

Part One

*LIBERATION PHILOSOPHY FROM THE PRAXIS
OF THE OPPRESSED*

It was twenty years ago, toward the end of the decade of the sixties, that Liberation Philosophy emerged in Latin America; in Argentina at first, but slowly in the entire continent, and later in other places in the peripheral world and, even still, in some of the developed countries.

The critique of the conquest (1510–53) may be considered as the first, implicit, Liberation Philosophy. The second was the philosophical justification of the first emancipation (1750–1830). The third Liberation Philosophy is being articulated now (since 1969). Its antecedents can be searched for in José Carlos Mariategui, in the twenties, or in the Cuban Revolution of 1959. The first explicit phase takes place from 1969 to 1973, the stage of constitution.¹ The second phase takes place from 1973 to 1976, the stage of maturation. The third stage takes place until 1983, the stage of persecution, debate, and confrontation. And the fourth, up to the the present, is the stage of growth and response to new problematics.²

In fact, although during the last two decades many new events have taken place, the original hypotheses have not being modified, but have been deepened and developed. On the other hand, neither have they been contradicted. Instead, they have been ignored—the non-rational tactic of domination. Meanwhile, in Latin America analytical philosophy and positivist epistemology have lost their sectarian elan³; Stalinist marxism has almost disappeared; the historicist latinamericanist philosophy has had to nourish itself on a greater methodological rigor. All of this has strengthened the philosophical “tradition” out of which Liberation Philosophy emerged. And because of this, today, in the last decade of the 20th century, it can grow with an unprecedented clarity. Above all, the *reality* out which such a philosophy emerged is today more pressing than ever before in its continuous and maddening spiral of underdevelopment: the *misery*, the poverty, the exploitation of the oppressed of the global periphery (in Latin America, Africa, or Asia), of the dominated classes, of the marginalized, of the “poor” in the “center,” and the African-Americans,

Hispanics, Turks, and others, to whom we would have to add women as sexual objects, the “useless” aged gathered in misery or in asylums, the exploited and drugged up youth, the silenced popular and national cultures and all the “wretched of the earth,” as Franz Fanon put it, who wait and struggle for their liberation.

1.1 DEMARCATIION OF LIBERATION PHILOSOPHY: BEYOND EUROCENTRIC DEVELOPMENTALISM

The philosophical “language” of Liberation Philosophy, in its origin, has to be inscribed within the hermeneutic and dialogical phenomenological tradition. The point of departure was the “late Heidegger,”⁴ which involved making reference to the Husserl of the *Lebenswelt* (world of daily life) and the *Krisis*,⁵ who nevertheless was still too much within the “paradigm of consciousness.” Gadamer and Merleau-Ponty, and even still Ricoeur of that period, should also be inscribed within that current. The early Marcuse, still a representative of this current, allowed us to “politicize” ontology.⁶ Ernst Bloch opened up the future and utopian horizons (however, it is still not yet exactly a “pro-ject” [*Entwurf*] of liberation). But it was departing from the critique of the “negative dialectics” (from Hegel⁷ to Adorno), and partly due to the rediscovery of the concept of the “dialectic” by Sartre,⁸ that we could understand the importance of the “old Schelling.” It was he who superseded the Hegelian “negative dialectics” from the *positivity* of the exteriority of the “Lord of Being.”⁹ It was thus that the reflection of a “community of philosophers” (Argentinean, at the end of the decade of the sixties),¹⁰ situated within a society oppressed by a peripheral military dictatorship, militantly articulated by popular movements (also populists) who struggled for their liberation, made the importance of Emmanuel Levinas’s thought evident; but not only and not mainly in the matter of the “Other” as *language* (although still always), but instead essentially as the *poor*: as the wretched one who suffers traumatically in her corporeality the oppression and exclusion from the “benefits” of the totality.¹¹ The *poor* as “the Other”: as peripheral Latin America, as oppressed classes, as woman, as youth.

Twenty years later, unfortunately, the “reality” has dramatically and contradictorily been accentuated in its injustice. The European-North American “community of philosophers” has undertaken other themes, and Liberation Philosophy cannot prevent a confrontation with them. Now, the “Other” is the “other face” of modernity.¹² Latin America is neither pre-, anti-, nor post-modern; and, for that reason, we cannot “realize” fully an incomplete modernity (as Jürgen Habermas suggests optimistically¹³), because as the slave (before the “Lord” of slavery) we have “paid” with our misery, with our “non-Being” (since 1492 as colonial world, first, and since 1810 as neocolonial world); for the “Being,” the primitive accumulation and successive supersessions of the “happy” capitalism of the center, and even of those who are so-called delayed (the

“developmentalist” notion of *Spätkapitalismus*, conceals the “exploited capitalism,” and because of that the underdevelopment of the periphery).

The postmodern critiques of modernity can be of great use to Liberation Philosophy, as Heidegger’s and Wittgenstein’s critiques of modern metaphysics were,¹⁴ but they are not sufficient. Richard Rorty’s neo-pragmatism, for instance, is useful for an integral critique of the analytic “style” of thinking (which since the 18th century had been epistemological but which became positivist within the Anglo-Saxon tradition—with Frege, Carnap, and Popper) which is so prevalent in Latin American universities. Interestingly, while influenced by Heidegger and Levinas, I had already begun, in the sixties, a critique of modernity’s imposition of a philosophy of *enlightenment*, that is, of “representation” and the “subjectivity” of the cogito. Michael Foucault, especially in his masterful *Archeology of Knowledge*,¹⁶ that no longer intends “com-prehension” but instead the archeological “destruction” of subjectivity, where the “false continuity” is not attempted to be seen but instead the “fissure,” can help us, for instance, as a way, as a method to “re-trace” the history of “eurocentrism” or the “developmentalist” fallacy, present still in him and all of modern philosophy, and in order to describe the origin of our peripheral consciousness as a “fissure” of the Exteriority (since Liberation Philosophy is one of these historical “ruptures”). The same can be said of the attempts of Jacques Derrida,¹⁷ Jean François Lyotard,¹⁸ or Gianni Vattimo.¹⁹ Like Friedrich Nietzsche,²⁰ they help us as “destroyers” but little as “re-constructors,” where liberation as praxis is always “constructive” of novelty (rationally prudent and consensual, realizable utopia, hopeful negativity in the possibility of the “new”: How can the hungry not *hope* to eat tomorrow?).

