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PHILOSOPHY
OF
LIBERATION

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*To the peoples of
Nicaragua,
El Salvador,
and Guatemala*

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2.1.1.3 It is a matter, then, of beginning with somebody who is encountered beyond the world of ontology or Being, anterior to the world and its horizon. From proximity—beyond physical closeness, anterior to the truth of Being—we come to the “light of day” when we appear, when our mother gives us birth. To give birth (maternal act) is to appear (filial act).

2.1.2 Approaching the Other

2.1.2.1 I am not speaking here about going toward a table, a chair, or a thing—to approach something, to get close to it so as to take it, buy it, sell it, or use it. Nearness to things I shall denominate *proxemic*. * I am speaking here of approaching a person, of shortening the distance between someone who can accept or reject us, shake our hand or injure us, kiss or kill us. To approach in justice is always a risk because it is to shorten the distance toward a distinct freedom.

2.1.2.2 To draw near is to arise from beyond the origin of the world. It is an “archaic” act (if *arche* is the origin anterior to all other origins). It is anteriority anterior to all other anteriority. If the system or the world is anterior to the things that dwell in it, if responsibility for the world of the other is anterior to responsibility for one’s own world, then to approach the immediacy of proximity is the anteriority of all other anteriority.

2.1.2.3 To move closer toward proximity is anterior to signifier and signified. It is to go in search of the origin of the signified-signifier relationship, the very origin of signification. It is to advance oneself; it is to present oneself anterior to presence; it is a signification signifying itself; it is to advance as the origin of semiotics (4.2.6).

2.1.2.4 To shorten the distance is praxis. It is acting toward the other as other; it is an action that is directed toward proximity. Praxis is this and nothing more: an approach to proximity. To direct oneself to things involves physical closeness, the proxemic. But touching or feeling something is very different from caressing or kissing someone. Comprehension of Being, neuter, is very dif-

* Abraham Moles (*Sociodynamique de la culture*, Moutan, 1971) has used this term, as I use it here, in the sense of “physical, existential closeness.”

FROM PHENOMENOLOGY TO LIBERATION

Phenomenology, as its name implies, concerns itself with what appears and how it appears from the horizon of the world, the system, Being. Epiphany, on the other hand, is the revelation of the oppressed, the poor—never a mere appearance or a mere phenomenon, but always maintaining a metaphysical exteriority. Those who reveal themselves transcend the system and continually question the given. Epiphany is the beginning of real liberation.

2.1 PROXIMITY

2.1.1 *Status Questionis*

2.1.1.1 The Greek or Indo-European and modern European experience exalted the person-to-nature relationship (nature as *physis* or *natura*) because it understood Being as light or cognition (*cogito*). In both cases the world and politics were defined in terms of the seen, the dominated, the controlled.

2.1.1.2 If, on the contrary, we give a privileged place to spatiality (proximity or farness, center or periphery) and to the political (dominator and dominated; 3.1) and to person-to-person relationship, which was the original Semitic experience of reality as freedom, we shall be able to begin a philosophical discourse from another origin.

ferent from embracing in love the desirous reality of another person.

2.1.2.5 To approach is to advance toward the originating origin, toward the very archeology of metaphysical discourse (which is philosophical but still more historical and political).

2.1.3 Originating Proximity

2.1.3.1 A person is not born in nature. A person is not born from hostile elements, nor from stars or plants. A person is born from the maternal uterus and welcomed by maternal arms. One person is born from another and is given security by her. If we were viviparous, one could say that the experience of physical closeness, the person-to-nature experience, would be the primal experience. The fish must defend itself alone in the infinite hostile waters that surround it. A person, on the other hand, is born from someone, not from something; the newborn is fed by someone, not by something.

2.1.3.2 The first proximity, the immediacy before all other immediacy, is nursing. Mouth and nipple form a proximity that feeds, warms, and protects. The hands of the child that touch the mother do not yet play or work. The little feet have not walked or gone deeply into farness. The mouth that sucks has not yet launched speeches, insults, or benedictions; it has not bitten someone it hates or kissed a beloved. Nursing is the immediacy anterior to all farness, to all culture, to all work (4.3); it is proximity anterior to economics (4.4); it is already the sexual (3.2), the pedagogical (3.3), and the political (3.1). The proximity of nursing is nevertheless eschatological: it projects itself into the future as does the ancestral past; it calls like an end *and* a beginning. And it is unique no matter how often repeated.

2.1.4 Historical Proximity

2.1.4.1 The mother-child immediacy is lived within a culture-people framework. Birth is always within a symbolic totality, which nurtures the newborn in the signs of its history. A person is born into and grows up in a family, or other social group, and in a society in a historical epoch within which one's world of sense will unfold. Before the world, then, there was al-

ready proximity, the face-to-face that welcomed us with a cordial smile or harmed us with the rigidity, harshness, or violence of traditional rules—the ethos of the people.

2.1.4.2 Anterior to the world is the people; anterior to Being is the reality of the other; anterior to all other anteriority is the responsibility of the weak one, the one who as yet is not—a responsibility of those who procreate new persons (parents) or new systems (heroes and liberating teachers).

2.1.4.3 Whether in the face-to-face of the child-mother relationship in nursing, or the sex-to-sex of the man-woman relationship in love, or the shoulder-to-shoulder of colleagues in an assembly where the fate of a country is decided, or the word-hearing of the teacher-pupil relationship in the apprenticeship of living, proximity is the word that best expresses the essence of persons, their first (archeological) and last (eschatological) fullness, an experience whose remembrance mobilizes persons in their inmost recesses and their most ambitious, most magnificent undertakings.

2.1.5 Proximity, Timeless Synchrony

2.1.5.1 In face-to-face relationship, in the historical immediacy par excellence, reciprocity is risked. A handshake, a gentle caress, a hard struggle, comradesly collaboration, friendly dialogue, a passionate kiss—all are the originative reciprocity of proximity. There is no distance yet; the anterior farness has not been shortened; one lives the absolute instant where time is only a distant context.

2.1.5.2 Economic, technological, semiotic history is diachronic. Time passes while one waits for future proximity, inspired by the remembrance of past proximity. But in the immediacy of proximity itself, time becomes synchronic: my time is your time, our time; our time is your time, the time of fellowship in justice and festival. The synchrony of those who live proximity becomes timeless. In the instant of proximity, distinct and separate times converge and dissolve in the joy of being together. The timelessness of the instant of proximity is, nevertheless, the point of reference for history; it is where ages and epochs begin and end.

2.1.5.3 The timelessness of proximity overcomes abstract

temporality and opens the door that had been closed to spatiality. The nonspatiality of proximity will also originate the feeling of distance and farness. Proximity, the nonspatial timelessness of the instant, is anterior to all thematization by consciousness and to all economic activity.

2.1.5.4 Nonspatial timelessness is a saying without the said; it is the concreteness of someone who advances without needing the significant universal. Proximity is the root of praxis and the point of departure for all responsibility for the other. Only those who have lived proximity in justice and joy accept responsibility for the poor, desire for them the proximity of equals.

2.1.6 From Archeological to Eschatological Proximity

2.1.6.1 The "happy" proximities—the erotic proximity of the kiss and coitus, the political proximity of collegiality, the pedagogy of nursing—are essentially equivocal. The kiss of lovers can be auto-erotic totalization, a hedonistic utilization of the other. The assembly of colleagues can close itself off as a group of dominating sectarians and assassins. Nursing itself can be experienced by a mother in compensation for the absence of orgasm with a castrating, macho husband. Proximity becomes equivocal.

2.1.6.2 Metaphysical proximity materializes unequivocally, truly, before the face of the oppressed, the poor, the one who—outside all systems—cries out for justice, arouses a desire for freedom, and appeals to responsibility. Proximity is unmitigable where it is established with the one who needs help because of weakness, misery, and need.

2.1.6.3 The first, or archeological, proximity anticipates the last, or eschatological, proximity, situated beyond all aspiration, like the always unfulfilled desire or the realized infinite. It is a desire for proximity without farness, without economics, without contradictions, without war. It is the utopia that keeps us in suspense.

2.1.6.4 Both the first and the final proximity are always a festival. A festival indicates a metaphysical category of fulfilled proximity, like joy, if joy is understood as the realization of the real, the satisfaction due to confluence of desire with the desired.

2.1.6.5 Proximity is a festival: a political celebration of colleagues, companions, and fellow citizens who express their joy in demonstrations after elections won for the people or for the fall of a dominating enemy, or the banquet of a labor union that has succeeded in a strike. It is the pedagogical festival of rebellious youth and their university reform in Córdoba, Argentina, in 1918, or the celebration of the young in their dances and music where they express their distinctiveness, originality, creativity. It is the sexual celebration in solitude and darkness of the caress, the kiss, the rhythm of orgasm. It is the festival, banquet, liturgy, and *diakonia* of the community in jubilation, the originative and final reference.

2.1.6.6 Proximity is security and warmth, the immediacy of flesh or of wine; it forgets afflictions and absorbs with pleasure what one deserves. Proximity is a feast—of liberation, not of exploitation, injustice, or desecration. It is a feast of those who are equal, free, and just, of those who yearn for an order of proximity without counterrevolutions or relapses.

2.1.6.7 Archeologically timeless and eschatologically utopian, proximity is the most essential reality of a person, the beginning of the philosophical discourse of liberation, and metaphysics in its strict sense—real, reflective, and carefully thought out.

2.2 TOTALITY

2.2.1 Status Questionis

2.2.1.1 Proximity, the face-to-face of person with person, always leaves room for farness. The baby is put in the cradle; the lover must leave for work; the teacher and pupil must part to pursue their future lives; citizens leave the political assembly to take up again their work in the political economy; even worship points to service. The detour into farness makes future proximity possible.

2.2.1.2 When they leave proximity, persons do of course approach beings, things, objects. Sense-things, * beings, confront

*I use the expression "sense-thing" (*cosa-sentido*) as in Xavier Zubiri's *On Essence* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1981).

in an almost indefinite multiplicity. Nevertheless, they are moments that are never isolated; they are always within a system, part of a totality that includes, embraces, and unifies them organically. There is not one being (*ens*; pl., *entia*) here and another there, fortuitously. They have a place in an order; they have a function in a whole; they are placed-with, put together (*sys-tema* in Greek, "system"). The level of beings is the proxemic or ontic; the level of Being (*esse*) is that of totality—whether worldly, natural, economic, artistic, and the like—the ontological. Interpretive, evaluative, productive intelligence concerns itself with beings (4.1–4); dialectical intelligence concerns itself with totality (*esse*) (2.2.5); historical, analectical (5.3), or liberating intelligence, or practico-poietic intelligence (5.5), concern themselves with exteriority (2.4).

2.2.2 World, Totality

2.2.2.1 Sense-things, beings, do not surround us chaotically. They form part of a world. When we speak of world, we refer to the daily horizon within which we live—the world of my home, my neighborhood, my country, my working class. World is thus an instrumental totality of sense. It is not merely an external aggregate of beings but the totality of the beings that are meaningful to me. It is not a question of the cosmos as a totality of real things (2.2.3.1) but of a totality of things with sense. The world, we can say, slowly unfolds from the moment of our conception. It is not the first experience, as ontology believes. Proximity is first, anteriority anterior to any world. But proximity immediately gives way to farness. From that moment the world begins to be populated with beings, the first stimuli of cold, heat, hunger—and moving shadows, which surround the one who has just seen the light of day. But very soon the other—mother, father, brother, sister—begins to give meaning to each stimulus and slowly, one after the other, they begin to establish the first circle, the world of a day-old child. It is already a world, and yet how narrow its horizon!

