

*DUSSEL'S PHILOSOPHY OF  
LIBERATION: DISCOVERY AND  
INTEGRATION OF LEVINAS'S  
THOUGHT*

IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL "Liberación latinoamericana y filosofía," Enrique Dussel describes both his philosophical development toward Emmanuel Levinas's thought and the gradual evolution of the philosophy of liberation. He admits the traditional character of his undergraduate work at the Universidad Nacional de Cuyo and classifies his subsequent doctorate in philosophy, finished in 1959 in Madrid, as falling "within the most traditional third period of Scholasticism." After spending time in the Middle East and completing doctorates in theology and history and further philosophical studies in Europe, Dussel still shows himself to be rather traditional. In his 1965 theological article "Hacia una historia de la Iglesia latinoamericana," he envisions the task of Christianity as forming elites so that it might insert itself into a technical and pluralist civilization, in imitation of the early Christians who were able to integrate themselves (*internarse*) into the Roman Empire, the secular culture of their day. Latin American Christians need to partake of the Universal Civilization (the capitals are Dussel's) of which Latin America is only one part. This early Dussel also praises Hernando Arias de Ugarte for his life of perpetual service to the Church and the king. Dussel even defends the Spanish evangelization of Latin America for avoiding syncretism, even though he admits that it neglected indigenous points of view. His earliest major philosophical article, "Situación problemática de la antropología filosófica," espouses traditional phenomenological positions opposed to forms of ide-

alism and endorses phenomenological methods such as phenomenological reduction.<sup>1</sup>

From this starting point, Dussel will undergo a substantive series of transformations on the way to his own final philosophy of liberation, which derives from and transforms Levinas's philosophy. This chapter will show why Dussel found it necessary to turn to Levinas in the first place, and the next chapter will discuss his transformation of Levinas into his own unique philosophy of liberation. Following Dussel's own clues in the autobiographical material in "Liberación latinoamericana y filosofía," I will argue that there are three trajectories in his thought that led him to Levinas. (a) At the beginning of his career, Dussel wrote three works of what could be called a philosophically styled anthropology: *El humanismo semita* (begun in 1960 and published in 1969), *El humanismo helénico* (completed in 1963 and published in 1975), and a synthesis of these two works, *El dualismo en la antropología de la cristiandad* (finished in 1968 and published in 1974). (b) After the breakdown of his later project of founding an ethics on Heideggerian-hermeneutic grounds, Dussel devoted himself from 1970 to 1974 to a substantial study of Hegel which issued in *La dialéctica hegeliana* (1972) and a revised edition of that work, *Método para una filosofía de la liberación* (1974). (c) Dussel developed his own theory of ethics, extending from his attempt to base ethics on Heideggerian-hermeneutic grounds in *Para una de-strucción de la historia de la ética* (1970) to his five-volume *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, published from 1973 until 1980, with the first three volumes clearly manifesting the confrontation between Heidegger and Levinas in his thought. In this chapter, I will take up each of these three trajectories, and will demonstrate how each of them led to Levinas. Of course, I will be continually asking the question guiding this text: what is the meaning of rationality in Dussel's own philosophy of liberation?

## LEVINAS AND DUSSEL'S ANTHROPOLOGICAL WORKS

Dussel understands his inquiries into the Semitic and Hellenistic worldviews and their synthesis in Christianity as propaedeutic to grasping the actual prephilosophical world of Latin America. Ac-

According to Dussel, every culture possesses a "pre-position" toward the world exercised in every experience, manifesting itself in the anticipations and potentialities of the least perception of the most humble thing. In more Heideggerian terms, being always takes on meaning within the horizon of a certain precomprehension of the world which varies from culture to culture. Paralleling the later Husserl's recovery of the world of everyday life (*mundo de la vida cotidiana*), Dussel believes that philosophy can question the forgotten, prephilosophical approaches to the world out of which philosophy itself arises.

Even if Christian thought would not have arrived at presenting a philosophical discourse, that is to say, even if there would not have been a Christian philosophy, there existed effectively a pre-philosophical anthropo-logical structure at the existential level. Such a structure would be contained in the "world" of the Christian historically given. We are setting out, insofar as we are philosophers, necessarily contemporary ones at that, not only to discern the elements of a philosophy, but also to study a structure, a pre-philosophical anthropo-logy, effectively given even before thought has situated its object reductively as an "entity" to be thematized. For that reason, it does not matter whether we dwell on philosophical documents or on expressions of everyday life, since every document will be of value for discerning in its contents the basic anthropo-logical structures that are *implicit* and hidden beneath the clothing of a theological, literary, or historical question.<sup>2</sup>

This Heideggerian/phenomenological project of recovering precomprehensions of the world and resolutely taking up one's past unearths basic features characteristic of the Semitic and the Hellenic cultures. The Semites attribute responsibility for evil to human beings rather than to the gods or the structure of being. Such a view sets God off as transcendent over the realm of nature, and its emphasis on human responsibility posits the human being as self-conscious and autonomous over against the things of nature. Yet there is no mind/body dualism among the Semites as there is among the Greeks. Historicity is integral to the human person, and Semites tend to rejoice in the adventure of the changing and the phenomenal that scandalizes the Greeks.<sup>3</sup>

The Hellenic precomprehension of the world, including its preclassical, classical, and Hellenistic stages, traces itself back to

the Western Eurasian steppes and the worldview of the Indo-European, understood not racially but culturally. For the Greeks, heirs of Indo-European culture, mind/body dualism constitutes an undiscussed dogma that implies the corollaries that the soul takes precedence and that salvation can be found only in freeing oneself from one's body. This anthropological dualism often accompanies an ontological monism in which all things return to a fundamental principle or emanate from an immanent divinity. Thus, Greek thought shows tendencies of an inability to assume the intransferable value of the concrete and to flee from the irreversible and unforeseeable in search of the security offered by immobile, eternal, first principles. The Greeks stress individual perfection and contemplation "outside the city," thereby assigning only secondary importance to intersubjectivity and the common good.<sup>4</sup>

Dussel examines the confluence of these two cultural streams in his *El dualismo en la antropología de la cristiandad*, acknowledging that his text focuses on the soul/body relation solely as it appears in the comprehension of humanity of early Christianity in its passage to its later, established form as Christendom. According to Dussel, the primitive Christian community carried with it a certain (Semitic) understanding of the human person as its universalistic impulses prompted it to reach out to Romanized Hellenism. The process of acculturation—that is, the passage from early Christianity to an established form of Christendom, culminating in Constantine's declaration of Christianity as the official religion of the empire—required expressing this Semitic understanding through the totality of mediations (language, logical instruments, economic, political, pedagogic, erotic systems) of Hellenic culture. For Dussel, it was the Christian Apologists (A.D. 120-180) who mediated this "dialogue to the death" between two giant cultures, and he advances abundant evidence to show how the proponents of the Semitic-Christian belief system struggled to uphold the unity of the person even though the very Greek categories they employed undermined their struggle. For example, even as Methodius of Olympia denies dualism and affirms synthesis, he admits the existence of two irreducible components: "The human being by nature is neither soul nor body ... but rather the synthesis composed of the union of soul and

body." In tracing this dualism down through the history of Western thought, Dussel observes that all Christian tinkers held the secret conviction that they were betraying something central to the Hebraic-Christian worldview expressed in the Old and New Testaments. The biblical comprehension of the human person was unitary; the philosophical expression turned dualistic. In Dussel's view, only Thomas Aquinas articulated a unitary vision of the human person by construing the soul not as a separate, incomplete substance, but as a *sui generis* substantial form, the direct recipient of the *esse* pertaining to the whole person, which is irreducible to the soul itself. Only by breaking with all previous philosophical categories could Aquinas successfully preserve the unity of the person.<sup>5</sup>