Similarly, the critique of metaphysics by Popper or Wittgenstein—especially the “late”—demanding a precision of language²¹ that denies the overcoming of certain limits naive metaphysics had already jumped over, is compatible with the de-constructive task of Liberation Philosophy. But, again, neither its arguments nor its “closed door” to every realization of any actualizable utopia can be seriously considered by any of us. On the contrary, the epistemology that always already presupposes an *a priori*, a “community of scientists”—like that of Peirce or Kuhn—retraced and radically transformed at the hands of Karl-Otto Apel, can be a valid point of departure for the contemporary stage of Liberation Philosophy. Now, however, taking into account that the “communication community” has to be extended not only to humanity in general, but also to the historical subject of the process of liberation, the “we” (a “Thou” which is exterior to the dominating “us”) of the “people,” as a social block of the oppressed, women, the youth, and others, and, because of that, “transcendental pragmatics,” ought to be superseded, overcome, and preserved, in a “transcendental *economics*,” as we will see later on.

Habermas’s defense of modernity, in the work already cited, and in others,

is equally helpful because it prevents us from falling into populist, folklorist, fascist irrationalism;²² but this is still not enough. The ambiguity of the realization of modernity, on the part of the “open society” of *late* capitalism, finds itself limited by what we call the developmentalist fallacy. That is, it would like to extrapolate, to impose the model (and the philosophy that derives from it) of late and central capitalism, in the very same straight line of development without discontinuity, on peripheral capitalism (of Africa, Asia, and Latin America; or in other words, to more than 80 per cent of global capitalism, if we take its population numerically), underdeveloped and, as is said in such developmentalist ideology, “delayed.” The “delay” of peripheral capitalism is a “before” with respect to the “after” of “late” capitalism. What is not taken into account, in this eurocentric ideology, is that there is no such “before.” Since 1492, the periphery is not a “before,” but an “underneath”: the exploited, the dominated, the origin of stolen wealth, accumulated in the dominating, exploiting “center.” We repeat: the developmentalist fallacy thinks that the “slave” is a “free lord” in his youthful stage, and like a child (“crude or barbarian”). It does not understand that the slave is the dialectical “other face” of domination: the as-always, the “other-part” of the exploitative relation. The peripheral world will never be able to be “developed,” nor “center,” nor “late.” Its path is another. Its alternative is different. Liberation Philosophy gives expression to this “dis-tinction.”²³

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall (November 1989), and thanks to the process of *perestroika*, the “democratic” alternatives of a socialism of liberation in the periphery manifest themselves with greater clarity as never before. Although the periphery of capitalism suffers with greater force the lashing of imperialism, a utopian critique, more necessary than ever before, of inhuman, unjust capitalism (and where the “free market” allows it, of the competition of the *homo homini lupus*, where only the the stronger, more developed, more militarized, more violent triumph) profiles itself in the horizon. The irrationality of capitalism is suffered by its periphery (a point which Marcuse could not fathom, and which Habermas ignores completely). This is the central theme of Liberation Philosophy.

1.2 LIBERATION PHILOSOPHY AND PRAXIS: CATEGORIES AND METHOD

Liberation Philosophy moves in the dialectic or the “passage” that departs from a given or established system (be it political, erotic, pedagogical, fetishist, economic, etc.), and that enters into the depth of a future system of liberation. The dialectical passage moves between an order and another, and all the problematic of the rupture within the old (1); order as system of domination, by the *praxis of liberation* itself (2); and of the constructive moment of the *new* order (3)

Old order (1) → *Passage of liberation* (2) → *New order* (3)

What is of interest, therefore, is not so much the “reform” of the “open society” (the ruling Totality), as its liberating “overcoming.” Therefore we must define clearly the *negative* category—with respect to the ruling Totality as in (1)—that allows the act of “superseding” which is implicit to liberation.

The Latin American “reality” of misery, of classes and peoples exploited by capitalism, of the women oppressed by machismo, of the dominated youth and popular culture, is the starting point and the criterion for the choice or construction (if this was not available) of a method and the pertinent categories for a philosophical reflection on such “reality.” In our work *Liberation Philosophy*, we have attempted a description of some of the essential categories (Proximity, Totality, Exteriority, Alienation, Liberation, etc.)²⁴ that in our judgment remain the same and are still necessary for the analysis of the “praxis of liberation” of the oppressed.