2.2.2.2 Every world is a totality. Totality indicates the horizon of horizons. It is not strange that a Kant or a Wittgenstein could say that the world can be neither an object nor a fact. It is

evidently the horizon within which all beings (which can be objects or facts) find their meaning. The world is the fundamental totality; it is the totality of totalities. This notion frightens mathematical analysts, for they are accustomed to formalize beings. Totality corresponds to dialectical reason (2.2.8 and 5.2) and not to ontic understanding or to analytic or synthetic reason. From now on, when I refer to totality without further qualification, I am speaking of the world.

2.2.3 World, Cosmos

2.2.3.1 I shall use the word "cosmos," of Greek origin, to designate the totality of real things, whether or not any human being knows them—the totality of heavenly bodies, life, and reality insofar as they are something constituted "of themselves," by their own essence (3.4.6 and 4.1.2.1).

2.2.3.2 On the other hand, "world," *mundus* in Latin, designates the totality of sense included in one's fundamental horizon (2.2.5). World is the totality of beings (real, possible, or imaginary) that exist because of their relationship to humankind; they are not only real "of themselves." The wood of the table is "of itself," from within itself; it is a substantive reality. The table, on the other hand, is a moment of the world. Without a world there is no table; there is only wood. Without humankind there is no world, only a cosmos. Evidently there was a cosmos before humankind, for the human species emerged only a few million years ago (4.1.5), but only with the appearance of humankind in the cosmos did the world appear as a cosmic reality. The world is thus the system of all systems that have humankind as their foundation. Economic, political, sociological, mathematical, psychological, and other systems are only subsystems of a system of systems: the world.

2.2.3.3 This does not mean that the world is a part of the cosmos but that some real things in the cosmos have in the world the function of sense-things. There are, nevertheless, beings that are not cosmic but only worldly (all imaginary beings, for example). This is why we say *there are* things in the cosmos (in reality), or that beings *are* (*sein*) in the world.

2.2.3.4 Idealism considers the world to be the only reality;

naive realism or equally naive materialism consider the cosmos as the only reality. Against idealism, I claim the cosmos is a partially real anteriority; against realism, I claim the world is a real constitutive (4.1.5.2) of human nature, and thus even imaginary beings have a meaning (4.1.2.1).

2.2.4 World, Time, Space

2.2.4.1 The everyday world, the obvious one that we live in each day, is a totality in time and space. As a temporal totality, it is a retention of the past, a launching site for the fundamental undertakings projected into the future, and the stage on which we live out the present possibilities that depend on that future. As a spatial totality, the world always situates the "I," the person, the subject, as its center; from this center beings are organized spatially from the closest ones with the most meaning to the ones furthest away with the least meaning—peripheral beings.

2.2.4.2 European philosophy has given almost exclusive preponderance to temporality. No wonder it has now given a privileged place to the fundamentality of the future in its emphasis on *Entwurf* (*projecto**) and the *Prinziphoffnung* ("hope principle"). This philosophy must be understood well, and its snares must be discovered. If persons actually are what they are because of their ontological *projecto*, because of what they try to achieve as individuals or as groups, nevertheless the *projecto* is the fundamental possibility of "the same." What you "already" are is what, in short, is attempted. The *projecto*, no matter how utopian its desired future, is only the actualization of what is in potentiality in the present world. To give prominence to future temporality is to give a privileged place to what we are already.

2.2.4.3 The world, on the other hand, in spatiality or the totality of beings in a certain proximity or farness (from the other in the first proximity), gives a privileged place to the past as the

*The Spanish word *projecto* is retained in this translation because the English word "project" does not do justice to the author's meaning. He uses it in the Heideggerian sense (*Entwurf*): "self-projection into the future." German philosophy emphasizes its influence on our present self; we are what we are because of what we strive (actively hope) to become or achieve.—Ed.

"place" where "I" was born. The "where-I-was-born" is the predetermination of all other determinations. To be born among pygmies in Africa or in a Fifth Avenue neighborhood in New York City is the same thing—as far as being born is concerned. But it is to be born into another world; it is to be born spatially into a world that predetermines—radically, though not absolutely—the orientation of one's future *projecto*. The one born among the pygmies will strive to become a great hunter of animals; the one born in New York will strive to become a great entrepreneur (a hunter of persons).

2.2.4.4 To say "world" is to enunciate a *projecto* that is temporally future. It is also to affirm a past within a spatiality that, because it is human, signifies the center of the world. But that world can impinge on other worlds. This is why philosophy of liberation will fix its attention on the past of the world and on spatiality to detect the origin (archeology) of dependence, weakness, suffering, apparent incapacity, and backwardness.

2.2.5 Foundation, Identity, and Difference

2.2.5.1 What functionalists (who observe and explain only parts) or those who claim that only what is mathematically formalized is scientific (the ontic level) generally do not understand what beings form part of a totality—the everyday world, the point of departure and foundation of every other partial system. It is said that the everyday world is the foundation because it is from everydayness that any partial object of consideration (for example, that of whatever science) can be abstracted or precised. Foundation (*arche*, *ratio*, *Grund*) states a position with respect to what is grounded. The first foundation is that about which nothing can be said, because it is the origin of all saying. The foundation of the world is what prominent thinkers have called Being. For example, the Being of economic reality as such—Marx tells us in his *Grundrisse*—is work as such, "laboriousness." The being of macho sexuality, as Freud teaches, is the phallus as such, "phallicity," the *imago patris*. The foundation or Being of a system is what explains the totality. The foundation of the world is the striving that is projected into the future—a striving that remains anchored in the past, or implanted by the conditioning spa-

tiality of the same foundation (just as the ground is under the foundation of a house).

2.2.5.2 The foundation is identical to itself. It is where all that populates the world is nevertheless unified, one. Foundation and identity are one and the same thing. Being is identical with itself. "Being is" and it is *thus* as obviously and primarily as it is.

2.2.5.3 Beings, things, possibilities, on the other hand, are multiple, numerous, different. The origin of the difference between beings is the determination of the Being of the System, of the world. The difference between beings shows, as regards the foundation, dependence; as regards other beings, negativity. One is *not* the other; they are different. The totality of beings or different parts is explained or founded in the identity of the Being of the whole. Being, identity, and foundation are the whence of emergent beings, difference, and dependence. A being (*ens*) is dependent because it is founded on the Being (*esse*) of the system.

2.2.6 Metasystem, Whole and Parts

2.2.6.1 The world is a totality of structured parts, be they homogeneous or heterogeneous, which maintain a similarity in some aspect. The parts of the world are organically functional; they are like subsystems or component systems. The totality of the world is an existential metasystem, composed of infinite variables. It is nonformalizable, nonformalizable: it is itself the foundation of all formalization. Those who study systems often forget the fundamental system, the world.

2.2.6.2 One does not know the full meaning of any being or part if it is not discovered within the totality of sense, within the world, the everyday system. Every world must be defined as a totality of totalities, a system of systems (and thus a system that includes the economic, the political, the sexual, the pedagogical, the religious, etc.), which explains the partial, singular behavior of each member, subject, or particular "I." The ontological method (5.2) consists exactly in knowing how to refer beings or parts to the world that establishes them, the subsystems to the system that is the originating identity from which there issue, as by internal differentiation, the multiple beings or parts that constitute it. They are moments of historico-social formations.

2.2.6.3 All ontologies know how to explain the parts by the whole. In this sense it can be said that if by the "manner of knowing them" beings first present themselves (the parts before the whole), by their "mode of Being" or by their foundation it is the world that comes first and the sense-things next (the whole before the parts). The process that begins with the parts and directs itself to the whole is ontological; what goes from the whole to the parts of the system is apodictic, demonstrative, scientific (5.1).

2.2.7 Comprehension and Interpretation

2.2.7.1 We comprehend or embrace the world as a totality. This totality is present in every concrete human act. To discover that this sense-thing is a table is possible because the one who discovers it can relate it to other things and interpret it as a table. Without the *a priori* whole, it is impossible to make sense out of anything. Those who have amnesia do not have their past world effectively present as a frame of interpretation.

2.2.7.2 Dealing with the world as a totality I call comprehension. Comprehension is the act by which persons grasp something, not as a whole (prehension or simple apprehension) but rather along with (com-prehend) other objects until they compose a whole world. The act of comprehending or embracing the world as a whole is not a speculative moment (the *Idea* of Hegel) or a conceptual moment (the *conceptus* or *Begriff* as an act of apprehension of an object for Kant, the *sense* for Husserl, or the *eidós* for Aristotle). The comprehending act is preconceptual in that it is the foundation of conceptualization. But it is not an allogical or affective act. To comprehend is to embrace and present to the world a horizon of interpretation.

2.2.7.3 Comprehension is fundamental and at the same time quotidian. It is the light that illumines and thus is not itself seen; it is the end toward which all other things are chosen and thus cannot choose itself; it is the foundation of all words and thus ineffable. It is not, however, that before which one must remain silent, even though one can speak about it only in a roundabout way, indirectly, and formally (not about its content). One can speak directly of a past comprehension only, of one that has turned into a being—the comprehension of the Greeks or the

medieval—but not of actual comprehension, our comprehension.

2.2.7.4 Interpretation, on the other hand, constitutes sense (2.3.5). But between comprehension of the world as a totality and the interpretation of sense there is derived comprehension or founding interpretation. To know that the material of the table is wood is not the same thing as interpreting the table as a table. Discovering the reality of a thing as a moment of the world is derived comprehension or founding interpretation, the first moment of the concept but still not full interpretation. This derived comprehension (dependent on the comprehension of the world) or founding interpretation (related to all cosmic things in the world) is what discovers in phenomena or things within the world their reality—their essential anteriority to that which is of itself, their essence preceding their meaning, their cosmic constitution, which appears concomitantly with their meaning. The thing is of itself insofar as it is real; it manifests itself in the world insofar as it is a phenomenon or being. The first grasping of the real appearance of a thing or phenomenon is accomplished by derived comprehension or founding interpretation. The real constitution of a thing is not its worldly manifestation. Its real constitution is not interpreted meaning sense.

2.2.8 Everyday Dialectic

2.2.8.1 If dialectic is the passage (*dia-*) from one horizon or frontier to another horizon or ambit (*-logos*), the world is continually comprehended as a dialectical process with a mobility that continually exceeds its limits; it flows without cessation. The totality of the world is never fixed; it displaces itself historically or spatially. Inasmuch as we incorporate new beings into our world every day, the horizon of our world displaces itself in order to comprehend and embrace them. From childhood to old age, we go from one moment to another, from one experience to another, from one frontier to another. Unlike animals, whose frontier is fixed by the instincts of the species or by a thin overlay of conditioned reflexes or even by a certain rudimentary intelligence, we—on the contrary—can expand our horizon into the past (not just by memory but also by recorded and studied tradition), into the

future (by turning to new pursuits), and in spatiality (dealing with new spaces).