Dussel engages here in a Heideggerian venture of returning to the origins of Christianity to recover a lost unity, to escape from the trap of dualism into which Christianity fell in acculturating to Hellenism. Just as Heidegger criticized the metaphysical tradition for encrusting over and concealing originary experiences, Dussel turns to accounts and descriptions of existential situations of everyday life—a prephilosophical moment—distorted when they were thematized within Greek categories. In order to thematize adequately, one has to situate oneself existentially in an originary world, prior to the philosophical separation of the human being into soul and body. Not only is Dussel's method Heideggerian, but Heidegger's fundamental ontology also comes to represent the goal toward which the Western philosophical tradition has been approaching, however haltingly. Thus, near the end of *El dualismo*, Dussel recommends replacing the logico-analytic interpretation of human nature that has treated human nature merely ontically, as if it were a thing (composed of two subthings), with an existential description that would analyze human existentials. Corporality, animality, temporality, intersubjectivity—all constitute existentials of an ontological, structural, *a priori* unity before the appearance of any dualism. Dussel suggests that such an existential analysis of the fundamental ontological type exists effectively in the thought of Thomas Aquinas.<sup>6</sup>

Although Dussel's search for lost origins in *El dualismo* recovers a unity of the person approximating Heidegger's own philosophical anthropology, Dussel confesses in the foreword of that book

that he had recently experienced a "theoretic rupture" with European ontology (including Heidegger's) that would require him to rewrite the entire book. Rather than undertake such major revisions, he decides to include additions expounding the origin of the notion of "person," the originary concept of a unified being, which philosophers and Christian thinkers in their attempted explanations subsequently bifurcated into separate substances of soul and body. The term "person" represents neither an entity nor an animal differentiated by rationality, but refers instead to alterity, the Other from whom the moral world is constituted. "Person" in the Old Testament signifies "face," not the mask through which a voice resounded as in Greek theater, but, rather, the face of the other as Other, exemplified when Moses spoke "face to face" with God. This notion of person designates a locus beyond the horizon of the world, of being, and even of ontology. This Other is given as a unity, as "a supplicating carnality" (*carnalidad suplicante*), who cries out "I am hungry," prior to any philosophical considerations of soul and body. Thus, the unity of the person, forgotten by the philosophical tradition except for Heidegger and Thomas Aquinas, itself derives from more fundamental ethical origins, prior to any ontological elucidation. Utilizing Heideggerian method to rescue Christian anthropology from Hellenistic superimpositions, Dussel is led beyond Heidegger and Heidegger's fundamental ontology and even beyond Christianity itself to Hebraic-Semitic categories marked by an ethical "logic of alterity." In brief, his anthropological studies utilize Heidegger only to lead beyond Heidegger to Levinas.<sup>7</sup>

This is not to say that all Dussel's interpretations of individual figures or groups are historically accurate. One might dispute his claim in *El humanismo helénico* that Heraclitus was too fixated on order. Similarly, it does not seem correct to assert that Aristotle emphasizes the species over the concrete and reduces the individual to no more than a subject/carrier of the universal, especially since Dussel never refutes the most powerful counterevidence to such assertions: namely, Aristotle's critique of Plato's theory of the forms. Moreover, Dussel frequently evinces a less than fair approach to Judaism. He repeatedly interprets the New Alliance in Christianity as the fulfillment of Judaism, a Christian reading offensive to Jews and repudiated in recent Christian documents.

Accepting all Jesus's words as authentic and ignoring the anti-Jewish polemic underlying Christian texts, Dussel presents Jesus as opposing the merely "carnal" practices of Judaism such as circumcision. Furthermore, when he claims that Israel was less open to pagans than Christianity was, Dussel neglects broad universalistic tendencies in the Prophets and in works such as the Book of Jonah. The criticism that Judaism never extended to the entire world because it would not deny its particularism and because it demanded of nations that they forfeit their own physiognomy to become part of the people centered in Jerusalem smacks of hypocrisy, especially when one considers Christianity's traditional suppression of internal diversity and its age-old aggressive persecution of non-Christian religions, particularly Judaism. Rosemary Reuther has convincingly argued that Christianity's reproach of Jewish particularism in contrast to its own universalism has often concealed from Christians their own ruthless particularism.<sup>8</sup>

Dussel's preference for the Semitic current over the Hellenic might indicate an option against rationality and philosophy, which would seem to have done nothing more than misrepresent lived experience and create a pseudo-problematic (for example, dualism) plaguing the history of philosophy for more than two millennia. But the very anthropological inquiries disclosing the errors and limits of rationality are themselves the work of reason. Dussel's entire anthropological investigation is premised on the fact that we inherit much more than we are aware of from our parents in terms of race, character, culture, and home. Following Heidegger, Dussel observes that we are thrown (*arrojado*) into life with a (pre-given) meaning and direction within which we can freely choose. The cultural heritages of Latin America act upon its denizens more than they realize. Of course, even to be aware of one's thrownness requires self-reflection—a reflection requisite, in Dussel's view, for personal and cultural maturity.

Someone might reproach us: In the present anguish of a Latin America that is debating about realizing a revolution that will establish a more just order, what sense does it make to lose time studying the far-distant Greeks? We ought only to respond that in order to understand truly the human edifice constructed in history, it is necessary to begin with the foundations in order to decipher the *mean-*

*ing* of our own present. One becomes an adult only through attaining reflexive consciousness of one's collective and historical existence. In this case, consciousness will be able to precede history, *orienting it*.<sup>9</sup>

The rational process of recovering one's own and one's cultural past in anthropology stands as the only alternative to remaining a child, a passive victim of one's own history, or a culture alienated within world history.<sup>10</sup>

Apart from its results, this Heideggerian-like "destruction" of history entails, as Dussel describes it, a "demystifying" (*dimitificar*) of history, with all the connotations of Weberian rationalization that that word carries. Dussel hopes to destroy inauthentic history and unveil its forgotten meanings, to rescue them from the dominant tradition, that is, the vulgar tradition of the mere traditionalists. Thus, his anthropological endeavor leads him to uncover the originary unified Semitic anthropology that has been overlaid with Hellenic dualisms. Dussel's restoration of the importance of the Apologists in the process of the constitution of Christian anthropologists runs counter to usual histories of philosophy, such as Gilson's, Fraile's, or Heimsoeth's that, after presenting the Ancients and the New Testament texts, leap to the Hellenists, Neoplatonists, and Augustine. Later, we shall see Dussel producing similar critico-destructive histories, such as his effort to recover the religious meanings of the indigenous people whose voice was drowned out in the Spanish conquest of Latin America. Dussel's writing of critico-destructive history is but an effort to make historiography itself more rational.<sup>11</sup>

We have teased out elements of rationality implicit in Dussel's own anthropological explorations. Of course, what those explorations ultimately find—the face of the Other as the basis of the unified notion of the person—ultimately invites us to a richer, more authentic notion of rationality, as the previous chapter argued. Nevertheless, Dussel's anthropological writings would leave us with the impression that Greek thought, and philosophy in particular, serve only to obscure originary experiences and blunt their ethical force. Only later will we be able to see whether Greek rationality provides riches that the philosophy of liberation has yet to tap in their fullness.