Inasmuch, then, as we have to take seriously the Totality (as any ontology), and the “institutionalization” of Mediation (as much technological as scientific or mundane), Liberation Philosophy cannot negate the determining place of “rationality,” even in the Habermasian sense. Concerning this point, therefore, it cannot be postmodern. Inasmuch as the institutionalization may be dominating, the negation of the being of another person, the critique of the Totality is now an essential moment of Liberation Philosophy. However, it is necessary to know “from where” the critique is announced. It can neither be nihilist nor a mere return to the past (as is the case with Nietzsche), nor simply a negation of all rationality (like Rorty). Unlike Schelling, it will not depart from the “Other of Reason” but instead from the “Other” of the *dominating*, oppressing, and totalitarian totalizing reason. That is, it will not depart from the dominating moment of rationality. Furthermore, when “critique” departs from the Exteriority of the exploited and excluded poor (excluded from the distribution of life), from women as sexual object, and so on (that is, from the “positivity” of the reality of the Other, who is non-being for the system, the one who is negated), the critique and the praxis that precedes it and is its concomitant, it is not only the negation of the negation (negative dialectics) but also the affirmation of the Exteriority of the Other, the source (*Quelle*)—and not the foundation (*Grund*)—“from where” the critique departs (from the “living labor” facing capital, as in Marx; from the active subjectivity of feminine corporeality as constitutive of Eros and not as “object”; as the trans-Oedipal subjectivity of youth, from popular culture as creator of a “new” ideology and symbols). From the “positivity” of this affirmation can the “negation of the negation” be performed. Liberation Philosophy, in this sense, is a positive philosophy. This movement beyond mere negative dialectics we have called the “analectical moment” of the dialectical movement—essential and belonging

to liberation as affirmation of a “new” order, and not merely as negation of the old.²⁵

Hence, utopia is not the fruit of a mere “creating imagination” which sets out from out of the Totality (from Marcuse to Bloch), but instead and above all, is the affirmation of “that-which-has-no-place” (*ouk-tópos*): the poor, the “castrated” women, the alienated Oedipus, the exploited people, the capitalist peripheral nations. “Ouk-topias” (which have no place in the dominating totality) are the non-beings, who nevertheless have *reality*. There is no need to create future projects, products of pure imagination and fantasy that are only “possible” for the ruling order. It has to be known how to discover in the transcendental exteriority of the oppressed the *actual* “presence” of utopia as actual reality of the impossible, which is impossible for the system of domination without the help of the Other. Hence the sense of “analogy” of a new order of liberation—which is not simply a “metaphor” of the given, as Ricoeur would say, but as an “analogical”²⁶ impossibility for the Totality without mediation of the irruption of the Other. From this comes the specific meaning of a “project of liberation.”²⁷

1.3 HORIZONS AND DEBATES OF LIBERATION PHILOSOPHY

Liberation Philosophy affirms that ethics (and therefore politics, as first horizon) is *prima philosophia*. Philosophy begins with reality, and human reality is practical, always already *a priori* person-to-person relationships in a communication community (of language and life), presupposed in reality (objectively) and transcendently (subjectively). Therefore, prior to nature, the other is always already encountered, vitally and pragmatically.

The first practical communicative horizon of constitution we have denominated “politics.”²⁸ By politics I understand the relation, person-to-person, at the level of equality, of fraternity, of solidarity. Every political “system” (Niklas Luhmann) is a totality of institutions that have to articulate themselves as natural:

The *natural* distribution is neither just nor unjust; nor is it unjust that men are born into society at some particular position. *These are simply natural facts.*²⁹

So we are told by John Rawls. For him, it is “natural,” not “historical,” to be born bourgeois or a wage earner. He confuses the mere “being born” (which certainly is natural) with the being born bourgeois, owner of an “initial” capital. This hereditary property is an historical “institution” and can be perfectly unjust. Marx had already analyzed this “paradise of natural rights” when he wrote:

They contract as *free persons*, who are equal before the law. Their *contract* [anticipating contemporary contractualists] is the final result in which their joint will finds a common legal expression. *Equality*, because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent. . . . The only force bringing them together, and putting them into relation with each other, is the selfishness, the gain and the private interest of each. Each pays heed to *himself only*, and no one worries about the *others*. And precisely for that reason, either in accordance with the pre-established harmony of things, or under the auspices of an omniscient providence, they all work together to their mutual advantage, for the common weal, and in the common interest.³⁰

Marx had anticipated, even in its smallest details, the liberal argumentation of Rawls. He knows well that both parties of the contract find themselves in radically different situations of non-equivalence: one is violently compelled to sell herself, alienate her corporeality and personality for a given time. The other, in contrast, buys and uses the Other as mediation of its project (valorization of value). “Initial” historical injustice. This is a political, practical “system” which determines the social life of the citizens of a democracy.

Liberation Philosophy will ask itself always, first, who is situated in the Exteriority of the system, and *in the system* as alienated, oppressed. Within the regimes of “formal” democracy–bourgeois, and within the “late” capitalism of the center—it is asked after the rights of minorities. In reality, in the nations of peripheral capitalism, underdeveloped and exploited, the oppressed classes, the marginal ones, the ethnic groups and other groups constitute the greater “social block of oppressed,” the *people*. This “people” (as a political category) is excluded from the “formal” democracies (and it is the manipulated “majority” of an institutionalization of the State that makes do, in fact, without the popular will). “Politicism” (as attempted in the “modernization” of peripheral nations, mimetically imitating the Habermasian proposals, for example) does not understand the importance of the economical (not as a juxtaposed “system” but as an essential constitutive moment of the *Lebenswelt*, of the political and the social). The failure of the solely *formal* democracies (such as those of Alfonsín o Menem in Argentina, Alán García in Perú, since 1983), shows that “democratic” politics without “economic” consciousness is a fictitious formality of false and reductive “rationality.”

