

## PREFACE

Enrique Dussel's philosophy of liberation has gained worldwide prominence. He has published more than two hundred articles and more than forty-five books, principally in philosophy but also in history and theology, including three widely acclaimed volumes on Marx based on a thorough reading of the manuscripts underlying *Capital*. He has participated in a one-on-one dialogue with Paul Ricoeur, and he has met for several years with Karl-Otto Apel in what has come to be known as the North-South Dialogue. Critical, scholarly articles on his philosophy of liberation have appeared in Spanish, French, Portuguese, German, and English circles, and book-length studies of his corpus have recently appeared in Spanish and German. To my knowledge, this is the first full-length book in English on the entirety of his philosophy.

One of the major tasks of this book, then, is to introduce Dussel's thought to an English-speaking audience, but such a presentation requires creative interpretation. In my opinion, the substance of Dussel's philosophy can be grasped through the idea of an "ethical hermeneutics" that seeks to interpret reality from the viewpoint of the "Other," as philosopher Emmanuel Levinas presents him or her. For Levinas, the category of the Other includes the poor, the stranger, the widow, or the orphan of the Jewish scriptures as well as contemporary analogates—those who are vanquished, forgotten, or excluded in any way from existing sociopolitical or cultural systems ("totalities," in Levinas's terminology). To substantiate this interpretation, I trace Dussel's development toward Levinas's philosophy through his early anthropological writings, his discussion of the Hegelian dialectic, and, finally, the stages of his own ethical theory. Dussel originally sought to overcome the ethics of modernity through a Heideggerian version of natural law ethics before passing on to Levinas, but his subsequent ethical hermeneutics continued to employ Hei-

deggerian hermeneutical principles in the ethical service of Levinas's Other. Incidentally, his turn from natural law to Levinas permits a reconciliation with modernity, particularly critical theory.

But not only does Dussel appropriate Levinas's thought, he also transforms it by both transposing it to a Latin American setting and developing his own analectical method, which begins with the Other, recognizes the analogical character of the Other's word, unmasking false universals imposed upon the Other, and expands rationality through exposure to the Other. Dussel's transmutation of Levinas's thought enables him to explain the distinctiveness of Latin American philosophy, which is analogous to but not univocal with European philosophy. In addition, this Latin Americanizing of Levinas results in a philosophy that Dussel himself describes as "transmodern." This is so, on the one hand, because Dussel cannot afford to share the comfortable skepticism at times characterizing postmodernity, because he requires rationally based universal norms of justice to denounce the poverty and violations of human rights inflicted on Latin Americans. On the other hand, he cannot wholeheartedly partake of the Frankfurt School's optimism about the project of modernity, since Latin America's history of oppression, from the conquest of Mexico to present-day economic dependency, has so frequently been justified in the name of "rational," "modern," or "universal" values which have turned out to be only Eurocentric or North American. Ethical responsibility to the Other prohibits either the abandonment or the uncritical acceptance of universal norms and judgments.

To conclude this exposition of Dussel's thought, I show the relevance of his ethical hermeneutics to the domains of history, economics, and theology. Dussel's historical writings, admittedly perspectival in character but without being relativistic, seek objectivity by recovering the forgotten Other of history, as exemplified in his analysis of the discovery of America and the conquest of Mexico. On the basis of this analysis, Dussel relocates the origin of modernity in these worldwide events and thereby highlights the violent, exploitative underside of modernity, in contrast to those, such as Jürgen Habermas, who envision the more flattering, intra-European events of the Renaissance and Reformation

as the origin of modernity. As regards economics, Dussel's careful reading of all Marx's pre-*Capital* manuscripts has yielded a new, philosophical Marx, one engaged in an ethical hermeneutics of the capitalist system. This Marx interprets capitalism in terms of its origin in and impact upon living labor-labor outside the system, in sheer destitution and yet the origin of value, coming to sell itself to the capitalist and discarded in economic crises. Although Marx allows Hegel's logic to describe the interior unfolding of capitalism's moments, Marx's main focus, in Dussel's novel interpretation, lies in the Other outside the system to whom one is ethically bound. Dussel, in effect, reads Marx along the lines more of Levinas or Schelling than of Hegel. He also shows how this "unknown" Marx is relevant, in the current predicament of Latin America, for avoiding the dangers of totalitarianism, economicism, and historical determinism that have plagued Marxism. Finally, he illustrates how even theology can avoid ideology by opening itself to the viewpoint of the Other.