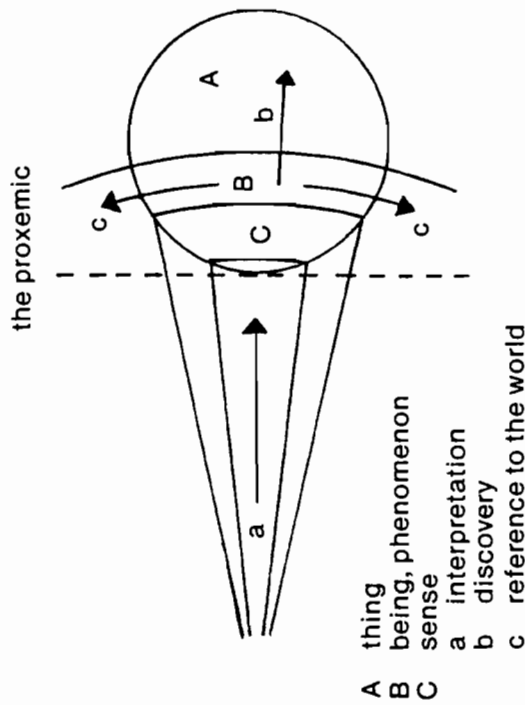
2.2.8.2 The movement of totality as such is dialectical; the movement of beings within the world is ontic—movement that can be formulated, as when it is said that velocity indicates a relationship between traversed space and determinate time—that is, a quality of movements. Movement in physics is intramundane, ontic; the movement of totality, of the world as such, is dialectical, ontological.

2.3 MEDIATION

2.3.1 Status Questionis

2.3.1.1 The totality of the world as the horizon within which we live—the system—puts together the beings, the objects, the things that surround us. The beings or the objects are the possibilities of our existence; they are the means to the end that the foundation of the world constitutes. Mediations are what we seize upon in order to reach the final objective of our activity. Proxim-

DIAGRAM 2



ity is face-to-face immediacy with the other; totality is the entirety of beings as such, as a system; mediations make it possible to draw close to immediacy and remain in it; they constitute totality in its functional parts.

2.3.1.2 The far side of proximity in the world is always a nearness to things, mediations, and objects. I call this nearness to things *proxemic*, "physical closeness" (person-to-beings), which is not *proximity* (person-to-person). Beings can appear as mediations or as everyday possibilities for a *proyecto* (2.3) forming part of the world (2.2), or as natural beings, material for work (4.1), signs or signifiers (4.2), artifacts (4.3), or merchandise (4.4). Here we are concerned only with mediations, which are not always real things. (2.3.7.1).

2.3.2 Originative Farness

2.3.2.1 When humankind appeared, when it became present as the species *homo* (4.1.5), in environs inhabited by other primates, it faced a natural, inhospitable, hostile medium. It was surrounded by mere things, beings that had not yet been incorporated into a world as mediations, possibilities, or artifacts. They had some sense, the sense they could have had in a purely animal medium. They provoked automatic stimuli linked with instinctive motives modified by some learned (conditioned) reflexes.

2.3.2.2 Little by little things began to take the shape of beings at hand, mediations that were taking the form of artifacts, tools (*pragmata*). The virgin earth, the *terra mater* (in Latin) or *pacha mama* (in Aymara, the language of the Incas), was one day transformed by agriculture. The culture-thing* is no longer a mere thing. It is now in a world; it is a being; it is in my world. The environs were then populated by sense-things: the rock gave way to the weapon, wood to fire, the cave to the dwelling place.

2.3.2.3 The face-to-face relationship, proximity, the essence of praxis, leads us to the theme of the proxemic or the essence of *poiesis* (4.3), of the work that a person accomplishes in nature whereby a mere thing gains a sense and value; it is transformed in mediation.

*I use the expression "culture-thing" in parallel with "sense-thing" (see 2.2.1.2.p. 21, note).

2.3.2.4 For all this to be possible, space, distance, the far side of proximity, is necessary. Farness establishes the possibility of possibilities, of mediations. The farness of proximity (person-to-person) gives way to proxemic nearness (person-to-nature).

2.3.3 Phenomenon

2.3.3.1 Something is approaching from farness; something is advancing toward proxemic closeness, to the vicinity of touching, feeling, hearing, tasting. What appears is a phenomenon. Here it does not matter whether it is pure appearance or whether the appearance is that of what the thing really is. What matters is that it appears and manifests itself. That is, the thing is not only really constituted (the thing as such, in the order of its own constitution (2.3.8.1), but it relates to an observer who uses it as a mediation.

2.3.3.2 That is to say, placed in the world, a person confronts beings that appear. But beings, which turn into objects when they are considered in themselves, are distinguished from the environment only when they are put to some use. A person turns to something or something appears or is a phenomenon only when a person intends to do something with it. Sheer "things there," real, cosmic, which are "of themselves," turn into worldly beings, mediations, insofar as they are useful to someone for something. The "for" of mediation is the essence of possibility, which is only a means that permits someone to attain something proposed or imagined.

2.3.3.3 Taking this into account, we shall have to consider as posterior or secondary the description of a being as an object. I shall call "object" that which stands before (*ob-*), which has been flung out (*-jected*) for the theoretical consideration of the *ego cogito*, as when one asks, What is this? Obviously, before one asks explicitly about something it is already there, in one's world. The spoken theoretical question is secondary. The object is posterior to the phenomenon.

2.3.3.4 The phenomenon, that which appears, is like a cut-out of a being; all the rest of it is left behind as though in its background, its context. The only thing that comes forward and therefore gains our attention or is constituted by us as sense is

whatever in some way is an actual mediation in the continuous process of daily life.

2.3.4 Critical Everydayness

2.3.4.1 The everyday way of living surrounded by products is not, as the modern thinking of the *cogito* proposes, a theoretical life (*bios theoretikos*, as the Greeks said) where persons explicitly ask themselves what things are. The first way of confronting products in daily life is to use them within the dynamics of the practical, existential life of every day (*bios praktikos*). Thus the daily world of beings, products, and objects (objects now not in the sense of theoretical consideration but as something used in our workaday world) surrounds us daily from our rising in the morning (leaving the oneiric behind), during all our waking hours, until night (which again seizes us in the logic of the desires of the nonconscious, which is neither practical nor theoretical life).

2.3.4.2 The daily way of facing the world is not the critical way. Here we are concerned with the critical way only as opposed to everydayness.

2.3.4.3 The farness, the distance that leaves proximity behind, is lived within attitudes, interpretations, sense-things, and products we do not notice because we have always been close to them since we "saw the light of day." This not noticing is like an unseen prison. We see the world through the bars of our cells, and we believe they are the bars of cells in which others are imprisoned. Our life, because it is "natural" and obvious, is lived in an acritical naivety with very great consequences. Our way of facing beings is conditioned by this everydayness that is our own being, our second nature, our ethos, our cultural and historical character.

2.3.4.4 This is the first naivety. Later there will be other types of naivety correlative to other types of criticism. Thus everyday persons in Western civilization consider themselves critics of the naivety of the primitive or uncivilized person. Westerners do not view the sun as a god, the way the Aztecs or Egyptians viewed it or the way Eskimos and animistic peoples of Africa or Asia still view it. Nevertheless, Westerners naively take for

granted that their culture, political power, and military domination are justified, and that they spread democracy and liberty on earth. This mentality is part of a naive everydayness that manipulates whole populations.

2.3.4.5 Scientists, for their part, believe they are not naive, because they can discover what the person on the street does not know. But scientists of the center, as we shall see later, forget that the very principles of their science contain cultural elements (scientifically indemonstrable) and that all their endeavors serve the nonscientific *proyecto* and historical culture of the system wherein they live. Scientism, the current ideology of the center, is a subtle ideology, which, although less naive than the everydayness of the *hoi polloi*, is more dangerous inasmuch as it fabricates the instruments necessary for the power of the center to be exercised over the periphery. At the proper moment, we shall have to question the naivety (with respect to the system as a totality) of scientists and discover a critique that is more critical (with regard to the everydayness of the general populace) than is the scientific one (5.7).

2.3.5 Interpretation of Sense

2.3.5.1 Things appear in the world as phenomena. A phenomenon is a being with a certain sense. The sense is our interpretation of a phenomenon insofar as it has been integrated into a practical or productive process as a mediation.

2.3.5.2 The world is comprehended (2.2.7.2); a phenomenon or being is interpreted as to its meaning. How is this sense or meaning constituted?

2.3.5.3 Persons discover and constitute sense. They do so insofar as they understand what was concealed. They conceive; there is a concept. Mental conception of a being entails novelty; it is the discovery of what was not known before. The being was there already, before, *a priori*. It is not newly constituted; it is only discovered. Because of this, its meaning has an aspect of having been there before, but concealed. Interpretation, in some way, discovers what was previously concealed: the real (arrow *b* in diagram 2).

2.3.5.4 Nevertheless, it is not pure discovery of something

already given. It is at the same time intentional constitution of meaning. Discovery of sense refers to the reality of the being as a thing; the constitution of meaning refers to the worldliness of the being or its reference to the rest of the beings in the world (arrow *c* in diagram 2). I discover water because I am thirsty. That is, I discover it as a mediation because its real constitution is such that it can satisfy what I feel as thirst. I do nevertheless constitute its sense as a being that slakes thirst, as a beverage. Water also has other possible senses; and other beings (e.g., orange juice) have a similar constitution.

2.3.5.5 If, for example, I am thirsty and I discover in looking around (circumspection) is a looking in, an inspective vision like that of an inspector) a juicy fruit (an orange), I discover likewise, as in the case of water, its real capacity to satiate my thirst. The conceptual interpretation would be identical to that of water: I constitute it as a beverage. But I can discover water in another way. For example, there is a fire. In my circumspect looking around, I discover water; I consider its capacity to put out the fire. I constitute it as a mediation for avoiding the dangers of a conflagration. Thus I interpreted it in another sense.

2.3.5.6 A phenomenon or being (water) can be comprehended in its real constitution (2.2.7.4)—water as a liquid—and interpreted in different senses (as a beverage and as something to put out a fire). If it is discovered in its real constitution, the sense is related to reality (alcohol, though it is liquid, is not correctly interpreted as something to put out fire); if it is constituted in its reference to the world, the sense is related to the totality of the world (and in this acceptance, without persons or world there is no sense whatsoever even though there be real things).

2.3.5.7 To repeat. There is no phenomenon without constitution of sense. The wood of the table can appear to me as firewood, because when the weather is extremely cold it is more important not to freeze than to have a table. The wood-firewood appears as a phenomenon, a sense-thing, just as wood-table daily appears as a sense-thing. The sense, on the other hand, is never a merely theoretical or abstract consideration. It is always quotidian and existential; it is the way in which something makes up the “for” of an action, be it practical or productive.

2.3.6 Perception and the Percept

2.3.6.1 Phenomena, beings, when they are the apparition of the real, can fall under the testing capacity of the senses (in the way that a meal is sampled or tested by the taste buds). Bodily organs (eyes, ears, etc.) permit the establishing of proxemic and ontic relationships. Nevertheless, sensations (of a tree, for example) are not each of them totally independent units (the brown of the wood, the fresh smell, its exterior form, the wrinkles on its branches, etc.), nor are they purely sensible.