Analogously, populism uses the category “people” in order to affirm the peripheral “nationhood,” but hegemonized by the interests of national bourgeoisies and therefore within global capitalism, pretending some sort of national “autonomy” under the control of some national peripheral bourgeoisie. These projects have failed. The bourgeoisies of the central countries have organized a structural transference of value from the periphery to the centers, using the same bourgeoisies of peripheral countries as a mediation. Liberation Philoso-

phy rejects populism (be it Vargista, Peronista, Cardenista, Ibañista,) which was the best hope of the peripheral bourgeoisie and the only democratic and nationalist example, in favor of the “popular.” A politics hegemonized by the “social block of the oppressed” (working and farmer classes, radicalized petit bourgeoisie marginalized classes, ethnic groups, etc), and departing from such a “historical” subject (when the social block organizes and becomes a subject), only this, then, can be of liberation. Liberation Philosophy has debated at great extent this central question.³¹

The economic crisis of real socialism, and its political democratization through the process of “perestroika,” opens up new possibilities to a praxis of liberation. The alternative of a democratic socialism is now possible. Sandinismo, which is not Leninist in its “democratic centralism,” is not an ideology about the national, the popular, or the religious, nor is it Stalinist over the control of a competitive market. And although it might have been temporarily defeated in the voting polls, it is all the same a point of reference for Liberation Philosophy (a concrete historical, political “subject” in Latin America).³²

The second practical horizon (and not second because it is after, but always synchronously co-existing) is the relation women-men, the “erotics.”³³ Now the other of the machist Totality is the woman. The constitutive ego is a “phallic ego,” as Lacan would say. Freud may be re-read as the one who analyzes and diagnoses the Machist Totality, when he says that sexuality is “the masculine but not the feminine; the opposition is announced: masculine genitality or castration. . . . The masculine comprises the subjects, the activity and the possession of the phallus. The feminine constitutes the object and passivity.”⁷ Freud contributes categories that need to be de- and re-constructed. In any event, the Latin American erotics of liberation is far more complex than that of the European Oedipus. The conquering masculinity (which is epitomized in Hernán Cortés) rapes the Indian woman (Malinche); Oedipus is the Latin American mestizo child. Phallocracy becomes conquest, plutocracy, and social domination. This is the machist culture of hypocrisy and the mystification of women’s domination. Because of this, women’s liberation has been a central theme of Liberation Philosophy since the beginning of the decade of the seventies.

However, retractions have to be made, especially when taking into account the conservatism of the general Latin American consciousness and, in particular, that which existed at the beginning of the seventies. A first, central theme is that of abortion. In this limiting situation, philosophy finds itself before a true rational dilemma: two absolute rights confront each other. The right of women over their own persona, their carnality, their corporeality (above everything else, over that which takes place in “their own bodies”). And the right of the new being, the fetus, to live. Before such a dilemma, which rationally cannot be solved *a priori*, the old doctrine of “the least evil” ought to be adopted. In each case, when the circumstances are well defined, it would be an

act of responsible liberation and ethics by women—and, of course, solidaristically, by the responsible male—to decide such a situation. Whether or not the fetus is separated from the maternal uterus is an ethical act whose *responsibility* is a contribution of the female human “subject,” and of the male in solidarity, since the event takes place in her own body, in her own being. Evidently, there are ethical criteria (such as that the person never be a means but always an end in itself, as in the case of the fetus) that woman also has to respect—for her who has to responsibly decide with justice and equanimity.

In the second place, the grave problem of homosexuality. Again, a conservative mentality prevents seeing the question with clarity. The human person whose sexuality is directed toward the same sex (leaving aside here the cause, whether it is natural, psycho-pedagogical, or psycho-pathological) ought to be respected in the dignity of the person. The ethics of erotics ought to overcome sexuality in order to arrive at the person itself of the Other. A sexual relationship is just if it respects, in justice, the person of the Other. In a homosexual relationship such respect is not impossible. A Liberation Philosophy which thinks and formulates the liberation of women from the machist totality that alienates the Other/woman, and therefore exalts heterosexuality as the full relation of complementarity, solidarity, and love for distinction and justice, can not disallow the possibility of respect for the Other even in the case of the same-sex erotic relationship (homosexuality in the hetero-personality). Again, as in the prior case, it would be a question, if no solution appears, of choosing the “lesser of evils,” meaning that only the conscience of the participants ought to decide responsibly. An erotics that only preserves certain “traditional” abstract principles immolates millions of persons whose homosexuality is not yet adequately diagnosed in its causes. This type of erotics would reduce itself in reality to a mere “objectivist” morality that, in attempting to save the customs of a given society (which in reality are historical and relative), would destroy the person (it would, in other words, be an anti-ethical and anti-moral criterion).

These two questions demonstrate the coherence of Liberation Philosophy. Since the personhood of the Other is the absolute criterion of both ethics and liberation, it is necessary to demonstrate in both cases (the dignity of women, the right over her body, and the right of the fetus to life; the dignity of the person over the determination of his sexuality) the primacy of the criterion, even if the situations are culturally and socially new.

The third practical horizon is that of “pedagogy.”³⁵ The political equality of person to person and the erotic relation women-men are now lived through by the adult, parents, institutions, the State, the means of communication, with respect to the child, the youth, the people as *subject of culture*. This is the question of cultural reproduction.³⁶ Now, the hegemonic educational totality can also dominate the Other, as object of the “Lectern” (Paulo Freire) who simply repeats or “re-remembers” (Socrates) the old. All re-remembering is a

pedagogy of domination because the “new” that is brought into the “world” by the youth can not be remembered, but must be discovered with respect to the novelty of the Other. The pedagogy of liberation is cultural revolution, and in the peripheral countries of capitalism it is a revolution of popular culture, where the autochthonous and one’s own (Amerindian, African, Asian, etc.) ought to be developed into a modern culture (albeit not of a modernity). Neither folklorism nor eurocentric rationalism: liberating reason, (*liberationis ratio*) which discovers a new “objectivity”, has as its function to unify the historical “tradition” of a people with the necessary technological (but adequate) and scientific development (according to the real exigencies of the nation, and not simply imitating foreign models).

