hermeneutics or about "conversation", have forgotten the bodies and hunger, in other words, the poor. They have forgotten economy, not as a science but as an anthropological restriction. I speak, we speak, we constitute a communicative community... But Aristotle said that we are *living beings* who talk. So the absolute condition of speech and of community is life. However, life is reproduced according to a logic that is not of the sphere of language but of production and distribution of material goods, through the consumption of which it is reproduced. That is what I call economy and that is the contribution of Marx that I discovered and that I use against Apel. I said to him, "You don't know Marx", and he answered, "How can you say I don't know him!", and prepared a report. This provoked a new debate. Ricoeur is likewise not familiar with Marx, I talked to him quite a lot about this and saw that he had abandoned Marx long ago. But the problem is not about Marx or Marxism but about economy! Habermas explicitly stresses that the economy has ceased to be an appropriate philosophical problem because under late capitalism misery is no longer a fact. All right, let's say this is true for Germany. But in Latin America, in Africa, in Asia, in other words, for about 80% of humankind, the economy is the appropriate problem, because misery is a daily fact. A philosophy that has turned its back on the economy is outside of reality. The philosophy of Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, etc., is for Europe, for North America, for Japan, but it is provincial, regional with respect to the other 80% of humankind, which faces very different problems. Now I have the advantage that I can employ transcendental or universal pragmatics, hermeneutics, and even philosophy after the linguistic turn, in order to say that the philosophy of liberation agrees with the concept of a communicative community, but there are also other questions, which are ig-

nored by those who are outside the system. Hermeneutics is a very good thing when it is a question of the text. But how can the text of one who is dominated be read? This question has never even occurred to Ricoeur. How could the dominated Mayas in Yucatan or in Mexico read the texts of the Spanish conquistadors and what are the conditions for such a reading? Ricoeur's hermeneutics says nothing about this matter. What happens when the poor person says, "I am hungry"? – a fact that is determined by the economy. He does not say, "I am the Other" – that would be a linguistic and ethical expression. When he says he is hungry, that means he has not eaten, has not participated in the division of goods. This is an interpellation that is economically determined. On this issue, Apel, Ricoeur and Rorty can say nothing. The conclusion is, to paraphrase Kant, that hermeneutics, transcendental pragmatics or the linguistic turn are empty without the economy and the economy is blind without pragmatics, hermeneutics or a philosophy of language. Both sides are necessary. But in addition to that we may refer to the linguistics of erotics, of pedagogy, of politics and of many other practical levels. At every level, there is domination and exclusion, as well as liberation. This impossibility for the human person to be a symmetrical subject shows that the question of liberation is neither a secondary question nor a purely Latin American problem. It is a universal human issue proper to all cultures and to all levels. That is why I am now writing a new book called *Ethics of Liberation* (see Dussel 1998) which does not address only the Latin American problems but try to be transmodern (not postmodern!) and universal. Here I give many examples related to Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, USA, Western Europe, and Latin America in order to show that all these problems that I am referring to are universal and that they must find a place in all philosophical doctrines.

**Raynova:** From the standpoint of philosophy of liberation or the standpoint of this new *Ethics*, is it possible to create a world without domination, without antithetic differences, without *différend*, as Lyotard would say?

**Dussel:** Well, that is impossible by definition. Hermann Cohen is the author of a work called *Religion and Metaphysics*. In it, he says that the method of the prophets was to take the side of the poor in society and, from there, to describe the pathology of the State. To summarize, I will say that the method of philosophy of liberation is to take the side of the oppressed in every possible system – pedagogical, esthetical, erotic, political, etc. It is impossible for us to imagine a world without domination – that would be the end of history or some viewpoint from the position of absolute knowledge, of the divine *intellectus archetypus*, as Kant said, or, to use Popper's vocabulary – an infinite tangent at infinite speed, which discovers all possible dominations in order to show that

there are no such in this society. Since it is impossible for a system without domination and exclusion of the Other to exist, philosophy of liberation will always have a task: the task of taking somebody's side. Habermas put forward a procedural principle that "all those affected should be participants"... Very well, but I put forward another procedural principle: when some community is created and I want to point out arguments in favor of a certain consensus on something, I have to ask myself not who the affected are but who the *excluded* affected are. For instance, when a meeting of professors is planned, the first problem is to see who have been excluded. Perhaps the meeting will take place without anyone noticing who are excluded from it – but this is a primary ethical question. For me the basic question today is this: the excluded affected person becomes aware that he is excluded and affected, but this happens at a certain historical moment. For instance, the slave became aware of this in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, women understood fully only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century that all their human rights were being affected. Children are also starting to become aware that they are excluded, because there is a rule that "You must honor your father and your mother", but there is no rule that says "you must honor your children." This discovery was made only ten-fifteen years ago. It is interesting how, in history, people grow mature and begin to be conscious of some fact. This achieving of consciousness by the excluded affected person, I call it "primary ethical consciousness" because, through it, begins the movement of liberation of the excluded, in which he becomes a participant. Only then can the community begin to discuss, to give supporting arguments, to seek validity, consensus, to create institutions, etc. – this does not mean that liberation is the end of the process. It is merely the *condition* of every historical process. So it is always a pressing and universal issue.

**Raynova:** Does that mean that the task of your philosophy is to bring the Other to awareness of his exclusion, or does it also aim to show him the concrete ways to liberation, which are so necessary today for bringing about a real change in the contemporary world?