## LEVINAS AND DUSSEL'S READING OF HEGEL

In "Liberación latinoamericana y filosofía," Dussel reports that after his *Para una de-strucción de la historia de la ética* he began to find Heideggerian terminology and hermeneutic instruments unsatisfactory and thus began an intense study of Hegel which would be the theme of his graduate seminars and occupy him from 1970 until 1974. Why Dussel found that terminology and those instruments unsatisfactory will be the theme of the next section. For now, though, we will discuss how he critically appropriated the Hegelian dialectic and why he felt impelled to move beyond Hegel to Levinas.<sup>12</sup>

Near the end of *La dialéctica hegeliana*, after tracing the development of the dialectic and its various meanings in the history of philosophy, Dussel discovers two valuable aspects of the dialectic: it denies the security and obviousness of everyday life, and it opens out on encompassing ontological structures, which are never exhaustively known. Later, in his *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, Dussel maintains his admiration for the dialectical method by admitting that it plays an important role even after an originary moment of analectic conversion to the Other. Philosophy then proceeds dialectically, borne along by the word of the Other.<sup>13</sup>

Most of Dussel's reactions to Hegel's thought, though, are negative. He sees in Hegel's Absolute merely the subjectivity of modernity "elevated to actual infinity which englobes everything in an absolute immanence without exteriority." In the dialectic of desire, the master-slave, and stoicism in Hegel, it is purely and simply the same self-conscious consciousness undergoing modifications, without any real Other. When in Hegel's philosophy of "identity and absolute knowing" the finite destroys itself, the elevation of the whole does not come from anything outside itself. Hegel's comment that "As opposed to the desire of the Absolute, the desire of other spirits of other particular peoples has no rights" constitutes a sacralization of the predominant order of the world. In Dussel's opinion, philosophy of the Hegelian type ends up justifying the elimination of the Other and thus serves as an "ontological cause" of such diverse phenomena as fascist

concentration camps, Siberian forced labor, and the repression of African-Americans in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

Dussel contends, though, that the post-Hegelians overcame Hegel's dialectic, just as Levinas has overcome Heidegger's ontology, and so they, along with Levinas, make up the prehistory of Latin American philosophy. The young Schelling argued that beyond Hegel's identity of thought and being lies the positivity of the unthinkable-existence-*a prius* abandoned when Hegel pushed on to the level of consciousness. Feuerbach, continuing Schelling's line of thought, believed that atheism regarding the Hegelian totality led to the rediscovery of the other human being—sensible, corporal, fleshly—that Descartes had denied and that can be apprehended only in the true dialectic of a dialogue, not in the monologue of a solitary thinker. Marx reformulated Feuerbach's notion of the sensible to include human sensible action and praxis; and for Kierkegaard, who remained on the theological plane only, the Other appeared as incomprehensible and absurd, known only through the Other's free self-revelation. The later Schelling also reiterated this necessity for self-revelation on the part of a Creator, who produces an autonomous creation instead of a mere pantheistic emanation from that Creator's own self. In Dussel's view, Levinas recapitulates and surpasses this entire tradition by focusing on the human sensible Other's revealing itself and the Divine and provoking an *an-archic* concern for justice beyond what can be thought, beyond logos, beyond Hegel's identity. Dussel starkly contrasts the method of Hegel's dialectic with his own ana-lectic, which, though he develops it on the basis of Levinas's thought, is beyond it.

The method of which we wish to speak, the *ana-lectic*, goes beyond, above; it derives from a level higher (*ana-*) than the mere *dia-lectic* method. The *dia-lectic* method is the path that the totality realizes within itself: from entities to the fundament and from the fundament to entities. What we are discussing now is a method (or the explicit dominion of the conditions of possibility) which begins from the Other as free, as one beyond the system of the totality; which begins, then, from the Other's word, from the revelation of the Other, and which, trusting in the Other's word, labors, works, serves, and creates.<sup>15</sup>

The criticism of Hegel here leads through the post-Hegelians to Levinas, just as Dussel's anthropological investigations lead beyond Hellenism to the Semitic notions of the unified person which are articulated better by Levinas's ethics than by even Heidegger's fundamental ontology. In recovering what Hegel's dialectic forgets and overlooks, the post-Hegelians and Levinas effectively make even the archrationalist more rational. But it is in Dussel's attempt to develop an ethics for Latin American liberation that he will turn most dramatically to Levinas and, as we shall see, sharpen modernity's own efforts at constructing a rational ethics.

#### LEVINAS AND THE ETHICS OF LATIN AMERICAN LIBERATION

In 1970, Dussel published *Para una de-strucción de la historia de la ética*, a Heideggerian and hermeneutically based ethics that he will find unsatisfactory and that will prompt him to embark on his study of Hegel before coming finally to write his five-volume *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*. The 1970 work constitutes his critique of modernity's ethics, particularly Kant's, and in the latter work he criticizes the Heideggerian foundations of the earlier work. After examining these permutations in detail, we shall assess this entire project in ethics.

In the foreword to *Para una de-strucción*, Dussel informs us that he uses "destruction" in the Heideggerian sense of separating oneself from traditional interpretations, untying the transmitted hermeneutics, to recover the forgotten and open one's ears to what in the tradition addresses itself to us as the Being of being. Dussel believes that all the ethics ever written bring to light an ontological structure that already is an "ethic equally ontological." In this task of discovering, thinking, and expositing the ontological ethics, which Dussel says is actually an *ethica perennis*, there is no doubt that ethics and ontology go hand in hand. The synthesis of these two philosophical domains prompts Dussel's admiration of Aristotle and the natural law tradition:

In conclusion, the being of humanity, which has begun through its being a physically given being from birth, will be, in the course of its existence, more and more, an *eidōs proaireton*. The same human

being will go through life realizing its self effectively. That realization will not be a pure construction of its essence (as Sartre will think), but an effectuation *kata physin* (according to nature) by *discovery* (not through *invention*) of unforeseeable existential possibilities. Ethics is thus understood, not as a type of thinking posterior to ontology, but as one of the chapters of ontology; and it is normative, not through promulgation, but through elucidation: the discernment of the ethical being of humanity illuminates existential comprehension and interpretation.<sup>16</sup>

In agreement with Aristotle, Dussel describes the human being as tending toward its proper being, toward a "situating-in-one's-end" (*estar-en-su-fin*) that comes toward one (*le ad-viene*), in the sense that one does not arbitrarily invent one's *telos*, but finds it demanding ethical compliance. When discussing Thomas Aquinas, a principal proponent of natural law ethics, Dussel portrays this demand in very Heideggerian terms, stating that moral conscience is "the voice of being," showing us our "authentic possibility" and filling us with remorse when we fail to live up to it. Not to act in accordance with the end that approaches is to obnubilate one's own being, to lose one's way and the comprehension of one's authentic being. For Aquinas, the meaning of evil is "the silencing and obscuring" of being. The only rule, for Dussel and Aristotle, is that which an authentic human being would obey on the basis of a correct, comprehensive interpretation. This ontological ethics is situational, not determinable beforehand, and yet ontologically founded in being.<sup>17</sup>

The Heideggerian nature of Dussel's interpretation of natural law is evident not only from the overarching character of his project—namely, to reestablish "destructively" ontological ethics—but also from the terms he employs, such as "existential possibilities," "existential comprehension and interpretation," "the voice of being," and "authentic human being." Dussel himself acknowledges as much by claiming in his conclusion that in his approach to the first two sections of *Para una de-strucción*, on Aristotle and Aquinas, he read ancient works with new eyes and detected in them beyond any traditional interpretation a hidden ontological ethics. Ethics, he concludes, is only a final chapter of fundamental ontology.<sup>18</sup>

Armed with this Heideggerian reading of natural law, Dussel

goes to war with modernity, particularly Kant and Scheler. But before he discusses Kantian ethics, and following Max Scheler and Werner Sombart, Dussel depicts the modern world, in which Kant was immersed, as dominated by a capitalistic bourgeoisie interested no longer in contemplating the world but in dominating and transforming it in accord with the will-to-power. Symptoms of this modern worldview appear in the mathematicization of nature by the sciences and in particular in political theories premised on the belief that human beings as solitary individuals form social bonds only when they foresee that freely embraced contractual terms will procure their egoistic interests. Philosophically, such cultural strands express themselves in the representational theory of knowledge, according to which being is not discovered, but reduced to the objectivity of an object constituted by the synthetic unity of apprehension. Being is thus an "act of human subjectivity"; it is posited and even produced by representation. Following Descartes, who confused what Heidegger would later call the "human being who comprehends being" with the *ego cogito*, Kant succumbed to the same cultural blindness by denying to humanity the comprehension of the being that approaches (*del ser ad-viniente*) and by reducing the human being to being one who represents objects and is, thus, only a subject.<sup>19</sup>