The second major task of this book involves assessing a series of criticisms of Dussel's thought. American critics, such as Mexico's Horacio Cerutti Guldberg and the United States's Ofelia Schutte, attack Dussel for holding a "first philosophy" preeminent over the sciences and lacking any rational demonstration, for uncritically supporting Catholic Church positions and fascist forms of populism, and for advocating blind heteronomy in the face of the Other. Though I acknowledge Schutte's critique of Dussel's sexual ethics, I argue that Cerutti's and Schutte's criticisms, which portray him as indulging in irrationalism, can be adequately answered by referring to his Levinasian roots—roots which he himself often does not acknowledge. The rationality of Dussel's position cannot be understood, I believe, without understanding the rationality of Levinas's. To facilitate that understanding, an initial chapter situates Levinas within the prorational phenomenological tradition, since Levinas, too, explores the taken-for-granted horizons of theory itself, engages in a type of phenomenological description (unlike other kinds of description, though), and philosophizes self-reflectively about his own very peculiar type of philosophy.

Karl-Otto Apel raises pertinent criticisms as well. Though he tries to subsume the philosophy of liberation under his own tran-

scendental pragmatics, by presenting it as a mere application of transcendental pragmatics, such a move fails to appreciate the distinctiveness of Dussel's position. I suggest, instead, a division of philosophical labor in which the philosophy of liberation and transcendental pragmatics use their different methods for different purposes as part of the talk of a single rationality. This single rationality owns up to its own often-overlooked presuppositions, as it uncovers at a pretranscendental level the origins of theory itself in the face-to-face, and reflects at the transcendental level on the presupposed conditions of argument itself. Apel further argues that Dussel's turn to Marx is utopian and anachronistic, given the recent collapse of Eastern-bloc socialism. Although the situation of Third World nations would mandate that Apel move toward more economic planning in line with his ethics of responsibility, Dussel, it would seem, cannot avoid markets and their inevitable alienation, even within such planned economies. But Dussel's novel interpretation of Marx in intersubjective terms, as seeking to reassert the rights of capitalism's forgotten Other, undercuts the Frankfurt School's usual interpretation of Marx as depending on German idealism's philosophy of the isolated consciousness triumphantly exerting its power over inert matter.

Dussel's philosophy of liberation stands, then, at the intersection of a number of contemporary crossroads. In his thought, several tensions, many of them unresolved and more polarized in the North Atlantic philosophical community, play themselves out. For instance, one can find in his work the opposition between phenomenology and the Frankfurt School, between the universality of philosophy and its national/ cultural distinctiveness, between natural law and modern ethics, between modernity and postmodernity, between the situations of Latin America and those of Eastern Europe, between the new Marx and the old Marx, and between philosophy and other disciplines such as history, theology, economics, and the natural and social sciences. In my opinion, the question of rationality runs as a common thread through all these antagonisms. My account of the rationality of Dussel's thought, understood as an ethical hermeneutics at a pretranscendental level in the tradition of Levinas, can resolve many of these tensions. It can also enable the philosophy of liberation to withstand most of the criticisms advanced against it by critics from

both sides of the Atlantic who accuse it of succumbing to forms of irrationality .

Finally, it is difficult to write a book on a living philosopher because one no sooner finishes the book than the philosopher has moved in new directions. This book presents the bases of Dussel's thought so that the reader will be able to understand his future progress, even though that progress might involve modifying or even retracting earlier positions. For instance, in a recent collection of essays entitled *The Underside of Modernity*, the reader can see Dussel moving out from the philosophy of liberation to engage the positions of Paul Ricoeur, Richard Rorty, and Charles Taylor, as well as Karl-Otto Apel. In addition, Dussel has just completed a major work, *Ética de la liberación en la edad de la globalización y de la exclusión* (Ethics of liberation in the age of globalization and exclusion), that subsumes the valid philosophical contributions of formal pragmatics and critical theory within a broader liberationist architectonic. Familiarity with the trajectory of Dussel's development, presented here, will equip the reader to understand more fully these subsequent extensions of his thought. Furthermore, it may well be that some of the critical suggestions advanced here will be recognized and incorporated in future works by Enrique Dussel, as he pursues his own historical evolution.