A fourth practical horizon, intimately linked to the prior ones, is the one we have denominated anti-fetishist—the traditional question of the Absolute (Hegel), or of theodicy (Leibniz). Liberation Philosophy affirms that all Totalities can be fetishized: the political as in the empires or the State; as historical manifestations of the divinity; the erotic, as in fetishist machismo; pedagogy, because ruling ideology is a historical manifestation of the divine, such as the “Western and Christian civilization” or the *American way of life*. All critique, then, ought to begin by negating the divinity of the fetishized absolute which negates the possibility of human realization. Atheism as negation of the negation of the person (Feuerbach) is the first thesis of Liberation Philosophy. But, from a rational point of view (and from the popular cultures of peripheral nations), one can, however, affirm the Absolute only in the case that it would ground, justify, or give hope (Bloch) to the oppressed in their process of liberation. Symbolically, the Pharaoh-god justified domination; the Yahweh of the slave of Egypt, led by Moses, gave motives for liberation. These symbolic structures (as in Ricoeur’s “The symbols that make one think!”) are metaphors of a rational discourse: if there is an absolute, it ought to be Other than every historical system (otherwise such a system would be unsurpassable, it would be an end of history). The negation of the divinification of every Totality (the anti-fetishism of Marx with respect to capitalism), as negation of the negation of the human person, is the negative and correlative moment of its affirmation. If there is an absolute, it cannot be but the Other of every system, as the breath of life of all that lives.³⁷ In this case, religion becomes a fundamental moment of the praxis of liberation. It is not necessary to negate the popular religions of the peripheral world (especially in Africa and Asia, but in Latin America as well). It is necessary to negate the moments that negate the person, and to develop the moments that justify liberation. It is a hermeneutical task (of “tradition”) to discern (introjected by the dominators in said “traditions”) in these religions their regressive elements and to empower the creative moments of human affirmation. If there is an Absolute, it cannot but affirm and develop the person in justice, autonomy, and freedom.

On this point Liberation Philosophy is inscribed within the popular traditions of the peripheral world and in the philosophical schools of Hamann, Schelling, Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Gadamer, Ricoeur and Levinas, without leaving to the side Kierkegaard, Marx, or Bloch. The hermeneutics of the symbol, politics and economics as cults, the utopian hope as horizon of popular praxis of liberation—this is an entirely new project for the “majority” of humanity (which lives in the South, which dances in Africa; which contemplates in suffering in Asia, and venerates its traditions in Latin America). Secularization is the false name of fetishism; and the atheism of the left was a first dialectical moment, whose second moment is the affirmation of the absolute as liberation. Forgetting the second moment has distanced the left from the peoples who explain their daily lives, in the *Lebenswelt*, with symbols, rituals, and cults.

1.4 PERTINENCE OF ECONOMICS

We speak of “economics,” and not of economy, as the moment in which praxis and poiesis, in a concrete synthesis, are articulated in order to constitute the practical-productive level par excellence.³⁸

If Liberation Philosophy departs from the reality of misery, poverty, exploitation, then the relation person-to-person (practical) is always already *a priori* institutionalized and reproduced historically from a given economic structure, as practical (social relation) and productive (technological) presupposition. Stalinist “economism,” understood at the economic level as infrastructural base that determines the superstructure (the political and ideological), and “politicism” (of a Habermasian type, for instance), which gives absolute priority to the social or political relations over and above economics (relegated to a juxtaposed and secondary “system”), imagines that “democracy,” legitimation, and other essential levels of human survival are fundamental. However, it is forgotten that corporeality (which is hungry, and lives in misery, in the unjust distribution and productivity of “majority” of humanity in the periphery) points to a relationship to the “products” of technological labor, which fulfill the needs of life. We are living beings who have a *logos*, that is, the *logos* is a function of life and not vice versa. Human life, its corporeality, is not only the condition of possibility but the being itself and human existence as such. Reason (*logos*) is a moment of human life, and not life of reason. Still, to be a corporeality, to have needs (to eat, drink, dress, have a roof, need culture, technology, science, art, religion and other things) is a practical moment because *a priori* we are part of a community, and productive because “bread” is eaten, and “clothing” is for dressing, as products of human labor. This articulation of the practico-productive is economics; it is ethics, anthropological realization par excellence. Marx presented all of this with a clarity and pertinence never equaled. Today, this clarity and pertinence are necessary more than ever

for the “majority” of humanity, who live in misery in the peripheral world, where capitalism, more than socialism, has utterly failed.

If the “paradigm of consciousness” (from Descartes through Husserl) has been subsumed by the “paradigm of language” (as Apel demonstrates), this paradigm itself has to be subsumed in the “paradigm of life,” the life of the human community (a prudential and consensual practical moment, the grounding of politics) as “participation” and “communication” of the product of social labor (production, distribution, exchange, and consumption). Again at this level, the Totality (Capital) can exclude (as *pauper*, as Marx would say), or exploit, alienating the Other: the “living labor,” the poor person in his needy, hungry corporeality. This exteriority of the Other, of “living labor,” accepts a contract for the sale of its “creative source of value” from the nothingness of capital, for example, and is subsumed (alienated) in the salary system, as creator of surplus. Liberation here means not only to subvert the practical-social relation (communicative action, political institution, ethical injustice), but also to locate oneself in a different manner in the productive relation of work itself (subsequent and necessary technological revolution). In no other moment can the categories of Liberation Philosophy be manipulated with greater clarity and pertinence. Furthermore, in this “circuitous route,” philosophy describes (at ethical, anthropological, ontological, and transcendental levels) the “reality” of the misery in which the Latin American peoples find themselves. “Economics” has a non-substitutable pertinence, because in it the *practical* (politics, erotics, pedagogy, anti-fetishism) and the *productive* relations (ecological, semi-otic-pragmatic or linguistic, poietic-technological or of design, aesthetic or of art) are made *concrete*.