Because he relies on the subject as the ultimate foundation of his ethics, Kant separates his ethics from ontology and pretends that it is independent of any ontology. For Dussel, Kant's ethics "remains in the air," appearing to be an autonomous discipline—the exact opposite of his own view that ethics is an inseparable chapter of fundamental ontology. *Homo faber* and technical humanity will thus no longer have any standard given through manifestation or discovery; rather, humanity itself will posit from itself as consciousness, as subject, its own rules. Artistic and technical production beginning from a goal or prototype freely invented by self-determined human representation replaces the hermeneutic discovery of being as approaching. Empiricist ethicists agree with Kant's founding ethics in the empire of the subject, since for them that action is moral which produces the most subjective happiness.<sup>20</sup>

Slowly the metaphysics of the subject, characteristic of the modern era, cut off from all ontology that might check its pretensions,

leads to the arbitrariness characteristic of Nietzsche's will-to-power.

This modern human being, which is an "I represent," "I constitute the meaning of objects," little by little will deteriorate into an "I order," "I organize and calculate the political, economic, or cultural event." In this "will-to-power," the human being has no measure, and nothing is able to serve as limit for its creative zeal. It is artistic *ethos*, if one understands by art a mere inventive, creative impulse in which the human being "takes from itself" (from its own subjectivity) what it places before its sight: the artistic creation by art itself. This technical, calculating ethos, made greater by science, can transform human beings into material for its unlimited creation. It is, therefore, the slavery of humanity as a machine and as an instrument of labor.<sup>21</sup>

Dussel sees Kant as the culmination of Descartes's tradition, with Hegel as its ultimate result, and Sartre, as one of its latest representatives. For Sartre, "there is being" because of human decisions, and what is fundamental is humanity, as opposed to the viewpoint of Heidegger and the natural law tradition in which "being gives itself to humanity" in such a way that what is essential is being, not humanity.<sup>22</sup>

Dussel develops at least three other criticisms of Kant in addition to the charge that he espoused an arbitrary metaphysics of the subject. First, Dussel opposes his formalism and *a priori* approach, which led Kant mistakenly to seek to found an ethics not only apart from ontology but also "totally isolated and without mixture with anything of anthropology, theology, physics, or hyperphysics." Dussel attributes this formalism to Galileo's call for a radical disregard of everyday experience of the contents of nature which are really written *in lingua matemática*. Second, relying on comments from the third part of Kant's *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* about the intelligible world behind phenomena, Dussel argues that for Kant all knowledge (*saber*, *Wissen*) ceases when it comes to the moral domain, which can be grasped only by rational faith (*fé racional vernünftigen Glaubens*). Everything in the moral domain is a matter of faith, not knowledge. This very weak rational faith stands opposed to Dussel's stronger existential, ontological comprehension of the being that approaches and makes its ethical demand. Third, in his second formulation of the cate-

gorical imperative in the *Grundlegung*, Kant tests maxims by having the agent ask if the action the agent is about to perform could become a universal law of nature. Dussel reads Kant as relapsing here into an ontological ethics much like natural law and thereby not restricting himself within the formal limits he himself specified for ethical theory. A similar relapse occurs when Kant posits an unknowable kingdom of ends analogous to the kingdom of nature. It is clear that in all these objections Dussel regards a Heideggerian-based natural law theory as superior for eliminating arbitrariness, for being more rationally comprehensible, for and honestly owning up to its ontological suppositions from the beginning. Before we critically examine both these objections to Kant and Dussel's entire anti-modern project, let us present Dussel's arguments against Heidegger in his *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, the very Heidegger who provides his bulwark against Kant in this earlier work.<sup>23</sup>

Dussel's five-volume *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana* comprises two initial volumes on his ethical foundations, a third on liberation pedagogics and erotics, a fourth on economics and politics, and a fifth on the philosophy of religion. Dussel comments repeatedly on the structure of the first six chapters of the first two volumes—the section of the ethics that will concern us here. The first chapter provides an ontological fundament (the relation between *Dasein* and Being); the second, ontic possibilities (possibilities, choice, praxis) flowing from that fundament. Dussel informs us that he wrote this part in 1970 while he was in the Heideggerian tradition. In the third chapter, he introduces a new metaphysical foundation, the face of the Other, and traces its implications through chapters four and five. Dussel credits Levinas with influencing this new aspect of his thought, but also asserts that he goes beyond Levinas. In the sixth and final chapter, Dussel recapitulates the method of his ethics, stating that although the ontological description may come first in the order of presentation, ethics is really first philosophy.<sup>24</sup>

Dussel's early antagonism toward the modern metaphysics of the subject continues throughout his five-volume ethics. In his view, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Husserl all belong to the tradition in which the subject as will does not start from the horizon of being that is discovered but, rather, transforms ethics into a doctrine of

*logos* or art in which the subject creates laws and values inventively and arbitrarily. For Dussel, on the contrary, ethics involves opening up to values and discovering possibilities founded in the previous discovery of being. At this early stage of his ethics, prior to the introduction of Levinas, Dussel still opts for Heidegger, who envisioned his own philosophy as overcoming phenomenology, which, by its focus on subjectivity and transcendental philosophy, had proved itself the final bastion of modern philosophy.<sup>25</sup>

A Heideggerian ethics such as Dussel's must begin where Heidegger himself does. Before the subject objectifies and constitutes values, the human being is already in the world as a comprehender and projector of being. For Dussel, existential comprehension as access to being makes the radical thematization of being possible, and this making explicit of what is implicit often depends on the passage to reflection effected by a crisis, an alienation, rupture, or separation that forces one to forsake the security of everyday life. Philosophy, as ontology, becomes here a matter of rupture, conversion, death to the mundane. In other places, Dussel speaks of a dialectic that opens onto being as the fundament. This phenomenological-like thematization of what is already implicitly comprehended specifies the task of ethics as highly descriptive (rather than prescriptive): "The task of ethics is justly to describe [*describir*] the ethical structure that the human being lives in its historical, common, and unreflected situation."<sup>26</sup>

This structure that human beings live is the structure of their own being, including the demands that they become what they are meant to be as these demands emerge from who they are. Dussel reiterates his position in *Para una de-strucción de la historia de la ética* that humanity does not arbitrarily construct this being and its demands, but, rather, finds being with its accompanying prescriptions imposed. Though one may through praxis become more than what one received as one's being at birth, one cannot cease to be that which one is; nor can one radically alter one's being. One's being constitutes an *a priori* of which one must inevitably take account and for which one must assume responsibility, not as the producer of being, but rather—to use Heidegger's term—as its shepherd. For Dussel, this character of being as importuning reverses the modern metaphysics of the subject whose goal and fundamental project rise willfully out of the subject it-



self. Dussel conceives being as a foundation that is not freely chosen but to which the human being opens through existential comprehension. One is not free with respect to one's fundamental project, for one already finds oneself inevitably endowed with such a project, which emanates from who one is and with which one must come to terms.<sup>27</sup>