The author would like to thank Professors Bohrman, Caputo, Dussel, Marsh, and Punzo for their suggestions; the Department of Philosophy at St. Louis University and Rev. Theodore Vitali, C.P., for their support; the College of Arts and Sciences at St. Louis University for a generous Mellon Grant; Mr. Ollie Roundtree for his assistance; and the Leo Brown Jesuit Community for its patience and encouragement.



## *INTRODUCTION*

In order to explore the theme of rationality in the thought of Enrique Dussel, in the first chapter I examine that same theme in the thought of Emmanuel Levinas, the philosopher on whom Dussel relies more than on any other. This question of rationality in Levinas is inseparably linked with the question of whether Levinas is actually doing phenomenology. Hence, the first chapter makes the case, against competing interpretations, that he is indeed a phenomenologist, albeit a unique kind, in the service of rationality, as was his predecessor Edmund Husserl. Like the later Husserl and the post-Husserlian generations of phenomenologists, Levinas criticizes theory by exploring its horizons, not in order to discredit it, but to make it more self-aware and, therefore, rational. Moreover, in his descriptions of the Other coming to appearance in ethico-practical relationships, Levinas struggles to recover an originary, forgotten experience overlain with uncriticized traditions and theories—as all phenomenology does. This Other, who commands from a height instead of being an equal, interchangeable term in a formal logical relationship, enhances rationality by initiating self critique, inviting rational discourse in the first place, and thus impugning one-sided notions of rationality and expanding them. The ultimate test of the rationality of Levinas's position depends, however, on reflection on his methodology. Although his Other defies all phenomenological categories (and thus is not given as noema, intentional object, etc.), I argue that some kind of phenomenology must be at play in order to recognize positively who this Other is who does not submit to usual phenomenological categories. Jean François Lyotard's reading of Levinas helps clarify the latter's methodology by claiming that he depicts the attitude of one who receives a prescription (a "prescriptive") as opposed to one who comments on or reflects on the experience in order to test the prescription's validity (and so produces "denotatives"). However, since Levinas is depicting

prescriptives, he is actually at a denotative, philosophical level, at one remove from the experience of receiving a prescriptive. In response to Derrida's radicalization of the question of Levinas's methodology—namely, that one must use language to get at what lies beyond language and to philosophize about what lies beyond philosophy—Levinas acknowledges that the very use of language to describe the Other both reveals and conceals the Other, who is "given" as a trace. In an ultimate self-reflective moment in *Otherwise Than Being*, Levinas admits that his own philosophizing—and he *is* philosophizing—inevitably brings the Other within the scope of Being and thus betrays the saying in the said. In a move reminiscent of transcendental phenomenology, Levinas attempts to redefine philosophy itself—as the task of continually reducing the betrayal of the saying in the said and of submitting to self-critique in the presence of the Other. The Other that phenomenology pushes to discover throws that very phenomenology off-balance and brings it to the severest self-criticism and rationality—which had been its dream all along.

Chapter 2 begins my critical exposition of the development of Dussel's philosophy of liberation and its implications, which extends into the next two chapters. In Chapter 2 I explain how Dussel, starting from a rather traditional education, arrives at a Levinasian position through studies of diverse philosophical anthropologies (the Hellenic and Semitic, for example) and the Hegelian dialectic and through the collapse of his Heideggerian version of natural law ethics. An effort at a Heideggerian retrieval of the Christian-Semitic unified anthropology—similar to Heidegger's own nondualist existential descriptions—from its Hellenic dualistic superimpositions leads Dussel to discover the unity of the human person as a "supplicating carnality." This unified anthropology reflects Hebraic-Semitic categories marked by an ethics of alterity, like Levinas's, beyond institutionalized Christendom and even Heidegger himself. Such an exercise in Heideggerian retrieval does not reject Hellenic rationalism, but shows that same rationalism correcting its own errors, reflexively appropriating its own past, destroying inauthentic history, and rendering historiography more rational. Though appreciating the valuable aspects of Hegel's dialectical method, Dussel rejects his Absolute, because it represents the subject of modernity "ele-