2.3.6.2 Merleau-Ponty clearly showed that sensations are integrated in a field that includes sensations as indivisible parts: perception. Perception is the phenomenologico-sensible totality constituted by indivisible unities of eidetic sensations. Just as there is conception of sense in interpretation, so there is percept of the immediate field of what is seized by sensibility. Conception and percept (sensible image) are given simultaneously because interpretation is an act of sentient intelligence and perception is an act of intelligent sensibility. Just as the human person cannot be divided into body and soul (person is one indivisible substantiality; 4.1.5), so eidetic content is not to be separated from sensible content.

2.3.6.3 Beyond interpreted sense as minimal conceptual unity, or perceptive sensation as minimal sensible unity, and before the world as totality (2.2.2), the immediate field of perception is found. It is not proximity; it is the area of the proxemic (physical closeness) in its strictest sense (the ontic level that effectively confronts us as the actual field of mediation: the presence of the present in its presentness or intellectual sensitive actuality).

2.3.7 Estimation of Value

2.3.7.1 Everything that is discovered and constituted in its sense can be estimated for its value. Possibility or mediation has value insofar as it is possibility or mediation. To be of value is the very fact by which possibility or mediation mediates, a *proyecto* is implemented. Possibility as possibility is the value that one attributes to a phenomenon or being.

2.3.7.2 In the middle of the desert, in extreme thirst, water acquires an immense value. It is the first and necessary mediation to quench thirst and subsist. The pen or pencil acquires value at the moment one wants to express an idea and not forget it. To have sense is not the same thing as to have value.

2.3.7.3 Sense and value are had because they make reference to the world, the system, projected undertakings, and the totality of references that unfold from humankind and not just from the real constitution of the thing itself. That the rose grows and exudes its perfume is due to its real constitution, "of itself," from within itself. That the rose is the queen of flowers, that when roses are red the lover gives them to the beloved, is worldly; it is *have* sense and value. Sense and value are superadded to the thing by the fact of its being integrated into a human process.

2.3.7.4 Something can have sense and not value. Something has sense when it keeps a possible relationship with an interpretive totality. Something has value when it keeps an actual relationship with a practical or productive totality (actual operative mediation for a project). Access to sense is intellectual and existential; access to value is estimative and operative. Interpretation considers the real constitutive or eidetic structure of the sense-thing; esteem appreciates the real or symbolic function of the sense-thing. All that has value has sense even though it can be that something that is devoid of sense for some is highly esteemed by others. But something can have sense and nevertheless not have value. For a pacifist, waging war has a meaning, but it is without value. That is, the eidetic structure of war can be discovered and interpreted, but it is not an actual operative mediation for the one who criticizes it.

2.3.7.5 At any rate, neither sense nor value is the foundation of the world or of ethical, economic, or esthetic systems. Value is mediation as such, and all mediation directs itself to a *projecto* that establishes it. Axiologies are ideologies when it is forgotten that the hierarchy of values is never absolute, but is relative to the historical system it serves as mediation. It is equally ideological to think that the sense of beings is absolute, forgetting that it is one's own world that establishes and gives sense to everything that surrounds one.

2.3.8 Things, Beings, and Senses

2.3.8.1 I must now clarify certain notions about the proxemic or the essentially ontic (what refers to beings or phenomena). When I speak of a thing (*res*) I refer to a substantive reality whose constitutive notes are closed or really independent as a whole. For example, a dog is a thing. It has an essence that enables it to perform actions proper to dogs, those of its concrete individuality. If I cut off its foot, I can no longer say that the foot is a thing, because when it is no longer alive it becomes evident that it is only part of something else, the dog. A thing is real "of itself," from within itself, a moment of the cosmos (2.2.3.1 and 3.4.6)—which is not the world (2.2.3.2) or only nature (4.1.2.2).

2.3.8.2 On the contrary, being (*on*, *ens*, that which is indicated that a thing is being referred to insofar as it is incorporated into the world as mediation or possibility, even though it is only a being of reason (*ens rationis*)—a centaur, for example. Being can be differentiated from phenomenon. One says "being" in reference to the eidetic content, keeping in mind the reality connoted (if there is any), the essence. One says "phenomenon" in reference to the fact of appearing in the world, with respect to the significant totality. Every being is a phenomenon and vice versa; but not every real thing is a being. If the thing is a being, it is a sense-thing. The centaur is a mere being whereas the wood-table is a being and a sense-thing. Sense-thing can be such in many ways. A wooden poster is a sign (4.2), an artifact (4.3), merchandise (4.4). A thing can be a purely natural being (4.1) as differentiated from a cultural being (4.2.4) or from a logical being (5.1.6).

A thing, insofar as it is a sense or a being (*ens*), always has a meaning in the world. Notice that reality is constitutive of a thing; we say it has an essence (3.4.7.3). A phenomenon, on the other hand, has a general content (the derived comprehension or the conceptualization of some essential or accidental notes; 2.2.7.4), which is determined in its eidetic or conceptual structure (this structure is not to be confused with the essential notes constitutive of the thing) by the interpretation of its meaning, sense. Essence expresses relation to real constitution and therefore founds interpretation as discovery; the eidetic structure has relation to the worldly totality or the order of phenomenal mani-

festation. Sense, then, is the eidetic structure of a being, which is interpreted conceptually on the quotidian existential or the theoretical critical level with respect to the world as the totality of the phenomenon.

2.3.8.4 Reality, entity, and phenomenality indicate different levels. Reality belongs to things insofar as they are really constituted "of themselves" (*ex se*). Entity (*entitas*) belongs to beings insofar as they are discovered in relation to their essential content (if they are not beings of reason, in which case their entity would be minimal because it refers to a purely eidetic structure). Phenomenality belongs equally to beings but insofar as they are constituted in their eidetic relational structure or worldly sense.

2.3.9 Situated Freedom

2.3.9.1 In reality persons are not surrounded by things or by independent, autonomous beings. The things and beings that constitute one's surroundings are mediations and possibilities. When persons work, they do so for a *proyecto*. That *proyecto* determines the possibilities or mediations for its realization. That is, we are, as it were, besieged by decisions to be made, ways that open and close.

2.3.9.2 Since classical times this openness to the duty of continually determining oneself for this or that possibility, this being sometimes disconcerted and not knowing which to choose, this power itself to choose and not to choose, this capacity or dominion over mediations has been called *freedom*.

2.3.9.3 Persons realize themselves by chosen determinations. The choice of one possibility makes others impossible. By decision after decision persons construct their own biography, their own history. Freedom is possible because no mediation completely fulfills the human *proyecto*. Indifferent or neutral to possibilities presented, a person finally selects one that is not the whole or plenary one but the possible, concrete, prudent one.

2.3.9.4 To choose freely does not mean being able to determine mediations absolutely from an absolute indetermination. This would be infinite, radical freedom. Nor is a person totally determined or conditioned; that would be simply an animal stim-

ulated by unrestrainable, instinctive motives. Persons are free and at the same time historically determined—that is, conditioning is not absolute, but relative or partial. The peaks of the reality of human freedom always reveal spontaneity. We are masters of our own decisions and choices.

2.3.9.5 Mediation is possibility for freedom. A thing is a being because, interpreted in its sense and esteemed for its value, it is finally chosen or rejected in view of a *proyecto*. Without freedom there is neither person nor being nor sense, because there would simply be no world; there would be only the cosmos, things, stimuli, and animals.

2.4 EXTERIORITY

2.4.1 Status Questionis

2.4.1.1 Here we approach the most important category for philosophy of liberation. Only now do we have the interpretive instrumentation that allows us to begin a philosophical discourse from the periphery, from the oppressed. Up to this point, our discourse has been something of a summary of the already known. From now on a discourse begins that, when it is established on its corresponding political level with the necessary mediations that are lacking in philosophies of the center that use the same categories, we shall be able to say is a new discourse in the history of world philosophy. This is not to claim superior intelligence; it derives from the simple fact that, when we turn to reality as exteriority, by the mere fact that the exteriority we explore is a *new historical reality*, the philosophy that issues from it—if it is authentic—cannot help being equally new. It is the newness of our peoples that must be reflected as newness in philosophy, and not vice versa.

2.4.1.2 The spatial metaphor of exteriority can lead to more than one equivocation. We could also denominate the "beyond," *vis-à-vis* the horizon of Being of the system, an *interior transcendentality*, a "beyond" *vis-à-vis* the subject in the system, *vis-à-vis* one's work, one's desire, one's possibilities, one's *pro-*

yecto. Exteriority and interior transcendentality have the same significance in this philosophical discourse.

2.4.2 The Being That Is Not Merely Being

2.4.2.1 Among the beings or things that appear in the world, which manifest themselves in the system along with instruments, there is one absolutely *sui generis*, distinct from all the rest. Along with mountains, valleys, and rivers, along with tables, hammers, and machines, there enter daily into our environment the faces of other persons. Far from proximity, in farness, their presence comes back to remind us of previous proximities. Generally, however, the face of the other person figures in our environment as just one more sense-thing. The taxi driver seems like a mechanical prolongation of the automobile, the housekeeper as one more instance of cleaning and cooking, the teacher as an ornament of the school, the soldier as just another member of the army. It seems difficult to detach other persons from the system in which they are inserted. The person is just another being, a part of a system.

Nevertheless, there are moments when persons appear to us and reveal themselves to us in all their exteriority, as when the taxi driver (who turns out to be a friend) says to us, "How goes it?" The unexpected question arising from a horizon of beings shocks us. Someone appears in the world! Much more so when someone says, "Please help me!" Or "I'm hungry. Give me something to eat!"

2.4.2.2 The face of a person is revealed as other when it is extracted from our system of instruments as exterior, as someone, as a freedom that questions, provokes, and appears, as one who resists instrumental totalization. A person is not something, but someone.

2.4.2.3 Exteriority, which does not have the same meaning as it did for Hegel (because for the great German philosopher exteriority is definitely interior to the totality of Being or, finally, of the Idea), is meant to signify the ambit whence other persons, as free and not conditioned by one's own system and not as part of one's own world, reveal themselves.

2.4.3 Being, Reality, and Distinction

2.4.3.1 If Being (*esse*) is the foundation of all systems, and of the system of systems that is the daily world, there is also reality beyond Being, just as there is also cosmos beyond the world. Being is like the horizon toward which and from which the phenomena of the world manifest themselves. It is the ontological foundation and identity; it is the light that illuminates the totality of the world. But beyond Being, transcending it, there is still reality. If reality is the order of the cosmic constitutions of things that are resistant, subsistent, "of themselves," it is evident that there is reality beyond Being. How many cosmoses have never been incorporated into any world! Did not the reality of the primate come millions of years ago and then later the appearance of the world, of Being?

2.4.3.2 Among the real things that retain exteriority to Being, one is found that has a history, a biography, freedom: another person (4.1.5.5). Persons beyond Being, beyond the comprehension of the world, beyond the sense constituted by the interpretations supplied by one's own system, transcending the determinations and conditions of one's totality, can reveal themselves as in opposition to us, can rebuke us. Even in the extreme humiliation of prison, in the cold of the cell and the total pain of torture, even when the body is nothing but a quivering wound, a person can still cry: "I am another; I am a person; I have rights."

2.4.3.3 If reality is the substantive and independent constitution of a thing—its essence—then a person is properly real, more real than the cosmic totality of the heavenly bodies and living beings that together form the physico-astronomical and botanico-zoological substantivity without real exteriority of one to another. Only the free person, each person, is the self-substantive, autonomous, other totality: metaphysical exteriority, the most real reality beyond the world and Being.