The being of the human person is essentially non-totalized, open; that is, the human person is always able to be something different, and therefore is, in Dussel's words, a being-able-to-be (*poder-ser*). One experiences such possibilities emerging from the life-situation into which one has been born, not which one has chosen. One does not, in fact, choose to be a being faced with possibilities, but is, rather, "thrown" into such a situation. One's family, city, nation, and cultural group give one's fundamental life-project a certain direction that one can follow, reject, or modify. In making choices regarding this fundamental project and thereby realizing certain possibilities, one finds new horizons opening up, new possibilities appearing, and the *poder-ser* dynamically unfolding without reaching completion. This dynamic progression from horizon to horizon may be grasped through existential dialectical comprehension, rather than through dialectical thinking. Dussel speaks of a "moral ontological conscience" that continually calls one to take up consciously and responsibly one's fundamental project, that which "covers the sense of what we pursue every day." Often this call of conscience is necessary, since one can lose oneself in "the public impersonality of the *One* [*das Man*] and its idle rumors in which one stops listening to one's authentic self in order to listen to the one" voice of society calling for mindless conformity. Because this call to authenticity, experienced as a demand that one emerge from the comfort and security of the herd, does not appear to be a product of arbitrariness, Dussel can easily speak of it as the voice of being (*la voz del Ser*) coming from without (*ad-veniente*), as he did in *Para la de-strucción de la historia de la ética*. Here being, insofar as it is being-able-to-be, is the ontological fundament of the ought-to-be. Duty and obligation in Dussel as opposed to Kantian ethics, are founded in the ontological structure of the human being who is a being-able-to-be.<sup>28</sup>

Dussel explicitly reads Heidegger as converging with the natu-

ral law ethics of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, which, in Dussel's opinion, specifies moral commands that circumscribe and limit all the diverse projects undertaken by humanity: "The law, rules, or norms, as ex-igencies of being, will have as many modalities as the horizons of the being-able-to-,be [*poder-ser*] are dia-lectically com-prehensible: the ultimate being-able-to-,be, that of humanity as such, has been denominated natural law,"<sup>29</sup>

It is questionable, though, whether Heidegger can be so easily conflated with natural law. I would suggest that Dussel would never be satisfied with the requirements flowing from Heidegger's fundamental ontology, since those requirements are actually ethically neutral. Heidegger insists, for instance, that every *Dasein* by its ontological structure must adopt *some* fundamental project calling for compliance to it, although this project remains indeterminate and varies from person to person. Since Dussel equates *Dasein's* being with human nature as understood within the natural law tradition, it is probable that there are some fundamental projects that he would have to proscribe since they are contrary to human nature and therefore "unnatural." Thus, "Being defines us," in the sense that one's own being/nature provides indications that appear as specifically *moral* exigencies, norms, and laws; the structure of nature becomes here the source of moral obligation.

Remarkably, Dussel altered this entire philosophical framework, which had been guiding his entire ethical project from the earlier *Para la de-strucción de la historia de la ética* through the first two chapters of *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*. It seems almost as if he never returned to revise these first two chapters after his switch from Heidegger to Levinas, since many of the above affirmations are not accompanied by any foreshadowing of the coming future changes. What motives prompted this critique of Heidegger and this reversal of a project that had been building for years?

In the sixth chapter on the method of ethics, Dussel makes a telling comment, after observing that fundamental ontological thought illuminates daily praxis by making explicit the suppositions of its praxis, fulfilling, as we saw earlier, a descriptive function:

The daily existential ethics, the communication of the existential interpretive totality of the *ethos*, is yet, as Sartre says, a "complicit" thinking. It is complicit in the sense that it communicates, that it knows how to express that which everyone lives, but only to corroborate it, to affirm it. It does not have a critical method which might permit one to overcome those suppositions and from the fundamental horizon of being re-found or de-destroy what is affirmed in everyday life. In this sense it is still a naive ethics, since it presupposes this foundation implicitly without recognizing this supposition.<sup>30</sup>

In simply thematizing philosophically a prevailing *ethos*, in simply describing the ontological structures it presupposes, ontological ethics clarifies for humanity its finitude, its limits, its inevitable fall, the concealment of being effected by everyday life, and thus permits one to assume one's being more responsibly and authentically. But the function of such an ethics is purely clarificatory, such that, as Dussel concedes, "the normativity of ontology is making clearly evident [*clarividencia*], whereas the normativity of alterative or metaphysical ethics is much more." Ontological ethics lacks critical resources when faced with an immoral suppression of the Other as non-being; the examples of injustice that Dussel frequently criticizes—Hegel and the European/North American *conquistadores* of Latin America—can be seen as fulfilling equally well the norms of an ontological ethics by transcending conformist norms and responsibly taking up their past in directing themselves resolutely toward a freely embraced life-project. Heidegger's notion of authenticity entails no ethiccity, since his major concern is not morality, but the *existential conditions of the possibility of moral good and evil*. Properly speaking, there is no such thing as ontological good or evil, only a tragically immobile fundamental structure, which one might approach through a kind of *gnosis*, discovering a fundament which is "thus as it is" and nothing more.<sup>31</sup>

This later Dussel interprets Heidegger's discussion of "authenticity" as a new version of *gnosis* in which one takes account of one's own being, one's most authentic being-able-to-be (*poder-ser*), in which the ontological-existential condition of the possibility of being free for the existential, authentic possibilities of one's unique destiny resides. An authentic person, freed from the for-

getfulness of being that is typical of those too immersed in daily preoccupations, could conceivably join with other authentic persons to produce a closed society (without alterity) in which members live indifferent to the rest of people. Moral ontological conscience, for Heidegger, remains entrapped in this gnostic solipsism, since it is only a voice that interpellates one from oneself, in which the Other is reduced to the mere position of something intramundane, someone with whom one exists but who is without radical importance.<sup>32</sup>

Dussel permits no interaction between the Heideggerian existential of *Mitsein* and the Heideggerian emphasis on authenticity in a way that authenticity might be deprivatized, perhaps because he believes that, in spite of Heidegger's talk of being-with (*ser-con*), Heidegger always departs from the self, from *Dasein* (*ser-ahí*), as the center of the world. Dussel further criticizes Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein* in that the Other becomes simply that one with whom I am in my own world. It is always possible to include the Other in my world as a mediation or an instrument and to allow the Other to become distantly impersonal as *Mitsein* (the soldier for the general, the postal employee for the purchaser of stamps).<sup>33</sup>

The entire discussion of the Other undergoes a radical transformation in Dussel's passage from Heidegger to Levinas. First, the centripetal focus of Heidegger's *Mitsein*, in which the Other is comprehended as part of one's world, is radically reversed, the Other in Levinas becoming incomprehensible precisely because he or she is exterior to one's world. For Dussel, the focus is placed, not on one's own liberty, but on the liberty of the Other, which cannot be submitted to rationalization and cannot be fitted into the being-able-to-be (*poder-ser*) and the being that approaches (*ser ad-viniente*) of one's own world. Instead of reconfirming Heidegger's notion of "anticipation" (*Vorlaufen*) as *my* living toward *my* death, the ontological limit-experience, Dussel looks forward to the joy of the liberation of the Other, the miserable one. Hope no longer aims at realizing a privatized project within the Totality, but focuses on the future, full realization of the Other beyond the Totality and one's own servicial responsibility to bring about that future: "Hope is, precisely, the moment of affirmation of the future of the Other, and it is here that the first negativity, the Alter-

ity of the Other, shines forth most mysteriously. *Her* project, that of the Other, is a being-able-to-be; it is *her* being that approaches; it is *her* future."<sup>34</sup> In brief, all the Heideggerian categories now stand under a different index: they are oriented toward the Other, who takes priority over oneself.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to these external criticisms of the limitations in Heidegger's view, Dussel also undertakes an internal critique. He notes that in *Gelassenheit* the later Heidegger discovered a new philosophical attitude: "openness before the mystery," "serenity before things." Heidegger resists any effort to domesticate this "openness" by safely subsuming it under familiar categories. This later Heidegger was beset by the problem of how to think being positively, and his search for transexistential categories led him to poetic and mystical language. Heidegger's intent was to go beyond ontology as a totality, and beyond demonstrative philosophical science and dialectical or existential foundational ontology as well. Dussel argues that ultimately Heidegger was trying to describe the face-to-face, the immediacy of the experience of the Other, when he spoke of an "openness before the mystery" and "serenity before things," the surpassing of his own ontological horizon. The overcoming of modernity, of the ontology of the subject, is not achieved in Heidegger's transcendence of the human being/world dichotomy that lies at the base of subject-object polarizations, as *Being and Time* attempted to show. Rather, one must discover that the Totality of humanity and being must open to a deeper fundament—the Other, who is trans-ontological, meta-physical. The conversion to ontological thought is one important step en route to the final overcoming of modernity's metaphysics of the subject in the Other. Heidegger took that step, but his own trajectory could reach its fulfillment only in Levinas.<sup>36</sup>