vated to actual infinity which englobes everything in an absolute immanence without exteriority." In his flight into consciousness, Hegel forgets the point of embarkation that the post-Hegelians and Levinas have finally recovered: the ethico-practical relationship with the concrete Other. In restoring to Hegel what Hegel himself presupposes without admitting, one makes Hegel the archrationalist even more rational. Finally, in his early ethics, Dussel fuses the natural law tradition of ethics with fundamental Heideggerian ontology in such a way that moral conscience appears as the voice of Being summoning one to heed one's authentic nature and to adopt responsibly and resolutely one's own fundamental project instead of mindlessly conforming to the pressures of *das Man*. From this perspective, Dussel attacks modern ethics, which, because of its focus from Descartes to Kant on the subject, independent of ontology, "hangs in the air," forfeits any check on arbitrary subjectivity, and thus climaxes in Nietzsche's will-to-power. But through his exposure to Levinas, Dussel comes to see that Heidegger really presents, not an ethics, but the ethically neutral conditions of the possibility of good and evil. Levinas, on the contrary, provides him with an ethical context situating Heideggerian ontology, placing all Heideggerian categories under an index of orientation toward the Other, and revealing authentic Otherness beyond *Mitsein*. This turn to Levinas enables Dussel to separate ethics from ontology, embrace the modern tradition's separation of the 'is' from the 'ought,' and pinpoint his difference with modernity in a fear of the arbitrariness of the subject that is lacking to modernity. I argue, though, that Kant and particularly dialogic (as opposed to monologic) critical theory in the Kantian tradition are also aware of this arbitrariness and battle against it. This criticism and my rebuttals to several other of Dussel's criticisms of Kant pave the way for a possible reconciliation between the philosophy of liberation and modernity, particularly critical theory, provided the distinctiveness of their levels, methods, and tasks within a common rational architectonic is preserved.

Dussel appropriates Levinas's theory but also transforms it, as Chapter 3 illustrates, by setting it in a Latin American context and developing a unique *analectical method* that begins with the Other and discovers the *analogical* word of the Other. The metaphysi-

cally distinct Other, whose alterity exceeds that of the ontologically different, calls for an apprenticeship of listening and trust in which one resists reducing the analogical word of the Other to univocity with one's own. The Eurocentric proclivity to see in all philosophy that employs Western philosophical categories, such as Dussel's, merely an extension or application of itself engages in such reductionism to the univocal. In spite of Dussel's exaltation of the universal at the expense of the particular prior to his discovery of Levinas, and in spite of his faulty universalizations particularly in the domain of sexual ethics, the later Dussel employs his analectic method to unmask false processes of universalization. Such false "univocation" becomes evident in modes of political and economic domination—in the conquest of Mexico, for example, or in contemporary economic theories of development, in Eurocentric patterns of cultural understanding from Aristotle's politics to Rousseau's pedagogy to Freud's erotics, in certain Roman Catholic practices and teachings, in brands of theological research, and in dialectics and negative dialectics, swirling in their own own vortices instead of beginning with a positive affirmation of the Other. Even science, whose objects are constituted within praxis, could profit from Dussel's heuristic of ethically oriented suspicion, since contact with the frequently overlooked exteriority heightens objectivity. The illumination sought after in taking up the hermeneutic position of the oppressed suggests that Dussel is doing more than skeptically uncovering false universals: he is engaging in a hermeneutics ethically bound to the Other—an ethical hermeneutics—that improves prospects of knowledge. When one adopts an ethos of liberation, one enhances rationality by bringing to light unnoticed values and emphases, opening horizons of the possible constitution of objects, deculturating oneself, deepening in self-criticism, facing anomalies that force paradigm revision, ensuring more thorough correspondence with the real, and even exposing the Other and other cultures to critique undertaken respectfully and for their sake. The prorational character of Dussel's work becomes clear in his 1492: *El encubrimiento del Otro—Hacia el origen del "Mito de modernidad"* (1492: The covering over of the Other—Toward the origin of the "myth of modernity" ), in which he attacks, not reason, but the irrational myth accompanying modernity and justify-

ing its violence in the name of development or civilization. Not as disdainful of rationality as is postmodernity and not as optimistic about the modern project as is modernity, Dussel concludes the volume by classifying himself as a "transmodernist." Both his skepticism and his rationalism derive from his ethical hermeneutics, which interprets events of history and structures of society from the perspective of the poor and outcast Other and thus fuses Levinas's ethical passion with the hermeneutics of Martin Heidegger, whose earlier impact on Dussel has never been totally neutralized.