The just and urgent claims of ecology can be united to the claims for justice by the exploited person. Earth and poor humanity are exploited and destroyed simultaneously, by a capitalism whose criterion of the subsumption of technology is the growth of the rate of profit, and by a productivist Stalinism whose criterion was the growth of the rate of production, both of which are anti-ecological and anti-human systems. It is time to recuperate, from Marx, the ecological sense. Neither the Earth nor the human person have any “exchange value,” because the first can produce values of use and the second values of exchange, but neither is a “product” of human labor, only the substance or creative source of exchange value. The “dignity” of the Earth and the person are two points of reference of the ecologism of Liberation Philosophy (and of Marx). Technology, destructive of nature, is a moment of capital (a social relation which has as its ultimate goal the valorization of value). Frequently, the ecological movements of the center do not acknowledge the essential relation between ecology and capitalism (or productive Stalinism).³⁹

1.5 PATHS OPENING UP TO THE FUTURE

Liberation Philosophy has urgent tasks. I would like to indicate some of them.

Liberation Philosophy has now two lines of argumentation. These developed out of the continental philosophy of the phenomenological, ontological, and hermeneutical traditions, on the one hand, and out of the economic thought in the current of Marx, on the other hand. Now, Liberation Philosophy has to develop more precisely the “paradigm of language” required by the praxis of liberation. Some liberation philosophers are already engaged in this task. But, in the same line of development, it is necessary to continue the debate with “discourse ethics” (of Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas), from the Exteriority of the Other, of the “poor,” who is not assigned any role within the “communication community” (already excluded from participating in her corporeality with food, clothing, education, and in justice, and not only in argumentation). It will be necessary to describe a transcendental economics (beyond transcendental pragmatics).

Politically, taking in its gravity the Latin American situation, a crisis augmented by the electoral defeat of Sandinismo, in February 1990, it is necessary to clarify and to deepen philosophically the necessity of a national, social, cultural, and economic revolution, from the perspective of a real democracy which would take into account the structural transference of value that originates in peripheral capitalism (which has to be superseded as *conditio sine qua non* for any possible future liberation).

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Liberation Philosophy, going beyond post-Marxism (but returning to Marx “himself”) and post-modernity (from the “other face” of modernity), developed a *positive* discourse from out of misery (where its negativity is negated), and affirmed the real and necessary process of liberation of the great majority of humanity: trans-modernity as a future-oriented project.

Notes

1. See Eduard Demenchonok, “La Filosofía de la Liberación latinoamericana” in *Ciencias Sociales* (Moscow), 1, 1988, pp. 123–40; Horacio Cerutti, “Actual Situation and Perspectives of Latin American Philosophy of Liberation” in *Philosophical Forum* (New York), 1-2, 1988-89, pp. 43–61. See also my essay “Retos actuales a la Filosofía de la Liberación en América Latina” in *Libertacao/Liberación* (Porto Alegre), 1, 1989, pp. 9–29 (also published in *Lateinamerika* [Rostock], 1, 1987, pp. 11–25), where I present the chronology delineated above. In addition see “Una década argentina (1966–1976) y el origen de la Filosofía de la Liberación” in *Reflexao* (Campinas), 38, 1987, pp. 20–50; and to situate Liberation Philosophy within the history of Latin American philosophy, see my “Hipótesis para una historia de la filosofía latinoamericana” in *Ponencias*, II, Congreso Internacional de Filosofía