2.4.3.4 All of this acquires practical reality when someone says, "I'm hungry!" The hunger of the oppressed, of the poor, is an effect of an unjust system. As such, it has no place in the system. First of all because it is negativity, "lack of" (4.3.3), non-

being in the world, but fundamentally because to satiate structurally the hunger of the oppressed is to change radically the system. Hunger as such is the practical exteriority of, or the most subversive internal transcendentality against, the system: the total and insurmountable "beyond."

2.4.3.5 The logic of totality (5.2) pursues its discourse from identity (or foundation) to difference. It is a logic of nature (4.1) or of totalitarianism (3.1.5-6). It is the logic of the alienation of exteriority (2.5.6) or of the reification of alterity,* of the other person. The logic of exteriority or of alterity (5.3), on the contrary, establishes its discourse on the abyss of the freedom of the other (2.6). This logic has another origin, other principles. It is historical and nonevolutionary; it is analectical (5.3) and not merely dialectical (5.2) or scientific-factual (5.1), although it includes both.

2.4.3.6 A person—each person, all persons—originates in someone's uterus. But a person is not a mere numerical difference within the identity of the species or of the originating identity of the mother. Persons are born distinct from their origin, forever. The constitution of the genetic chain in the fertilized human ovum is distinct from every other genetic process. The father and mother contribute equally. Nevertheless, the new being, the child, will establish its own world, a unique achievement; the newborn will be free (4.1.5). The essential note of freedom makes a person distinct from the moment of birth. The child is not differentiated from the mother the way a graft can be differentiated from a tree before being planted so that a new tree can take roots and grow (the new tree is differentiated only from the identity of life). Persons, on the other hand, forever separate, never essentially united, are other from the moment they are real; their alterity will keep growing until their last day; their death is historical, not merely biological.

2.4.3.7 Distinction-convergence is opposed to identity-difference. Persons, distinct in their real constitution as a contingent or free thing, converge, reunite, approach other persons.

*The term "alterity" (compare "totality," "exteriority") has been established by Emmanuel Levinas (*Totality and Infinity* [Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969]; *The Theory of Intuition* [Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1973]; *Existence and Existents* [Hingham, Mass.: Kluwer Academic Publ., 1978]; *Otherwise Than Being* [Kluwer, 1981]), and other authors.

Convergence will be goodness, justice, fulfillment, service, liberation. Beyond Being, persons converge in extrasystemic future reality.

2.4.4 Provocation of the Other

2.4.4.1 The other is the precise notion by which I shall denominate exteriority as such—historical, not only cosmic or physico-living, exteriority (4.1). The other is the alterity of all possible systems, beyond "the same," which totality always is. "Being is, and non-Being is," or can be, the other, we could say, contrary to Parmenides and classical ontology.

2.4.4.2 Others reveal themselves as others (3.4.8.1) in all the acuteness of their exteriority when they burst in upon us as something extremely distinct, as nonhabitual, nonroutine, as the extraordinary, the enormous ("apart from the norm")—the poor, the oppressed. They are the ones who, by the side of the road, outside the system, show their suffering, challenging faces: "We're hungry! We have the right to eat!" That right, outside the system, is not a right that is justified by the *projecto* or the laws of the system. Their absolute right, because they are sacred and free, is founded in their own exteriority, in the real constitution of their human dignity. When the poor advance in the world, they shake the very pillars of the system that exploits them. The face (*primo* in Hebrew, *prosopon* in Greek), the person, is provocation and judgment by its mere self-revelation.

2.4.4.3 The others, the poor in their extreme exteriority to the system, provoke justice—that is, they call (*-voke*) from ahead (*pro-*). For the unjust system, "the other is hell" (if by hell is understood the end of the system, chaos). On the contrary, for the just person, the other is the utopian order without contradictions; the other is the beginning of the advent of a new world that is distinct and more just. The mere presence of the oppressed as such is the end of the oppressor's "good conscience." The one who has the ability to discover where the other, the poor, is to be found will be able, from the poor, to diagnose the pathology of the state.

2.4.4.4 The other is a person as an imploring, revealing, and provoking face.

2.4.5 Revelation of a People

2.4.5.1 The face of the other, primarily as poor and oppressed, reveals a people before it reveals an individual person. The brown face of the Latin American *mesizo* wrinkled with the furrows of centuries of work, the ebony face of the African slave, the olive face of the Hindu, the yellow face of the Chinese coolie is the irruption of the history of a people before it is the biography of Tupac Amaru, Lumumba, Nehru, and Mao Tse-tung. To describe the experience of proximity as individual experience, or the metaphysical experience of face-to-face as lived experience between two persons, is simply to forget that personal mystery is always risked in the exteriority of the popular history of a people (3.1.3-4). The individualization of this collective personal experience is a European deformation derived from the bourgeois revolution. Each face, unique, inscrutable mystery of decisions not yet made, is the face of a sex, a generation, a social class, a nation, a cultural group, a historical epoch.

2.4.5.2 The other person—metaphysical alterity, exteriority on the anthropological level—is primarily social and historically popular. This is why the faces that are taken care of with beauty aids and rejuvenated by face-lifts and cosmetics of the oligarchs, aristocrats, and bourgeoisies—be they of the center or of the periphery—are faces that, like mummies, want to escape the contingencies of time. The eternalization of the present, in terror of the future, is the obsession of every dominating group. On the contrary, the withered face of the Bedouin of the desert, the furrowed and darkened skin of the peasant, the poisoned lungs of the miner whose face never sees the sun—these “apparently” ugly faces, almost horrible for the system, are the primary (4.4.9), the future, the popular beauty.

2.4.6 Freedom, Non-Being, Nothing

2.4.6.1 The other is the exteriority of all totality because the other is free. I do not mean freedom here as just a certain possibility of choosing between diverse mediations depending on a given project. Freedom here is the unconditioning of the other with respect to the world in which I am always the center. Others

as other—that is, as centers of their own worlds (though they be dominated or oppressed)—can point out what is impossible, unexpected, unpublicized in *my* world, in the system. All persons, insofar as they are free, and insofar as they take part in a system, are functional, professional, or members of a certain structure—they are not other. Others are other insofar as they are exterior to the totality (and in this same sense they are suppliant human faces—persons). Without exteriority there is neither freedom nor personhood. The fact of freedom, of free choice, is discovered only in the unconditioning of the other's behavior.

Robinson Crusoe, had he been born alone, would not have been free but only spontaneous: moreover, he would not have been a human being, a person, because persons recognize and develop themselves as persons in proximity, never in solipsistic farness. Crusoe would have been an animal whose rationality would have remained purely potential. He would not have had a world, simply because no one would have given sense to beings.

2.4.6.2 As an unconditioned, exterior other, the other is non-Being. Beyond the horizon of Being, the other is the barbarian (who for Aristotle is not human), or in a macho society the woman (who for Freud is castrated), or the orphan who is nothing and has to learn everything (like Rousseau's Emile). Insofar as the other is not, in terms of alterity and totality, it can be said that the other is nothing. But new systems come from nothingness—new in the metaphysical sense, radical. Berdyaev states that the Greeks thought about the problem of change, but they never even suspected the question of *newness*.

2.4.6.3 From the other as other, freedom unconditioned inasmuch as its exteriority is despised as nothing (as uncultured, illiterate, barbarian), the history of the new arises. Thus every future system resulting from a subversive revolution in the metaphysical sense is analogical, somewhat similar to the anterior totality, but really distinct (5.3).

2.4.7 Reason and Faith

2.4.7.1 Reason (in the sense of Hegelian *Vernunft* or even Heideggerian *Verstehen*) is the human speculative capacity by which one sees or discovers what beings are and what the world,

the system, or the totality consists of. It is the capacity to comprehend foundation and difference. It is the contemplative capacity that illuminates the area controlled by political and military power. It would seem that beyond reason there is the irrational. (Frequently the irrational passes for the supremely rational: Hegel's *Idea*, Nietzsche's "superman," Hitler's racism, the Manifest Destiny or American Way of Life of the United States, and numerous irrational myths that founded supremely analytical, mathematical, computerized, and "reasonable" enterprises.) Nevertheless, beyond reason, beyond the irrational that passes for rational, and more than the irrational, there is the exteriority of the other who cannot be comprehended completely (2.2.7), or understood perfectly by any world or system.

2.4.7.2 Beyond the horizon embraced by reason, but still ontological reason, the reality of the other resists. When the others speak from within themselves—but not by the force of torture that makes its victims confess in despair—they reveal their exteriority, their alterity which reason can never scrutinize from within itself. The other cannot be interpreted, analyzed, or studied from within the system, as can be done with stones, vegetables, or animals. We can investigate a cockroach starting from what its reality shows us, or we can ignore it. It would never occur to us to ask it "Who are you? How are you?" On the contrary, we ask for the name, the biography, and the opinions only of the other. But persons can lie. Hypocrisy is a sign of their exteriority. They can jealously guard the mystery of their secret. They can die without revealing it.

2.4.7.3 What reason can never embrace—the mystery of the other as other—only faith can penetrate. In proximity, face to face, someone can hear the voice of the other and welcome it with holy respect. "I love you!" says the beloved to the lover. What can one do in the face of such a simple and almost daily revelation? Do I believe what is said? Do I distrust? Is she deceiving me? Is she making fun of me? To tell her I also love her is a risk; in such a risk I can lose my reputation, my honor, and even my life. What do I do . . . ?

2.4.7.4 Faith means to accept the word of the other because the other reveals it—with no other motivation. What someone reveals to me has no criterion of certitude other than the very

reality of the other as other. I do not accept what the other reveals to me because of the evidence of its content or because it is true. It is accepted because behind the other's word is found the very reality of someone, immediate, open and exposed in a metaphysical openness of which the ontological openness to the world is a distant imitation (4.2.6). To reveal is to expose oneself to traumatism, like the prisoner who opens his shirt to the firing squad. To believe is to fling oneself into empty space because the other has stated that at the bottom of the abyss there is water and there is no danger. This is metaphysical relationship *par excellence*—proximity, revelation, and faith. It is supreme, historical, and human rationality.

2.4.8 Interior Transcendentality

2.4.8.1 The category of exteriority, as said above, is misunderstood when what is "beyond" the ontological horizon of the system is thought of in an absolute, total way without any participation in the interior of the system. To avoid this misunderstanding, exteriority must be understood as transcendentality interior to totality. No person as such is absolutely and only part of a system. All, including even those who are members of an oppressing class, have a transcendentality with respect to the system, interior to it.

2.4.8.2 The fact, for example, that the Nicaraguan Sandinista National Liberation Front did not even request the extradition of the dictator Somoza manifests this internal transcendentality. In the first place, the oppressor is an oppressor not in the ultimate secrecy of private life but in social functionality, in activity regulated by the institutional totality. If the social structure as a whole is modified, many who were wielding power in the system would not be converted to mere citizens without instruments of oppression. Magnanimous justice or pardon for their deeds is possible because the person is never identified with the social function without possibility of separation. Members of the dominant bourgeois class are themselves victims of capital, and the overcoming of capitalism will free them from the slavery exercised over the truly human level of their existence. This internal transcendentality is the

exteriority of the other as other, not as part of the system.