Chapter 4 traces the implications of Dussel's ethical hermeneutics for history, economics, and theology. Dussel's historical writings use a nonpositivistic methodology that recognizes the perspectival nature of history writing, while seeking to ensure objectivity through retrieving the viewpoint of the forgotten Other of history. His *1492: El encubrimiento del Otro* exemplifies this ethico-hermeneutical approach to the writing of history. Tracing the history of the "discovery of America" from the landing on Guanahani (San Salvador) to the conquest of Mexico, it describes the diverse worldviews of the Spanish and the indigenous peoples, highlighting the viewpoint of Moctezuma, the vanquished and discredited emperor of the oppressed indigenous peoples. Dussel also uses this work to correct a false periodification of history which would locate the origin of modernity in the intra-European and Europe-flattering events of the Renaissance and the Reformation. He argues, instead, that modernity began with the worldwide event of the conquest of the Americas, in which the European ego practically constituted itself prior to Descartes's theoretical *ego cogito* and the other face of modernity—its irrationality, violence, and exploitativeness—becomes evident. As regards the economy, Dussel, who had lambasted Marx in his earlier writings, undertakes a more sympathetic evaluation of Marx's interpretation of capitalism. Dussel's reading of all the pre-*Capital* manuscripts revealed to him a philosophical Marx (Althusser's interpretation notwithstanding) focused on living labor, which, exterior to the capitalist system, has at one and the same time absolute poverty as an object and the universal possibility of wealth as an active subject. In Dussel's view, Marx undertakes an ethical hermeneutics of capitalism, interpreting it in terms of its

origin in and impact upon living labor. With great originality, Dussel reconstrues the Hegel/Marx relationship by placing the point of Marx's rupture with Hegel in his focus on exteriority, on living labor beyond the system. Although Hegel's logic can be used to describe the internal moments of capital, Dussel's Marx is really interested in the ethical relationship with the Other beyond that system, and so begins to appear much less like Hegel and much more like Schelling or Levinas. On the basis of this fresh reading of Marx, Dussel illustrates how capitalists, their theoreticians, the workers themselves, and even the Marxist theoretical tradition from Lukács to Habermas have fallen into hermeneutical errors. Marx's ethical hermeneutics forms an interpretive framework or heuristic focused on the forgotten Other of the economy—just as it concentrated on the forgotten Other of history—a framework seeking to provide a higher-level context for empirical research in the tradition of German *Wissenschaft*. This Levinasian Marx has great significance for interpreting the Latin American situation and for evading the dangers of totalitarianism, rigid economicism, and historical determinism of previous Marxism. Finally, Dussel's ethical hermeneutics can preclude any use of theology as an ideological support for the status quo, as becomes clear in his critique of the "Documento de consulta" (Document of consultation) for Puebla.

In Chapters 5 and 6 I assess Dussel's philosophy of liberation in the face of criticisms advanced by his American critics Horacio Cerutti Guldberg and Ofelia Schutte and by Karl-Otto Apel. Cerutti and Schutte find Dussel engaging in self-righteous moral superiority, holding a first philosophy for which he provides no rational demonstration, assuming preeminence over the sciences (and, as a result, for instance, neglecting the multicausal character of international economic dependence), claiming to have surpassed all European rationality and previous Latin American thought, being driven by unacknowledged religious commitments (to the point of reduplicating the Church's teachings, even the condemnation of divorce), supporting Perón's fascist populism, and fostering uncritical heteronomy before the Other. Most of these criticisms center in the accusation that Dussel is an irrationalist, and flow from Cerutti's and Schutte's own positive valua-