Dussel has, in effect, discovered a foundation deeper (*más abismal*) than the ontological horizon: namely, the Other. This deeper foundation constitutes the ethicity of the ontological itself, such that one's fundamental project is judged as evil if it is not dedicated to the Other. The relationship with the Other now provides the starting point and wider context within which Dussel can situate Heidegger's ontology. Dussel thus places the categories of that ontology under a different index and submits them to another criterion of judgment. This turn toward Levinas also

demands a reorientation of the relationships between the two branches of philosophy, ontology and ethics. Dussel concludes that ontology offers an introduction to ethics, and this explains his placing of the first two chapters on Heidegger's fundamental ontology before his discussion of meta-physical exteriority beginning in chapter 3 and extending to chapter 6. But this ordering of presentation (*ordo diciendi*) for pedagogical purposes does not correspond to the order of importance for ethics as first philosophy, because the face-to-face is prior to all else—it is the access to first truth (*acceso a la veritas prima*).<sup>37</sup>

This transition from Heidegger to Levinas provides the framework for Dussel's collection of essays entitled *América latina: Dependencia y liberación*. The book is divided into four parts: two sets of philosophical anthropological reflections, one ontological and one beyond the ontological; and two sets of theological reflections, one based on a universalist theology and one directed toward a theology of liberation. An example of the change can be seen in the theological essays. In the first section, which is based on a universalist theology, Dussel seems concerned with helping the institutional Catholic Church to survive paganization, secularization, and social change and to expand its influence in the face of these movements. He urges the Church to support social change and to integrate itself into society without fearing secularization. This concern for the institutional preservation of the Church all but disappears in the second theological section. Here Dussel urges atheism against the European God, and speculates on what it would have been like had the sixteenth-century European colonizers in Latin America understood the indigenous people from their own world (*desde su mundo*) and loved them instead of violently imposing Western capitalism and Christianity upon them. Here the question becomes, not self-expansion, but ruthless self-critique before the face of the Other. Dussel's own philosophical transformation from ontology to ethics suggests that he gradually became a philosopher who, as Levinas might describe it, came to fear murder (of the Other) more than death (of myself).<sup>38</sup>

Dussel's attempt to fuse Heidegger with the natural law tradition founders in his ethics when he recognizes that the mere thematization of a prevailing ethos and the description of the

fundamental conditions of its possibility of good and evil can yield an account only of what is the case, not of what *ought to be* the case. All of Heidegger's categories could explain as well a fundamental project immorally intent on the destruction of the Other as one morally dedicated to the liberation of the Other. In a critique that could be elaborated (but not in this limited space) to extend to natural law, Dussel comes to see that an ethical viewpoint distinct from an ontological one is required in order to assess the morality of any fundamental project, the essential structure of which Heidegger's thought (and phenomenological eidetics) can illuminate. In a sense, Dussel completely reverses his conviction in *Para una de-estructuración de la historia de la ética* that all ethics is but a branch of fundamental ontology. He also withdraws from his earlier position that had rejected all non-ontological ethics, such as Kant's, because they seem to float "in the air." Indeed, this recognition of the distinction between the 'is' and the 'ought' has been a part of modern philosophy since Hume. It underlies Kant's fundamental distinction between speculative and practical-ethical reason, with the priority being put on practical reason, and it accounts for Levinas's efforts to found ethics on "metaphysical" rather than ontological grounds and to establish ethics as first philosophy. Though Dussel's critique of Heidegger prompts him to turn to Levinas instead of Kant, there is a sense in which this change involves embracing a fundamental tenet of modern philosophy: namely, that the 'is' and the 'ought' are radically distinct. This metamorphosis further entails abandoning a motive for his earlier rejection of the metaphysics of the subject, that is, that its ethics seems ungrounded ontologically. The problem with the ethics of the metaphysics of the subject—which Dussel continues to oppose in his later ethics—rests, not on its independence from ontology, but, as will be seen, on the arbitrariness of the subject, which, according to the earlier Dussel but apparently not the later, can be constrained only by an ethics based on some kind of ontological grounding.

It is interesting that in his search for ethics Dussel should turn to Levinas, who could also be considered as engaging in a phenomenological project parallel to Heidegger's: namely, trying to recover what has been forgotten, bringing to light the unnoticed and structural features of the intersubjective relationship. But

Levinas's eidetic description reveals not just what *is* the case, but also an *ought*, in fact, the *ought* of all *oughts*, or, as Derrida has put it, the ethics of all ethics.<sup>39</sup> That Levinas's phenomenological description yields an obligation, contrary to Heidegger's phenomenology and in apparent contradiction to a traditional dichotomy upheld throughout modern philosophy, highlights the uniqueness of Levinas's philosophy. In contradistinction to Heidegger, Levinas surpasses Heidegger, in that he attends much more thoroughly to the relationship with the Other than Heidegger's account of *Mitsein* does, with the result that Levinas sees what Heidegger and the phenomenological tradition had never seen. In regard to the is/ought divide, on the one hand, Levinas gives no rational derivation of any specific obligation from a factual situation and in this sense conforms with the modern insight. The rational derivation of obligations must occur at a philosophical level different from that of Levinas's phenomenological description of the human relations preceding rationality. Indeed, at that "higher" philosophical level, one might turn to a philosophical position such as Kant's which refuses to derive obligations from facts, especially since the critical force of Kant's ethics against prevailing factual arrangements would correspond to the critical stance Levinasian "metaphysics" adopts toward all predominant ontologies and totalities. Levinas's description that yields obligation could also be seen as evading the criticism that it commits the naturalistic fallacy since it refers to a philosophical level prior to the level at which the 'is' and the 'ought' are theoretically dissected.

But if independence from ontology does not offer sufficient grounds for rejecting Kantian ethics and modernity's metaphysics of the subject, do Dussel's other grounds withstand critique? Following Scheler's and Sombart's critique of the bourgeois underpinnings of Kant's thought, Dussel, too, raises the question of individualism. In fairness to Kant, though, it must be insisted that his demand that a moral agent test maxims to see if they are universalizable, and not based on merely subjective inclinations, testifies to his desire for universally binding norms contrary to private, individualistic approaches to ethics. Indeed, recent criticism of Kant by critical theory has furthered this very purpose of Kant's by calling for a dialogical search for universals to replace Kant's



own monological approach, uncritically wedded as it was to the philosophy of the subject begun by Descartes. The individualism of the origins of the modernist quest for rationally grounded universal norms does not undermine that quest, as critical theory has shown, but invites the development of a dialogical rationalism, an alternative that Dussel does not explore before rejecting modernity.<sup>40</sup>

Other criticisms of Kant that Dussel offers fall short of the mark. When he argues that Kant's formalism and *a priori* approach manifest Galileo's mathematicization of nature, he seems to overlook the fact that Kant's distinction between speculative and practical reason is meant to protect the domain of ethics from the reductionism and determinisms governing scientific domains. To make ethics depend on theology, anthropology, physics, or hyperphysics would leave it vulnerable to empirical contingencies and contribute to its complete relativization. Kant's effort to mark out the distinctive domain of ethics and the *a priori* structures of rationality—far from falling prey to Galileo's worldview—actually constitutes a powerful critique of it. Dussel's equation by *vernünftigen Glaubens* with *fe racional* through his translation (might not *fe* be better translated as *creyencia*?) fails to grasp the positive importance Kant attributes to practical reason, and reduces it to irrationalism in comparison with an omnipotent science—contrary to Kant's intentions. Finally, Dussel's equation of the "universal law of nature" in Kant with "natural law" confuses modernity's understanding of scientific law (stressing universalizability without metaphysical connotations) with medieval metaphysical structures. The "kingdom of ends" refers not to metaphysics but to transcendental structures presupposed before one ever takes up metaphysical questions.