- Latinoamericana, USTA, Bogotá, 1982, pp. 405–36; and “Praxis and Philosophy. Provisional Thesis for a Philosophy of Liberation” in *Philosophical Knowledge* (Washington: University Press of America, 1980), pp. 108–18; also *Praxis latinoamericana y Filosofía de la liberación*, pp. 21–45, section 1 ; and “Histoire et Praxis (Orthopraxis et Objectivité)” in *Revue de l’Université d’Ottawa*, 4, 1985, pp. 147–61. See especially the work of Hans Schelkshorn, *Ethik der Befreiung. Einführung in die Philosophie Enrique Dussels* (Freiburg: Herder, 1992); Christofer Ober, *System, Lebenswelt und Exteriorität. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit den Ethiktheorien von Alfons Auer, Niklas Luhmann, Jürgen Habermas und Enrique Dussel* (Doctoral thesis: Universität Tübingen, 1989); and by same author, *Die ethische Herausforderung der Pädagogik durch die Existenz des Anderen. Ueberlegung zum Verhältnis von Pädagogik und Ethik in Auseinandersetzung mit den Ethiktheorien von Jürgen Habermas und Enrique Dussel* (Institut für Erziehungswissenschaften und am philosophischen Seminar, Universität Tübingen, 1990); Ingrid Schraner, *Überlegungen zum doppelten Aufgabenbereich der Wirtschaftsethik* (Tübingen: Universität Tübingen, 1986); Anton Peter, *Der befreiungstheologie und der transzendental-theologische Denksatz. Ein Beitrag zum Gespräch zwischen Enrique Dussel und Karl Rahner* (Freiburg: Herder, 1988).
2. During the XVIII World Congress of Philosophy (Brighton, 1988), a panel was organized on “Identity and Liberation” with participants from Africa and Asia. In April of 1991, a first colloquium on Liberation and Philosophy, North-South Dialogue, was organized, in which Paul Ricoeur participated. In Louvain, inspired by Liberation Philosophy, an *Encyclopedia of Latin American Philosophy* is being prepared.
 3. Critiques like those of Rorty and Feyerabend have a lot to do with this change.
 4. See Dussel, *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, 3 Vols., (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1973) 1, Chap. 1–2.
 5. See Dussel, *Para una de-strucción de la historia de la ética* (Mendoza: Ser y tiempo, 1972).
 6. Especially Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), which had such a profound effect on the movements of 1968, even in Latin America.
 7. See my *Método para una filosofía de la liberación: Superación analectica de la dialectica Hegeliana* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1974).
 8. Especially in Sartre’s *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith (London: New Left Books, 1976).
 9. This was the background thesis of my work already mentioned (*Método para una filosofía*) without knowing, but anticipating, against Habermas.
 10. As example see the collected work *Hacia una filosofía de la Liberación* (Buenos Aires: Bonum, 1973).
 11. With respect to this see Chap. 3 of Vol. 1 of my *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*.
 12. See “La Modernidad y la falacia desarrollista: el eurocentrismo” in R. Fernet-Betancourt, ed., *Diskursethik oder Befreiungsethik* (Aachen: Augustinus Buchhandlung, 1992).
 13. In his excellent work *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, it is interesting that with respect to “Ein anderer Ausweg” (Chap. XI, pp. 294ff), Habermas refers to the work of Hartmut and Gernot Böhme, *Das Andere der Vernunft*. On the contrary, the Other of Liberation Philosophy is not only the other of Reason but the Other of the “life community,” who in her corporeality suffers being poor. Furthermore, this Other is not irrational but is in opposition

to the dominant reason (“hegemonic” as Gramsci would say), and that establishes a liberating reason (new and future rationality). We can accept neither the oppressing reason of terror nor nihilist irrationalism. The “poor” has to be “intelligent” (like the Sandinistas, besieged by the “democratic” empire; like the mouse in the paws of the cat, where the least of “irrational errors would threaten its survival. The cat can be “nihilist like G. Vattimo, skeptical like R. Rorty, playful like the “language games,” *Homo ludens*; while the one that cries out “I am hungry! Don’t torture me!” does not play, but dies in her traumatized corporeality.

But she has to plan, with *phronesis*, rationally, how she will eat tomorrow, how to structure a system in which torture will disappear). Habermasian, Apelian “rationalism” are welcome, but not as eurocentric “oppressing rationality.”

14. As is exemplarily demonstrated by Karl-Otto Apel, *Transformation der Philosophie*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973).
15. I am thinking of Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and The Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1982); *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Concerning my positions on these themes see my *Philosophy of Liberation*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985) 1.1.5; *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, Chap. 3, paragraph 36, V. II, pp. 156ff: “El método analéctico y la filosofía latinoamericana,” where I wrote: “El Otro está más allá del pensar, de la comprensión, de la luz, del lógos; más allá del fundamento, de la identidad: es un an-arjós” (The Other is beyond thinking, comprehension, the light, the logos; it is beyond the grounding, identity: it is an an-arjós”) (p. 161).
16. Above all in the Archeology of Knowledge, where what are important are the concepts of “discontinuity, of rupture, of umbral, of limit, of transformation.” In some way, the Other is the principle of discontinuity; it is the origin of change and transformation. Liberation Philosophy can learn from him although critically.
17. See Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: and other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973); *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978); *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).
18. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
19. Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture*, trans. Jon R. Snyder (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).
20. With respect to Nietzsche see my works *Para una ética de la liberación* and *Para una De-structucción de la historia de la ética*, already cited, which relate the thought of the great nihilist to a eurocentric return to the pretentious Aryan authenticity of war, of domination.
21. See the work of Liberation Philosophy by Franz Hinkelammert, *Critica de la Razón utópica* (San José, Costa Rica: Del, 1984), especially elaborated against Popper, and against Hans Albert. See Chap. V: “La metodología de Popper y sus análisis teóricos de la planificación, la competencia y el proceso de institucionalización,” where he concludes: “Thus, Popper neither overcomes nor attains a critique of utopia. What he does is to transform it from a utopia of human liberation—a utopia of praxis—into an utopia of technological progress: there are no goals that this technical progress cannot attain. He translates the utopian strength of technology and the objective inertia of its progress, thus making it act against human