2.4.8.3 The increasing structurally-related unemployment in the present crisis of capitalism is another example of interior transcendental or hope of exteriority. To have the ability and desire to work and to be unable to do so is to be made a subject "beyond" the system. The work that is possible but not used, and the time lost by the system that cannot engage it, is internal negativity; it is active exigency for transcendence in the interior of a system that is unjust and repressive with regard to productive labor straining toward the future.

2.4.9 Ontology and Metaphysics

2.4.9.1 Ontology moves in the light of the world under the control of reason. Philosophy as ontology means to reflect on oneself, to speculate on or look at oneself as in a mirror (*speculum*); it is to look for identity as the origin of what one already is.

2.4.9.2 Metaphysics, in the meaning I give it in this present discourse on philosophy of liberation, is knowing how to ponder the world from the exteriority of the other. It is to know how to think about not just the negativity of a being, which gives way to ontic novelty when it goes back to the origin of the world, the foundation, Being; it is to know how to think about Being from the exteriority that judges it—just as the periphery of the world judges today the center that pursues the philosophy of domination (be it ontological or functionalist, structuralist, analytical, or semiological), just as the women who liberate themselves from domination judge "phallocracy" or macho ideology, just as the youth of the world judge the aging, gerontocratic, castrating generations. Metaphysics is to know how to think about the system, the world, from within ontological negativity (because the negativity of an Adorno, for example, always ends up affirming Being, the ontological, even though it be as a future utopia). I, on the other hand, deny that same Being and its utopia not in the name of a future utopia but of a present utopia: the peripheral peoples, the oppressed classes, the woman, the child.

2.4.9.3 The ontological tension between a being (*ens*) and Being (*esse*) has been called preoccupation (*boulesis* for Aristotle or *Sorge* for Heidegger). The metaphysical tension of a moment

in the system thrown toward exteriority, toward the other as other, I shall call the "pulsion"—desire—of alterity. This pulsion, desire, and love for real justice is like a hurricane that destroys walls, makes a breach in the ontological horizon, and turns itself inside out into exteriority. Metaphysics takes a risk not only in its fidelity to its vocation but also in the pulsion that mobilizes, transforms, and subverts reality itself.

2.5 ALIENATION

2.5.1 Status Questionis

2.5.1.1 Our discourse up to this point will have delighted dominators because it is peaceful, and dissatisfied the oppressed because it is not conflictive. Pedagogically it is necessary to go from the source to the mountain rivulets, and then on to the torrential rivers that finally flow into the wild ocean. The discourse of philosophy of liberation will only now begin to show, feature by feature, its true physiognomy.

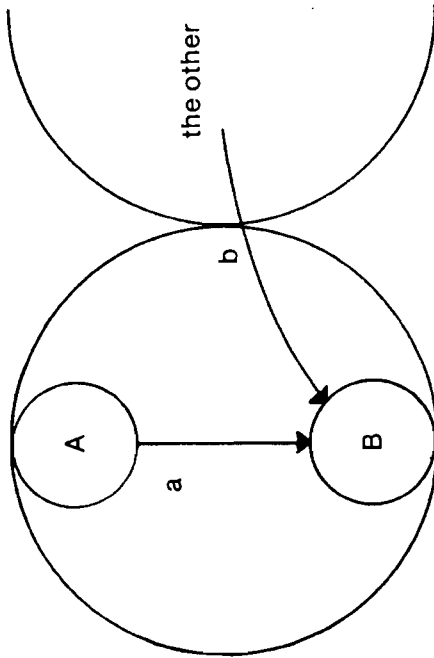
2.5.1.2 Totality, the system, tends to totalize itself, to center on itself, and to attempt—temporally—to eternalize its present structure. Spatially, it attempts to include within itself all possible exteriority. Having an infinite hunger, the fetish (3.4.2) attempts to install itself forever in an insatiable cannibalism. Face-to-face proximity disappears because the fetish eats its mother, its children, its siblings. Totalized totality, Cyclops or Leviathan on earth, kills as many alien faces (persons) as question it until finally, after a long and frightful agony, it sadly disappears from history, not without first sealing its final days with innumerable injustices.

2.5.2 The Other: The Enemy

2.5.2.1 Sages are clairvoyant; they see with absolute clarity. "Salvation is achieved by knowledge," according to the tragedy, and thus the Socratic "Know thyself" is as ontological as Nietzsche's "the eternal return of the same." In the end, "the same" remains "the self-same"; "Being is" summarizes all ontology. In the presence of Being there is nothing to do but

contemplate it, speculate on it, go into ecstasy over it, affirm it, and remain tragically in the passive authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) favorable for the dominator but fatal for the dominated. Gnosis is the perfect act of the ontological, aristocratic oppressor.

DIAGRAM 3



A dominator
B alienated

a domination
b alienation

2.5.2.2 Evil or injustice, of course, is not something persons commit. Especially the ones whom the gods have selected to dominate do not find in themselves the guilt of domination. Heraclitus said, "by *physis* some advance as gods and others as humans; some are free and others are slaves." The *ananke* or force of destiny has so desired it. Evil is only ignorance of what things are and, on the other hand, it is the reason for multiplicity. If we were one like being and foundation in their identity, there would be neither plurality nor evil. Matter or determination, which denies Being and constitutes beings, is the origin of evil. Plotinus and Hegel agree.

2.5.2.3 For the system, the other appears as something different. As such the other threatens the unity of "the same." The sage is in charge of proclaiming, on the basis of ontology, the danger that the other poses for the whole, the totality. So the sage clearly points out the enemy of the system: the one who is different, the other. Having identified the evil, the distinct, the other, ontology rests in peace.

2.5.3 Annihilation of Distinction

2.5.3.1 The sage has pointed out, with clairvoyance, Being and its opposite: distinctness, the other. Now is the hour of the practical person, the hero of the system, of Julius Caesar in Gaul, Napoleon in Russia, Hitler in Europe, Cortes in Mexico, Pizarro in Peru, the imperialist armies in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. It is the hour of praxis that eliminates the enemy, the one who is distinct, the other.

2.5.3.2 Because distinctness is an exteriority that denies the one-dimensionality of the system, its indistinct incorporation within the system, its becoming one more among the rest, is welcomed. The one who opposes leveling out remains distinct, other. As other than the system, that one is beyond Being. Inasmuch as Being is and non-Being is not, the other is not. If the other speaks, provokes, or demands, it is the verbal expression of non-Being. Before the other can continue these works of falsification and demoralization of the system, heroes throw themselves upon the enemies, the others, and annihilate them. The SS staged its heroes in Nazi Germany; the CIA—a lawfully armed extension of the transnational corporations—keeps up the tradition in the peripheries of the contemporary world.

2.5.3.3 The designs of the ruling system are imposed univocally on everybody by propaganda, the communications media, movies, and television—through all receptive pores. Whoever resists is kidnapped, jailed, tortured, expelled, or killed.

2.5.3.4 The dialectic between master and slave is no longer possible: the slave disappears from the horizon—by death. The periphery knows so many deaths—Patrice Lumumba, Ben Barka, Elieser Gaetán, Oscar Romero . . . !

2.5.3.5 The ontology of the center justifies what the central

powers and imperialist armies do. What was Stoicism and Epicureanism but the consecration of the empire? Who are Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger but the phenomenologists of European centrism?

2.5.4 Totalization of Exteriority

2.5.4.1 What is most frightening is the certitude (*Gewissheit*) the dominating heroes have of representing the gods on earth—in bygone epochs—and now democracy, freedom, and civilization. They are brave defenders of Being, who give their lives for the highest ideal before the plebeians, the barbarians, the representatives of non-Being, matter, difference, the diabolical, falsehood, disorder, chaos, Marxism—in a word: evil. The good consciences of heroes transform them into fanatics.

2.5.4.2 Clothed in noble, warlike, healthy, Nietzschean virtues, white-skinned and blond-haired like the Aryans, Europe throws itself upon the periphery, on the geopolitical exteriority, on the wives of other men, on their children, and on their gods. In the name of Being, of the human world, of civilization, it annihilates the alterity of other peoples, other cultures, otherotics, other religions. Thus it incorporates them or, in another way, violently expands the frontiers of its world until it includes other peoples in its sphere of control. From the year 718 Spain extended its military frontier to the south in its struggle of reconquest against the Arabs; after 1492 it extended to include most of Latin America. Latin America is a totalized geopolitical area annihilated in its exteriority and swallowed up by cannibals in the name of civilization.

2.5.4.3 The conquests of Latin America, the enslavement of Africa and its colonization, as well as that of Asia, are the dominating dialectical expansion of “the same” that assassinates “the other” and totalizes “the other” in “the same.” This huge dialectico-ontological process of human history simply went unperceived by the ideology of ideologies (even though it claims to be the critic of ideologies)—modern and contemporary European philosophy.

2.5.4.4 Tautology takes possession of everything: “the

eternal return of the same.’’ It is the self-affirmation of a particular social formation.

2.5.5 Alienation

2.5.5.1 The other, who is not different (as totality asserts) but distinct (always other), who has a history, a culture, an exteriority, has not been respected; the center has not let the other *be* other. It has incorporated the other into a strange, foreign totality. To totalize exteriority, to systematize alterity, to deny the other as other, is alienation. To alienate is to sell someone or something, to pass it on to another proprietor. The alienation of a people or of a single individual makes its victims lose their Being by incorporating them as a moment, an aspect, an instrument of another’s Being.

2.5.5.2 The geographical periphery of the world, of the woman and the child, is the property of the center, of the male, of the adult. The Being of others is alienated when they are displaced from their own center and made to revolve around the center of a totality alien to them.

2.5.5.3 Alienation, nevertheless, is a risk taken in the poiesis of social formation. The praxis of domination, as a person-to-person relationship, places the other at the service of a dominator; but it is in work (poiesis) that domination really fulfills itself. When the fruit of work is not recovered by a people, a worker, a woman, or a child, its Being remains alienated. When the dominator systematically appropriates the fruit of the work of the totalized, dominated other; when this appropriation becomes habitual, institutional, and historical—at that moment alienation is real, certain, and effective: it is a mode of unjust production. Ownership, such as the right to possess the other’s product, is the counterpart in the dominator of the alienation in the dominated. In a consumer society it is the ownership of capital; in a bureaucratic society it is control of the functions that exercise power. Alienation and the exercise of dominating power are the two aspects of totalized totality.

2.5.5.4 Thus all political, erotic, pedagogical, or fetishist alienation will be accomplished in its respective economy (3.1.5–4.4.9), in social formation.

2.5.6 Face as Instrument

2.5.6.1 In times of danger the other is transformed, thanks to ideologies, into "the enemy." In peacetime, even though the other is always considered a potential danger (cause of fundamental anxiety to every totalized or schizophrenic system), the face of the other is manipulated as a mere thing without transcendence or mystery; the other is considered an instrument. The face of the other is exchanged for an ugly mask, weatherbeaten and rustic. The mask is not a face; it does not make appeals; it is one more piece of furniture in the environment. One passes near the other and says simply: "A worker!" or "A native!" or "A black!" or "An undernourished Pakistani!" (one of those illustrated in posters to beg alms from Europe and the United States for the poor countries; thus Europeans and North Americans have a good conscience, not asking themselves why the peripheral peoples have rickets and especially what the center has to do with hunger in the periphery).