tion of rationality and its mandates to avoid dogmatism, give an account of oneself, remain open to maximal possible self-criticism, and test all validity claims, even those originating from the Other, instead of committing the genetic fallacy by arguing that origin proves validity. Although I agree with Schutte that Dussel's sexual ethics reflects an inadequate attention to alterity, many of Cerutti's and Schutte's criticisms betray a lack of familiarity with Dussel's Levinasian bases, perhaps because Dussel is often reluctant to acknowledge them. To understand adequately both the nature of Dussel's "foundation" and its "indemonstrability," and his seemingly arrogant claims of having surpassed European rationality or earlier Latin American thought, one needs to have a more thorough grasp of Levinas's method of phenomenological description, its unearthing of the presuppositions of "proof" itself, the relationship between Levinas's phenomenology and the sciences, and the meaning of ethics as first philosophy in Levinas. The charge of uncritical heteronomy overlooks numerous texts of Dussel's and fails to consider the autonomy of the I that is upheld by Levinas's phenomenological starting point as well as by such key notions as separation, enjoyment and identity, interiority, apology, discourse, and election. Though Dussel himself, in my opinion, has responded adequately to the attack that he supported Peronist fascism, a retrieval of his Levinasian roots makes possible a response to the many trenchant criticisms that Schutte and Cerutti have raised. Such a response would indicate that Dussel could agree as well with the positive endorsement of rationality underlying their negative verdict on him.

In Chapter 6, I present Karl-Otto Apel's two penetrating criticisms of Dussel's philosophy of liberation: (a) that Apel's transcendental pragmatics achieves the same solidarity and openness to the Other as the philosophy of liberation does and so can replace it, with the philosophy of liberation fulfilling the subordinate role of removing the barriers to the implementation (at level B of Apel's theory) of transcendental pragmatics; and (b) that Dussel's reappropriation of Marx is anachronistic, given the collapse of Eastern-bloc socialism. In response to the first criticism, I argue that Apel overlooks differences between himself and Dussel and that Dussel's theory could accommodate Apel's through Levinas's concept of the Third. In place of a competition in which

transcendental pragmatics and the philosophy of liberation each seek to subsume the other, I suggest a division of philosophical labor in which Dussel and Apel operate with different methodologies for different purposes within a common architectonic. The philosophy of liberation and transcendental pragmatics are the work of a single rationality, authentically owning up to what it usually bypasses or ignores, whether reflecting on the horizons prior to the origin of theory or on the operative but unadmitted presuppositions of argumentation itself. Without the philosophy of liberation, one would lose sight of an account of origins; of the constant challenge that the Other, as exterior to every totality, poses for hermeneutics, validity claims, and contractual agreements; and of the motivation on which selfless, daring, and heroic emancipation relies. Regarding Apel's second criticism, it is necessary to understand that Dussel reads Marx in the tradition of German *Wissenschaft* and therefore construes him as constructing an ethical hermeneutics of the capitalist economy in order to keep clearly in sight the forgotten Other of capitalism, living labor. Although such a hermeneutics never ought to contradict economic facts, no empirical phenomena of the economy can refute this hermeneutical framework, any more than individual historical facts can abolish the decision to interpret history by focusing on its suppressed Other. I further contend that Apel's critique of Dussel's dependence theory fails to grasp the abstract level of Dussel's analysis. In reaction to Apel's charge that Dussel should be reformist instead of utopian, I explain how in a Third World setting Apel's reformism would have to move toward a more revolutionary stance and a more thoroughly planned economy in keeping with Apel's endorsement of an ethics of responsibility at level B of his own theory. On the other hand, following Franz Hinkelammert, I do not see how Dussel can avoid the existence of a market even in revolutionary settings, with the inevitable alienation that follows. Finally, Dussel's interpretation of Marx in Levinasian/Schellingian intersubjective terms offsets critical theory's attack on Marx's theories of alienation, surplus value, and history as being bound within the parameters of German idealism's philosophy of isolated consciousness.

A word of caution: throughout this book, references will be made to Dussel's theological writings basically in order to illus-

trate the implications of his philosophical positions. There is no expectation that the reader share Dussel's religious faith, and no demonstration of God's existence is given here. However, when one seeks to understand an author fully, it seems somewhat artificial to isolate completely that author's philosophy from the rest of his (in this case, historical and theological) writings, even if one does not share the fundamental presuppositions of those writings.