- freedom. Heaven on earth is not precisely what Marx promises; it is Popper who promises it, integrating with it its own myth of immortality in the hióstasis of late capitalism” (p. 191). Hinkelammert’s critique is unquestionably deeper than that developed by Apel, who, nevertheless, has held an exemplary position on this question.
22. See the biased critique, by Horacio Cerutti, *Filosofía de la liberación latinoamericana* (México: FCE, 1983). Concerning this work see “Filosofía de la Liberación en América. Diez años después,” en *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, 80, 1984, issue dedicated to this theme.
 23. On the category of “dis-tinction” (Derrida’s “differance”) see my *Filosofía de la Liberación* 2.4.3–2.4.4, 4.1.5.5; in *Para una ética de la liberación*, Chap. 6, paragraph 37, v. II. With respect to the analysis of the “developmentalist ideology” see Franz Hinkelammert, *Dialéctica del desarrollo desigual* (Santiago de Chile: CEREN, 1970).
 24. See *Filosofía de la Liberación*, Chapter 2. The same can be considered in my *Para una ética de la liberación*, through the five books (Vols. I and II [Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1973]; Vol. III [México: Edicol, 1977]; Vols. IV–V [Bogotá: USTA, 1979–1980]). Totality since Aristotle (*tò hólon*), Thomas Aquinas (*ordo*), Hegel (*Totalität*), Marx and Heidegger (*Ganzheit*) up to Lukács, as the point of departure of all ontology, is questioned for the first time by Schelling, and later through Levinas’s concepts of “proximité” or “exteriorité”, positions that are subsequently radicalized by Liberation Philosophy. Against Levinas, this philosophy affirms the possibility of a “political liberation” that is beyond the horizon of the Totality (that is to say, the institutionalization of a new future Totality, although it might still be ethically ambiguous; or, in other words, inevitably and in the long range, a new system of domination).
 25. From Latin American misery, machismo, the oppression of woman, and from the overcoming of a Schelling (certainly taking into account the romantics, especially Hamann); and with respect to Hegel (out of the Schelling lecture of 1841 on the “Philosophy of Revelation,” see my work *Método para una filosofía de la Liberación*, pp. 115ff) a path opens up that will follow and deepen with Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, or Marx; and, in another tradition, Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber, and even Levinas; and, as convergence of both, and from the periphery, Liberation Philosophy. The European antecedents of Liberation Philosophy, as it can be seen, are “anti-hegemonic,” as Gramsci put it; marginal, peripheral, “edifying,” as Rorty would christen them.
 26. See my article “Pensée analytique en Philosophie de la Libération” in *Analogie et Dialectique* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1982), pp. 93–120.
 27. See my *Para una ética de la liberación*, Chapter V, paragraph 30, V. II, pp. 97 ff. This is the question of the “meta-physical” or “trans-ontological” project (that neither Heidegger nor Habermas nor Levinas can formulate). It is not the project of either a “real communication community” or an “ideal,” for Apel, but of the “historical-possible,” as mediation between both. It is not “Being” as the grounding of the ruling Totality, but the “Being-future” of the Totality constructed in the process of liberation.
 28. See *Filosofía ética latinoamericana*; Chap. 3.1 of *Philosophy of Liberation* is dedicated to this theme.
 29. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) paragraph 17, p. 102 (emphasis added). Rawls even maintains, further, that: “No one deserves his greater natural capacity nor merits a more favorable starting place in society. But it does not follow that one should eliminate these distinctions” (p. 102). It is evident that no recently born person deserves anything because, obviously, they were “no

one.” But this does not mean that initial differences are not unjust and that therefore they ought not to be eliminated a posteriori. It is a liberal conservatism in the name of a hegemonic reason.

30. Marx, *Capital*, 1, p. 280. Emphasis added.
31. The debate concerning populism has been central to the history of Liberation Philosophy. This problem was formulated in the critiques of Osvaldo Ardiles of the position of Mario Casalla (*Razón y Liberación* [Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1973]). Alberto Parisi analogously referred to the themes (*Filosofía y Dialéctica* [México: Edicol, 1979]). Horacio Cerutti and Brazilian philosophers have taken up the theme.
32. On the critique of real socialism’s utopian perfect planning see Franz Hinkelammert, *Crítica de la razón utópica* Chap. IV, “El marco categorial del pensamiento soviético” (pp. 123ff).
33. See *Filosofía ética de la liberación*, Chap. VII: “La erótica latinoamericana” (México: Edicol, 1977), pp. 50–123.
34. See *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* in *S. Freud Studienausgabe*, Vol. V (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1972), p. 88.
35. See “La pedagógica latinoamericana” in *Filosofía ética de la liberación*, Vol. III, pp. 126ff; and *Filosofía de la Liberación*, Chap. 2.3, where the question of Oedipus/ Elektra and the children of couples is treated.
36. See my article “Cultura latinoamericana y Filosofía de la Liberación” in *Latinoamérica* (México), 17, 1985, pp. 77–127 (and in *Casa de las Américas* [La Habana], 155–56, 1986, pp. 68–73).
37. See *Philosophy of Liberation*, Chap. 3,4; and the entire fifth volume of *Filosofía ética latinoamericana*.
38. On this theme see *Philosophy of Liberation*, Chap. 4.4; in *Filosofía ética de la liberación*, there is in every chapter an economics: economy of erotics (paragraph 45), economics of pedagogy (paragraph. 51), economics of politics (paragraph. 57), anti-fetishist economics (the cult) (paragraph 64). In addition see my works of commentary on Marx: *La producción teórica de Marx. Un comentario de los Grundrisse; Hacia un Marx desconocido. Un comentario a los Manuscritos del 61-63; El Ultimo (1863–1882) la liberación latinoamericana* (México: Siglo XXI, 1990). Through all of these works I have transversed the “long path” of which Ricoeur speaks, not of linguistics but of economics. In the debate with Apel see point 4.3: “De la comunidad de Comunicación del lenguaje a la comunidad de vida” in “La Introducción a la *Transformación de la filosofía* de K.-O. Apel y la Filosofía de la Liberación” in Karl Otto Apel, et al., eds., *Fundamentación de la ética y filosofía de la liberación* (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1992) pp. 83–95.
39. See Enrique Dussel, *Filosofía de la Producción* (Bogotá: Nueva América, 1983) and my edition and introduction to the *Cuadernos tecnológico-históricos de Karl Marx de 1851* (Puebla: Universidad de Puebla, 1984).