Dussel's remaining, and perhaps deepest, objection to the modern philosophy of the subject is the arbitrary character of that subject. The first thing to note is that Kant would absolutely agree that the subject is arbitrary. Kant shows no illusions about the corruptness of human motivation when he admits that, because we can never, even by the strictest examination, completely plumb the depths of the secret incentives of action, it can never be proved that a single person has ever acted from pure motives. But this lack of experimental evidence that anyone can act from

moral motives does not undermine the ethical demands of practical reason, which commands regardless of whatever is factually or experimentally the case. Practical reason commands that one strive to be a purely sincere friend, even though one has never experienced such a friend and even though one mistrusts that one's own and others' protestations that they are sincere could merely serve to cover over secret, uglier motives. Levinas would agree for he holds that morality begins when freedom, instead of being justified by itself, feels itself to be arbitrary and violent.<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps, though, the question for Dussel is whether the subject is so arbitrary that it would not be able even to articulate the universal norms that Kant hoped practical reason could deliver. Dussel is well aware that totalized systems invent "moral" (as opposed to "ethical") principles that serve simply to protect themselves. He notes, for instance (and many similar instances will be seen later), how the Argentinian military in the 1980s had elevated obedience to superiors' orders to an absolute value, as a support for the "universal order that founds the juridical itself"—all this simply to vindicate the corrupt government's legitimacy. Dussel's justifiable suspicion of moral universals protecting and concealing power relationships leads him to Nietzsche. As he comments, no one in modernity has discovered and explained thematically the fundamentals of modernity as Nietzsche has. In Dussel's view, Nietzsche saw the dominant virtues of the totality as hiding their true nature as nothing more than sublimated vices. Ideology, which Nietzsche grasped so clearly, is the ontic-conceptual formulation that justifies the established order and covers its reality. Marx, too realized that acts of domination become fixed as custom, promulgated as law, and respected as if they belonged to nature itself, so thoroughly does the totality cover its domination. The ethical totality, ethically evil as it is, hides itself from itself by creating its own quiet moral consciousness. Violence is rationalized; sacralized, and "naturalized."

Violence is consecrated like a virtue. The man does violence to the woman by closing her within the house and yet venerates her as "master of the home" (mystifying her alienation); the father does violence to his son by obliging his obedience to repressive authority and educating him in his own image ("the Same"); and brother does violence to brother by demanding that the brother love the

State under pain of death for the sake of security and the ideal of the fatherland ( the ancient fatherland now under the power of the brother who dominates).<sup>42</sup>

Sensitive to these dangers of universalization and mistrustful of objective, abstract, and universal conceptualization processes more suitable for entities than for human beings, Dussel insists that the Other is concretely unknowable in the proximity of the face-to-face. Before the Other, the universalizing intelligence finds itself perplexed and impelled to surrender its arms. The veneration of the Other's liberty is founded, not in reason or *logos*, in intuition or comprehension, but in the confidence that affirms the Other as prior, anterior to oneself. This mistrust of false universalization and rationality so often at the service of reigning powers no doubt prompts Dussel's repeated willingness to be classified as postmodern.<sup>43</sup>

But his very distinction between "ethics" and "morality"—that is, between a level of practical demands valid for every human being in every historical situation and a concrete level that remains delimited within a certain historical system (for example, Inca or capitalist European)—indicates at least a hope that authentic universals, beyond those pressed into service for oppression, are discoverable. The Other of Levinas and Dussel can be seen as aiding negatively in the continual criticism of false universalization and ideology detection and positively in the discovery of authentic universals. As Jürgen Habermas has remarked, so much of postmodern critique from Nietzsche to Foucault could be seen as an effort to refine the project of modernity, rendering it more self-critical and ultimately more rational, but, unfortunately, this critique is seen as ultimately destructive of any possibility of rationality and universalization.<sup>44</sup>

We have seen that in fashioning his own ethics Enrique Dussel sought out Martin Heidegger's fundamental ontology as a corrective to the modern metaphysics of the subject, which formed a single unity from Descartes's *cogito* to Nietzsche's will-to-power. But when Dussel discovered that he could neither derive norms from Heidegger's basically descriptive ontology nor sustain his synthesis of a Heideggerian ontological ethics with the natural law, he thus found himself gravitating toward Levinas's ethics,

which gave him the objectivity and capacity for critique against the modern metaphysics of subject. Yet we have examined Dussel's reasons for rejecting Kantian ethics and basically found them wanting.

In opting for Levinas, Dussel has chosen to work at the lived experience prior to theory—a level parallel to Husserl's notion of the life-world, if our pinpointing of the level of Levinas's philosophy's in the first chapter is accurate. In a reflection he offers on moral theology, Dussel himself seems to admit that his work begins at that level.

It is not possible to begin by defining—as moral theologies do—the morality of an action by its transcendental relation to a norm or law. On the contrary, the absolute morality of the action indicates its transcendental relation to the building of the kingdom in the historical processes of the liberation of actual material peoples "who are hungry." It is only subsequently, within this framework, that it becomes possible to situate all the problems of abstract moral subjectivity (within which all moral theologies start).<sup>45</sup>

Yet, the question arises whether it is possible also to work at the transcendental level, as Kant did, and to develop a theory of ethics there, correlative to and in constant tension with the level of lived experience that Levinas and Dussel describe so well. The possibility of a two-level ethical theory, at lived and transcendental levels, will occupy us in the last chapter. Through such a possible ethical theory, I will attempt to show how Dussel's philosophy of liberation can respond to and accommodate Karl-Otto Apel's transcendental pragmatics without losing the constant source of renewal and critique that Levinas's Other affords to any philosophy seeking to be fully rational.

## NOTES

1. Enrique Dussel, "Liberación latinoamericana y filosofía," in *Praxis latinoamericana y filosofía de la liberación* (Bogotá: Editorial Nueva América, 1983), pp. 9-12. Enrique Dussel, "Supuestos histórico-filosóficos de la teología desde América Latina," in *La nueva frontera de la teología en América Latina*, ed. Gustavo Gutiérrez, Rosino Gibelli, and Raul Vidales (Salamanca: Ediciones Sigueme, 1977), pp. 176-77. En-

rique Dussel, *Hipótesis para una historia de la Iglesia en América Latina* (Barcelona: Editorial Estela, 1967), pp. 157, 160, 171. Enrique Dussel, "Hacia una historia de la Iglesia latinoamericana," *Stromata* [Argentina], 21 (1965), 501, 503. Enrique Dussel, "Hernando Arias de Ugarte, obispo de Quito y Arzobispo de Santa fe de Bogotá, Charcas, y Lima (1561-1638)," *XXXVI Congreso Internacional de Americanistas*, Seville 1966, p. 178. Enrique Dussel, "Situación problemática de la antropología, filosófica," *Nordeste (Resistencia)*, 7 (1965), 115-21, 126, 129. It should be noted that Dussel's rather traditional views here are actually liberal relative to conservative "integrist" who would have had Christianity seal itself up against the outer world.