**Dussel:** The other day I asked Apel the same question, when he presented his paper. He turned to the skeptics in order to ground his ethical principles: such is his fundamentalist standpoint. When I placed in mutual opposition the skeptics and the cynics, he said to me, "So you are speaking to the cynics." But that is not true. I am not speaking to the cynics, because the ultimate goal of philosophy of liberation is precisely to bring the excluded affected person to awareness. The ultimate goal is not the skeptics, cynics, university, the book, but the historical awareness of those affected people who are excluded. "Is that all?", Apel asked me. Of course that's not all, because, in

order to achieve such awareness, they need to understand how the exclusion system functions. Along with that, it is necessary to destroy the false utopias. They say to me that here we are entering the sphere of market culture. Yes, but there is a certain deceptiveness even in the concept of Hayek's perfect competitive market. It is precisely with the destruction of false utopias that the problems can begin to be discussed with greater precision. For instance, if someone says that a real democracy should be built through consensus, through discussion on the validity of the means, institutions, etc., and the question of this or that institution should be raised, then philosophy may subject that assertion to critique. So this is not just a question of bringing issues to the awareness of people; philosophy can also help through critique in all processes of liberation. That is why the activism of philosophers is exceptionally important, essential. I could not understand the fight of women if I do not take the side of feminist movements. Together with this, let us say, a certain ethics of homosexuals that this excluded group requires. Others should be also treated as persons. If the positions are to be corrected, this can be done through activism. Habermas is right on this issue: theory and praxis. And the means by which theory serves to articulate praxis is the activist organization. Little by little, philosophers are taking this road. There are many frontlines now – feminist, environmentalist, anti-racist, economic, etc. Philosophers can choose to personally take part in some of these frontlines and, in that way, to understand other people and to help at this historical moment by talking about the universal or about the future, without forgetting the past. In brief, philosophers still have much to do, but they should not formulate feminist, political, etc., projects, which is the task of the movements themselves; philosophy should be useful by reflecting critically these movements, it should not follow behind them like a maidservant, but should go next to them.

**Raynova:** In that case, don't you think that Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir also created a philosophy of liberation?

**Dussel:** Well, that's true. Not accidentally Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, one of the great German theoreticians, is a Sartrian in his philosophical starting point. *Critique of Dialectical Reason* is a great work, which I have used a lot, whereas, for instance, *Being and Nothingness* does not go beyond the boundaries of modern subjectivity. What we said about activism can be found for example in *Dirty Hands*.

**Raynova:** Many women say they became aware of themselves after reading *The Second Sex*...

**Dussel:** No doubt. In the 1960s we read *The Second Sex* with a group of women. Levinas also owes much to Sartre. But it seems to me that Gramsci was the clearest as to the role of the intellectual. I recall, in 1969, we got together, about twenty philosophers, at a colloquium in Cordoba, where it was stressed that philosophy needs to be active, not purely academic. But academic philosophy is necessary in order to create philosophical instruments. On the other hand, if a philosopher is not an activist in the movements themselves, he will not be able to discover the themes. And that's not all. A theory is tested through practice and through the way people perceive it.

**Raynova:** Does that mean that every philosophy should be committed (*engagée*) and activist?

**Dussel:** There are people who work on history of philosophy, but even this activity can be committed, don't you think? I believe that every philosopher is committed. The problem is that he does not always know what he is committed to. My colleague Mario Bunge is a rather abstract epistemologist, who does not consider himself committed. But he is committed to capitalist culture, even though he wishes to be critical of it. For my part, I was expelled from Argentina because of my stance, whereas some colleagues stood aside, dealt with abstract problems, far from the struggle, and the military did not touch them. Why? That is my question, why did they not touch them? Because they had in fact committed themselves to not reasoning about the concrete reality! It was the same in the time of fascism. Heidegger, who is a great philosopher, went on with his work, undertaking the seminar on Nietzsche, while Adorno and Horkheimer left Germany. There is a big difference there. This does not mean Heidegger is not a philosopher. Simply, there is a difference in terms of commitment.

**Raynova:** But after all, out of love for knowledge itself, for philosophy, science, etc., is it acceptable in some circumstances that a person prefers not to commit to a reckless reality if he/she cannot do much to change it? In other words, would you accept a compromise in certain cases, as Galileo did, for instance?

**Dussel:** No, because science and philosophy do not belong to themselves. Galileo's case is quite interesting. When he made his discovery, he understood that it was in contradiction with the Bible and with many other dogmas. But that contradiction signified that there was something in the Bible that had to be interpreted in a different way. His position was exceptional. He had not rejected the Bible, but he faced trial and was persecuted because of the truth. Scientists who make great discoveries are always persecuted. That is precisely Lyotard's problem of the contrary sense of validity. Those who produce the cus-

tomary valid meaning are not persecuted. But the great personalities, who create some new current, are forced to fight. That is what happened to Husserl, before and after Nazism. Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche contains a very deep understanding of human being, which is lacking in Nazism, but afterwards he did not wish to disinculpate himself. He did not defend himself in public, did not recant and say that all that was an error. The case is much more complicated and profound. But it would be a contradiction to think that philosophy can be saved without a personal commitment. The only way philosophy can save itself is to commit itself to reality.

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