2.5.6.2 To kill, for example in El Salvador, one must beforehand deprive the others of their sacred exteriority and reduce them to "the enemy." In the same way in peacetime (for the dominators) and in times of peaceful coexistence (the better to exploit the periphery), the others are deprived of their dignity as persons and are constituted forced labor, instruments of an instrument, ultraperfect robots, things, tools. After this "sleight of hand" by classic ontology and its ever faithful ideologues (Rosenberg) or politicians (Kissinger and Haig with their "humanitarian" plans for Vietnam and El Salvador), all is possible, from making soap with the fat of martyred bodies to training dogs to violate women as a torture (the former was seen in Nazi Germany, the latter in Chile in 1976).

2.5.6.3 The reification of the other allows aristocracies to manage persons as plurality, multitude, *lumpen*, animals with *logos* but not human beings, as Aristotle taught with regard to slaves in Greece.

2.5.7 Praxis of Domination

2.5.7.1 The praxis of domination is a perversity. It is the practical affirmation of the totality and its *proyecto*; it is the ontic

realization of Being, its alienating performance. The master exercises power over the servant by means of oppressive praxis. It is the mediation of the system by which its structure endures and persists.

2.5.7.2 Domination is the act by which others are forced to participate in the system that alienates them. They are compelled to perform actions contrary to their nature, contrary to their historical essence. Domination is an act of pressure, of force. The servant obeys out of fear, out of habit.

2.5.7.3 Domination is transformed into repression when the oppressed try to liberate themselves from the pressure they suffer. Faced with a gesture signifying the intention of flight from a situation of domination, the dominator increases the pressure; the dominator represses. Repression can be individual and psychological, but it is always social. Thus cultural norms are introduced through education and punishment into the very psychic structure of the child, of the person. Today the average person is very much repressed (3.2.5). By the same token, political or economic power represses those who rebel—represses them politically (3.1.5–1.6), through the police or the military. Repression is the unmasked face of domination.

2.5.7.4 Psychological repression, by way of the communications media, becomes violent as the pressure of a revolution increases. The corporality of the oppressed is violated against their will. This institutionalized violence is of course justified by the ontology and ideologies of the system. It remains consecrated as a virtue. The man violates the woman, shuts her up in his house, and consecrates her as "housewife"; the father does violence to the child, forcing the child to blind and total obedience to his dominating authority. Brother does violence to brother, requiring him to venerate the state under pain of death, "for his own security," and out of patriotic love (the old homeland).

2.5.7.5 War is the ultimate fulfillment of the praxis of domination; it is domination in its pure state. When the dominated no longer accept being oppressed by peace, or by repression, or by tactical violence, the dominator begins war—"total war," as the geopolitician Spykmann and his pupil in the periphery, Golbery do Couto e Silva, would say. War is practical ontology; it is the being that in practice reduces the other to non-

being. Thus Parmenides anticipated the strategy and tactics of von Clausewitz and the Pentagon.

2.5.8 The Ethos of the Dominator

2.5.8.1 Ethos is the moral character of a people or a person; it is the structural whole of attitudes that predetermine action. The ethos of domination, be it imperialist or dependent national, revolves around the mystification, in the form of reigning customs or virtues, of what were vices in the time of oppression. (We have plenty of examples of dependent national domination in Latin American, African, and Asian neocolonies.) Repressed, the oppressed bring upon themselves a psychic self-poisoning in response to the violence they suffer. It is impossible for the weak to exercise the desired act of revenge against the strong. Thus arises resentment as autorepressive introjection of power, which, not being turned against the dominator, poisons as it settles into the one dominated. The resentment of the dominated cannot be lived either as a vice, which it is, or as mere resigned passivity. It is sublimated as the virtue of patience, or obedience, or discipline, or fidelity. In this way when the resentful oppressed of yesterday become the dominators of today, they present as virtues their old vices mystified. The avarice of the poor persecuted inhabitant of the medieval town, the bourgeois, is now the virtue of thrift.

2.5.8.2 Hatred, predecessor of envy, dwells in the heart of the dominator's ethos. The dominator is repulsed by the goodness, happiness, or success of the other; the dominator cannot stand the other's presence or existence, the other's imploring face. Hatred is a perversion of natural tendencies. It is the autoeroticism of the totality and the exclusion of exteriority. It is the origin of political and individual pathology: totalitarianism (political) and psychosis (personal). Both are self-centered and deny alterity; they are tautological, perverse, and self-destructive. Hatred is the perverse pulsion that keeps united the structured parts of the totalized whole.

2.5.8.3 Here prudence (practical wisdom) is shunted into "reason": the art of planning and winning wars. Justice gives to the powerful what was snatched from the weak under the appear-

ance of legality. Temperance is merely comfort, which leads to a rocklike insensibility impervious to another's distress. And thus the comforts enjoyed by the consumer society prevent it from discovering that its deceitful glutrony is hunger in the dominated; the arrogance of the manager is the indignity of the hourly workers; the purchased copulation is the degeneration of the prostitute; the pedagogical domination of the father is the ruin of the child. . . .

2.5.8.4 The "virtues" of the center and the dominating classes are alienation in the periphery and dominated classes.

2.5.9 Legality of Perversion

2.5.9.1 For a good moralist of the center like Kant, legality was the objective alignment of an act with the law, and morality was the will to fulfill the law out of duty. If we accept the principle "Love your country and fight for it," and we compare a nineteenth-century Englishman with a Nigerian, each will fight for their country; both acts can illustrate "a principle of universal legislation." But it so happens that the one is perverse (the Englishman fighting abroad) and the other is ethically heroic and exemplary (the African). Nevertheless, both acts are legal and moral for Kant.

What type of morality could it have been that tried to take the measure of peripheral nations and their cultures from the nations and cultures of the center? Only an imperialistic morality. What are the values of a Scheler and his hierarchies except mediations of a Western thrust into the future? That thrust is their foundation although it never appears as such in his *Der Formalismus in der Ethik*. Every ethic of the law, of virtues, of values, of the end (be it *telos*, *finis*, or a Kelseynian national constitution—that is, teleological or positivist) is an ethic that conceals its own world and system.

2.5.9.2 Surreptitiously, Being, good, the *proyecto* of a culture, and human nature become identified with each other. Societes divinized Greek culture by making his disciples believe that the ideas they had contemplated before their birth were divine; and they were *only* Greek. Rousseau, following him, made of the emerging bourgeois culture *la nature même des choses*. Inasmuch

as the *projecto* of a culture of the center was the natural human end, its exigencies were natural rights (as, for example, private property). Whoever stood up against Europe stood up against nature—that is, against God and the divine will.

2.5.9.3 In the name of those laws, valiantly practicing those virtues, and aiming to fulfil the *projecto* of the world domination, Europe set forth with Columbus and his ships from the port of Palos in Andalusia in 1492. Fulfilling those laws, Francis Drake, pirate by profession, assassinator of defenseless *mestizos* and violator of women, devastated the Latin American coasts and received as a reward the right to lock up his thefts in the banks of London and the honor of being a British nobleman—Sir Francis Drake. Behold the magnificence and the first accumulation of capitalism that oppresses us now! Its origin was the gold of Amerindians and the flesh of black slaves!

2.6 LIBERATION

2.6.1 Status Questionis

2.6.1.1 Now we arrive at the central core of this chapter, at the essential moment of metaphysics, understanding that metaphysics is the passage from ontology to the transontological, to the one who is situated beyond Being, in reality (2.4.3 and 3.4.7), the other. Ontology is phenomenology; it is a *logos* or a thinking about what appears (the phenomenon, the being) from the foundation (Being). Beyond phenomenology the road of epiphany opens: revelation (or apocalyptic) of the other through the other's face, which is not merely a phenomenon or manifestation, a presence, but an epiphenomenon, vicarious, trace or vestige of the absent, of the mysterious, of one beyond the present. Ontology (phenomenology) gives way to metaphysics (apocalyptic epiphany of the other). The manifestation of being is fulfilled from the horizon of the foundation or Being of the system; epiphany fulfills itself as a revelation of the one who makes decisions beyond the horizon of the world or the frontier of the state. Manifestation is not revelation; presence is not exposure to traumatism. Liberation is not a phenomenal, intrasystemic action; liberation is the praxis that subverts the phenomenological

order and pierces it to let in a metaphysical transcendence, which is the plenary critique of the established, fixed, normalized, crystallized, dead.

2.6.2 Ethical Conscience

2.6.2.1 The totalized person who carries out the *projecto* of the established order and observes its laws can have a *moral* conscience. I designate moral conscience the application of the principles in force in a given system to a concrete decision. An administrator who tries to sell products at the highest possible price to make more profit for the company and who personally steals nothing from the company has a moral conscience. Moral conscience accompanies an act and can cheer, disturb, blame, or tranquilize. The greatest tyrant can have a tranquil moral conscience, as can the fanatic.

2.6.2.2 I designate *ethical* conscience the capacity one has to listen to the other's voice, the transontological word that breaks in from beyond the present system. The just protest of the other may question the moral principles of the system. Only the one who has an ethical conscience can accept this questioning from the standpoint of the absolute criterion: the other as other in justice.

2.6.2.3 The conditions for the possibility of being able to hear the voice of the other are very clear, and I shall be describing them throughout section 2.6. In the first place, to be able to listen to the voice of the other it is necessary to be atheistic vis-à-vis the system or to discover its fetishism (3.4.3). In the second place, it is necessary to respect the other as other. Respect is the attitude of metaphysical passivity with which honor is rendered to the exteriority of the other; it lets others be in their distinctness. Respect is a metaphysical attitude as a point of departure for all activity carried out in justice. But it is not respect for the law (which is universal or abstract), or for the system or its *projecto*. It is respect for someone, for the freedom of the other. The other is the only really sacred being worthy of respect without limit. Respect is silence, not the silence of someone who has nothing to say (Wittgenstein), but of those who want to listen to everything because they know nothing about the other as other.

2.6.3 Responsibility for the Other

2.6.3.1 Those who hear the lament or protest of the other are stirred in the very center of their world, are decentered. The cry of pain of the one we cannot see signifies someone, not just something. The someone signified by the signifier—the cry—exhorts us, urges us to take on the suffering, the cause of the cry. To “take charge” (*spondere*) is to make oneself responsible. Responsibility is related not to answer-to (a question) but to respond-for (a person). Responsibility is to take charge of the poor who are encountered in exteriority with regard to the system. To be responsible-for—with-regard-to is the theme.

2.6.3.2 To be responsible for the other in and with regard to the system is anteriority prior to all other anteriority, a passivity that is almost metaphysical activity (more active than respect but more passive than the praxis of liberation). It is the metaphysical anteriority of the new or future order. It is anteriority to ontological openness to the world; it makes it possible; it is its real *a priori*. The mother is responsible for the defenseless child just as the teachers are responsible for their pupils and leaders for their people.

2.6.3.3 Responsibility for the poor, exterior to the system, exposes the just person to retaliation by the system, which feels under attack because of its dysfunctionality, openness, and exposure. For this reason, with inexorable logic the totality persecutes those who in their responsibility for the oppressed testify to the necessity for a new order. Responsibility is obsession for the other; it is linkage with the other's exteriority; it entails exposing oneself to traumatization, prison, even death. Heroes of liberation (not the heroes of the ancient expansionist homeland), antiheroes of the system, put their life forward and risk it. Responsibility is thus supreme valor, incorruptible strength (2.6.8), wisdom, authentic clairvoyance of the structures of totality.