2. Enrique Dussel, *El dualismo en la antropología de la cristiandad: Desde el origen del cristianismo hasta antes de la conquista de América* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Guadalupe, 1974), pp. 14-15. Enrique Dussel, *El humanismo semita: Estructuras intencionales radicales del pueblo de Israel y otros semitas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1969), pp. xi,

121. Enrique Dussel, *El humanismo helénico* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1975), pp. ix, xii, 115.

3. *El humanismo semita*, pp. 41-42, 45, 100, 110-11, 117-18, 120, 163.

4. *El humanismo helénico*, pp. xviii, xix, xxiv, 3, 17-18, 32. Enrique

Dussel, *Cultura latinoamericana e historia de la Iglesia* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Facultad de Teología de la Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina, 1968), p. 65.

5. *El dualismo en la antropología de la cristiandad*, pp. 17, 24, 62, 103-104, 160, 198, 231, 244.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 62, 147, 231, 259, 263, 266, 269, 270.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 26, 93, 104, 282-83, 287. Enrique Dussel and Antonio Blanch, "Fisionomía actual del catolicismo latinoamericano: Considerando su génesis histórica," *Fe cristiana y cambio social en América Latina* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sigueme, 1973), p. 345; Enrique Dussel,

*Ethics and the Theology of Liberation*, trans. Bernard F. McWilliam, C.S.S.R. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978), p. 134; Enrique Dussel, *Para una*

*ética de la liberación latinoamericana*. II. *Eticidad y moralidad* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Argentina Editores, 1973), pp. 120-21; Dussel points out features of Semitic culture before introducing Levinas's ethical theory.

8. Enrique Dussel, *América Latina: Dependencia y liberación* (Buenos Aires: Fernando García Cambiero, 1973), p. 146. *El dualismo en la antropología de la cristiandad*, p. 24. *El humanismo semita*, pp. 57, 59, 63, 167-70.

Enrique Dussel and María Mercedes Esandi, *El catolicismo popular en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Bonum, 1970), p. 27. Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations, NCCB; Adult Education Department, USCC;

- Interfaith Affairs Department, ADL, "Within Context: Guidelines for the Catechetical Presentation of Jews and Judaism in the New Testament [1986]," in *In Our Time: The Flowering of Jewish-Catholic Dialogue*, ed. Eugene J. Fisher and Leon Klenicki (New York and Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1990), pp. 62, 69. Eugene J. Fisher, "A New Maturity in Christian-Jewish Dialogue: An Annotated Bibliography, 1975-1989," *In Our Time*, p. 127; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury, 1974), pp. 141-44, 233-39.
9. *El humanismo helénico*, p. 91.
  10. *Ibid.*, pp. xxii, 51, 91. *América Latina: Dependencia y liberación*, pp. 28-29, 32, 34, 56. *Cultura latinoamericana e historia de la Iglesia*, p. 45.
  11. *El humanismo helénico*, p. xxii. Enrique Dussel, "Sobre el sentido de la traducción," *Actos del Primer Congreso de Estudios Clásicos* (Mendoza, Argentina: Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, 1972), p. 134. Dussel and Esandi, *El catolicismo popular en la Argentina*, pp. 19, 49, 164. *El dualismo en la antropología de la cristiandad*, pp. 26, 62, 147, 231, 259.
  12. "Liberación latinoamericana y filosofía," p. 13. Enrique Dussel, *Método para una filosofía de la liberación: Superación analéctica de la dialéctica hegeliana*, 3rd ed. (Guadalajara: Editorial Universidad de Guadalajara, 1991), pp. 9, 13.
  13. Enrique Dussel, *La dialéctica hegeliana: Supuestos y superación o del inicio originario del filosofar* (Mendoza, Argentina: Editorial Ser y Tiempo, 1972), pp. 154-55. *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, 2:171.
  14. *La dialéctica hegeliana*, pp. 107, 111, 122. Enrique Dussel, *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*. I. *Acceso al punto de partida de la ética* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Argentina Editores, 1973), pp. 115, 118; *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, 2:69, 73, 76, 132.
  15. *Método para una filosofía de la liberación*, pp. 181-85, 186.
  16. Enrique Dussel, *Para una de-strucción de la historia de la ética* (Mendoza, Argentina: Editores Ser y Tiempo, 1970), p. 200; see also pp. 164, 168, 191.
  17. *Ibid.*, pp. 195-96, 199, 223, 224.
  18. *Ibid.*, p. 311.
  19. *Ibid.*, pp. 232-38, 247, 293. *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, p. 68.
  20. *Para una de-strucción de la historia de la ética*, pp. 236, 238, 242, 247, 249.
  21. *Ibid.*, p. 280; cf. pp. 275-80.
  22. *Ibid.*, pp. 312-18.
  23. *Ibid.*, pp. 236, 252, 255, 260-61, 264, 267, 268, 270-74.
  24. *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, 2:129, 145, 162-63, 187.

25. Ibid., 1:35-37, 73-74; 2:133, 141-42.
26. Ibid., 1:38, 56; 2:135-38, 143-45, 151, 182.
27. Ibid., 1:45, 77.
28. Ibid., 1:47, 48, 54, 55, 56, 58-60, 63-64. *Para la de-strucción de la historia de la ética*, pp. 195, 223.
29. *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, 1:90-91. For other convergences between Aquinas and Heidegger (for example, between *Sorge* and intention, *boulesis* and *poder-ser*), see pp. 169 and 171.
30. Ibid., 2:190.
31. Ibid., 2:14-15, 19-20, 179, 184, 190-92.
32. Ibid., 2:21, 34, 56.
33. Ibid., 1:123. Enrique Dussel, "Del descubrimiento al desencubrimiento: Hacia un desagravio histórico," *Misiones Extranjeras*, 86 (1985), 107.
34. *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, 2:119.
35. Ibid., 1:123.
36. Ibid., 1:98-99, 119, 124-25; 2:153-55, 163, 213. Enrique Dussel, *Método para una filosofía de la liberación: Superación analéctica de la dialéctica hegeliana*, 2nd ed. (Salamanca: Ediciones Sigueme, 1974), p. 269. *La dialéctica hegeliana*, pp. 146-47.
37. *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, 2:26, 30-32, 187.
38. *América Latina: Dependencia y liberación*, pp. 171-72, 200-202.
39. Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," pp. 35-39.
40. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action. I. Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1984), pp. 390-91. Karl-Otto Apel, *Transformation der Philosophie. II. Das Apriori der Kommunikationsgemeinschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973), pp. 414, 417; English translation: *Towards a Transformation of Philosophy*, trans. Glyn Adey and David Frisby (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), pp. 269, 272. Karl-Otto Apel, *Diskurs und Verantwortung: Das Problem des Übergangs zur postkonventionellen Moral* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1990), pp. 98-99, 113, 166. Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1978), p. 326.
41. Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1981), pp. 19-20. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 84.
42. *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, 2:79.
43. Ibid., 2:35, 76-79, 81, 85, 93, 97, 102, 103, 173. Enrique Dussel, "Existen 'Dos Morales' en Argentina? Límites éticos de una orden oficial superior," *Iglesias*, 2 (1985), 14-15. *América latina: Dependencia y liberación*, p. 125.

44. Enrique Dussel, "Puede legitimarse 'una' ética ante la pluralidad histórica de las morales?" in *Praxis latinoamericana y filosofía de la liberación* (Bogotá: Editorial Nueva América, 1983), p. 119. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1987), pp. 97, 103, 120, 125, 127, 283, 292, 302, 341.
45. Enrique Dussel, "An Ethics of Liberation: Fundamental Hypotheses," *Concilium*, 192 (1984), 60.