2.6.4 Destruction of Order

2.6.4.1 The one who takes responsibility for the other in the system is seen by the dominator of the totality as a “fifth columnist,” a prophet of hatred or chaos, a corrupter of the

young (who still retain some freedom inasmuch as they have not yet fully entered the system of the whole). What is certain is that those who pursue the impulse of alterity or love of the new order in which the poor and oppressed can dwell in justice are transformed, even against their will, into an active principle of destruction of the old order. The oppressed as oppressed (but having some awareness of the positiveness of their exteriority) and the ones who risk themselves for them, insofar as they yearn for the new order and assume an active responsibility at least by no longer supporting the foundations of the present order, make dominators uneasy.

2.6.4.2 Every new order begins as a corruption or destruction of an old order. This is a physical, biological, natural law. It is also, analogously, a historico-human and cultural law. No system, be it tribal, nomadic, rural, or urban; no culture, ancient or modern; no economic system, be it feudal, capitalist, or socialist, can make way for a superior order without dying in the process.

2.6.4.3 There have been chaotic destructions of order, without sense, without future, as when armed hordes invaded regions with a superior culture; they devastated without leaving anything in its place. More than destruction, that was annihilation, in a totally negative sense. On the contrary, the destructuring of the flower, which makes way for the fruit, and the rupture or pain accompanying childbirth are creative, affirmative destructions. Something dies, true, but only as a condition for the possibility of the birth of something else. Every moment of passage is agonizing, and thus liberation is also the agony of the old for the fruitful birth of the new, the just.

2.6.5 Liberation: Anarchy

2.6.5.1 A process that has no conductive principle or rationality is called “anarchism”; it is a process without direction. Anarchism, even if it exudes immense generosity, is utopian in the reprehensible sense, insofar as it does not furnish a possible model for the next step after the destructive process. Liberation, on the contrary, is anarchy (in Greek it means “beyond the principle”) insofar as the origin of its metaphysical activity (the activity of respect and of responsibility as its passive anteriority) is the

other, the one who is beyond the system, beyond the frontier of the established order.

2.6.5.2 Liberation is metaphysical or transontological movement in behalf of the one who stands beyond the horizon of the world. It is the act that opens the breach, pierces the wall, and searches deeper into unsuspected, future, and really new exteriority.

2.6.5.3 Liberation, the act of the oppressed by which they express or realize themselves, incorporates a double moment, in that it is a denial of a denial in the system. The double moment passes unperceived in a simple dialectic as negation of a negation. To deny what is denied by the systems is to affirm the system in its foundation, for what is negated in the system (the oppressed) does not cease to be an intrinsic moment in the system. On the contrary, to deny the denied in the system, concomitant with the expansive affirmation of what in the oppressed is exteriority (and thus was never in the system, because it was distinct, separate, and outside), is liberation. Liberation is to leave the prison (deny the denied) and affirm the history that was anterior and exterior to the prison (the history of the prisoner before being put into jail) and the history that was lived as personal biography in prison—such as the eleven years spent there by Antonio Gramsci).

2.6.6 The Mask That Becomes Face

2.6.6.1 Alienation covers the face of the other with a mask fashioned by the system to hide the other's entreaty. The mask defines the other by the function that the other fulfills within the system—as an employee, worker, or *campesino*. The other's exteriority is defined from the horizon of the system and thus functions within it. The other's function or social class has been fixed; the "for-what" has crystallized and the "who" has vanished.

2.6.6.2 For the historico-biographical face to be revealed in justice, it is necessary to mobilize institutions, functions, and the systemized totality. To allow the imploring face to appear demands the expropriation of possessors in the system so that those defined as parts can be revealed. Displacement of functions requires throwing the system as a whole into a dialectical mobilization that leaves persons free (3.4.5.2).

2.6.6.3 The frightening mask, even ugly from so much use and suffering, withered by the wind and sun, gradually recovers the beauty of the people. Goya began with masks or monsters and ended by painting the face of a people beginning to reveal its splendor. Wrinkles recovered their humanity like the faces of the old Amerindians of the Andes that reveal the depths of the wise, the patience of the brave, the centuries of culture, the mystery of their symbols, the goodness of the exteriority that awaits a new order in justice.

2.6.6.4 Suddenly the glassy stare of the instrumentalized is transformed into a penetrating gaze. It is not a stare that objectifies the one at whom it is directed (as in Sartre's description), but a look that personalizes; it is the look that makes one responsible for the liberation of the face that exposes itself to rejection and demands justice. It is the demanding look that gives rise to mercy, justice, rebellion, revolution, liberation.

2.6.7 Praxis of Liberation

2.6.7.1 When I speak of praxis (person-to-person relationship) I include also in this case poiesis (person-to-nature relationship). Liberating action that directs itself to others (brother or sister, woman or man, child) is simultaneous with work in their favor. There is no liberation without economics, without humanized technology, without planning, and without beginning with a historical social formation. Because of this, the praxis of liberation (a practical poiesis or a poietic praxis) is the act itself by which the horizon of the system is crossed over and one really penetrates into the exteriority through which the new order is constructed, a new, more just social formation.

2.6.7.2 Routine praxis within the system (2.5.7) is dominating because it consolidates the existent totality; it is an ontic activity (2.2) or a mere mediation internal to the world, founded in its *proyecto*. It is the praxis of consolidating the old and the unjust.

2.6.7.3 The praxis of liberation, on the contrary, puts the system into question—not just as a possible or ideational question, but as a constitutive questioning, one that opens a world from itself, its own road from within itself. It is a metaphysical,

transontological praxis—liberation properly so called. There is no Greek word for it; the Greeks did not have this type of experience. But in Hebrew *habodah* means “work,” as also “service,” in Greek *diakonia*. Service is not a mere functional, intrasystemic work done out of duty or legal compulsion. It is a work (practical poiesis or poetic praxis) done for the other with responsibility, for the other’s liberation. It is an innovative activity using instruments put at the service of the poor. The praxis of liberation is the procreation of a new order, of its new structure, and at the same time of the functions and beings that compose it. It is the ultimate realization—creative, inventive, innovative.

2.6.8 The Ethos of Liberation

2.6.8.1 Ethos (2.5.8.1) is custom and character. How, then, can one have a custom whose function is to create the new? How can anyone become habituated to what is always new? Is it possible to have a habit of the unique, the unrepeatable—liberation from a given situation of oppression? If there is such a virtue, we must know how to distinguish it from the vices masquerading as virtues in the prevailing totality. The ethos of liberation is not just the habit of not repeating the same thing. On the contrary, it is an aptitude or capacity, become character, for innovation and creation. Inasmuch as it emerges from serving the other (2.6.7.3), and the other is always a concrete person in a unique situation of oppression and exteriority, only someone who is responsible and faithful to someone else’s uniqueness can be a liberator.

2.6.8.2 The ethos of liberation is structured around an axis that is not compassion (as for Schopenhauer) or sympathy (as for Scheler)—given that both are positions of functional parts toward other parts (to suffer-with one’s equal)—but commiseration: placing oneself with (*cum*) someone in misery (*miser*). The ethos of liberation is other-directed pulsion or metaphysical justice; it is love of the other as other, as exteriority; love of the oppressed—not, however, as oppressed but as subject of exteriority. The traumatic condition of the human being endowed with freedom, the other, reduced to being an instrument in a system, is rightly called misery. To discover the other as other and place-oneself-together-

with that person’s misery, to experience as one’s own the contradiction between being free and having to endure slavery, being distinct and someone and at the same time only a different internal part; to hurt from the pain of this cleavage is the first attitude of the ethos of liberation. It is not friendship or fellowship (among equals) but love of the oppressed because of their real dignity as exteriority.

2.6.8.3 From the commiseration shared by liberating heroes and the oppressed among themselves—for they have unlimited commiseration of their equals—the whole ethos of liberation is organized. (Only in this instance are fellowship and friendship actively liberative.) On it depends liberative justice, which does not give to each what is due within the law and the prevailing order, but grants to all what they deserve in their dignity as others. Thus liberative justice is not legal justice, whether distributive or commutative, but real justice—that is, subversive: subverting the established unjust order. It is obedience (a hearing of the one ahead of you: *ob-audire* in Latin) that is faithful, trusting, and does not doubt the other’s word. Thus it is metaphysical prudence and not Machiavellian or cautious intrasystemic convenience.

Authentic liberative politics advises liberative heroes and the people even to lay down their lives for the new order—it is imprudent prudence for the dominators of the system, absurdity for the wisdom in vogue. It is patient and active hope in the liberation of the oppressed, which knows how to keep the rudder firm in view of the strategic end even if many reformist tactical concessions must be made. It is valiant, strong, daring hope that does not fear to offer its life for what it is doing. It is the valor of the liberated, the supreme gesture of the perfect and exemplary person. Mahatma Gandhi, Patrice Lumumba, and Ernesto “Che” Guevara stand out as symbols for world youth; without wavering, they faced death for the people.

2.6.8.4 Finally, only the person who does not fear death is to be feared. That person is free in the face of death who is already free from the comfort that ensnares in its sweet arms the bourgeois of the consumer society. Temperance, as mastery over desires and satisfactions, allows for the correct interpretation of the other’s word, guarantees to justice its rightful exercise, and

makes it possible for the brave to leave all in order to serve the poor until death. Without discipline there is no liberation.

2.6.9 The Illegality of Goodness

2.6.9.1 Goodness is not to be confused with being a "do-gooder," naive, and uncritical. By goodness I understand the very fountain of the liberating act: human fulness, which is allowed to exteriorize itself in creative works that are revolutionary and innovative. Fearful, timid cowards can hardly create something new if they cannot even resolve the daily problems of their egotistic and totalized individual little worlds. Goodness is magnanimous; it is called to great works and tasks.

2.6.9.2 The liberating act, gratuitous and responsible, the expansion of goodness, confidently propels itself toward the future (not the future of the ontological *projecto*, which remains the same; its utopia is an imaginary prolongation of the same), toward the real utopia (realization of the other's exteriority, the really utopian pursuit for that which has no place here and now, *ouk topos* in Greek), toward the new order: utopia.

2.6.9.3 The *projecto* of liberation, the foundation or Being of the future and new order, is not a prolongation of the system (univocal) but re-creation from the provocation or real revelation of the other's exteriority (anadialecical [5.4.1] and thus analogous); the other mobilizes the process. That process is a real criticism of the system; it is a rupture; it is destruction. Goodness, *diffusivum sui*, reveals itself in detotalizing the system or annihilating repressive frontiers.

2.6.9.4 In this way, the liberating act (act of gratuitous goodness), inasmuch as it is beyond intrasystemic interest, is and can only be illegal, contrary to present laws, which, because they are those of an old just order that is now oppressive, are unjust. It is the inevitable position of liberation: subversive illegality.

FROM POLITICS TO ANTIFETISHISM

What was discussed in chapter 2 at six levels of reflection (proximity, totality, mediation, exteriority, alienation, and liberation) must now be discussed again in terms of four metaphysical moments: politics, erotics,* pedagogy, and antifetishism. We thus have more problems to resolve. Our discourse, incorporating more and more elements, gains in complexity and allows us to approach reality more concretely.

3.1 POLITICS

3.1.1 *Status Questionis*

3.1.1.1 The proximity from which I set out in this chapter is not that of mother to child; I shall here emphasize the person-to-person relationship (brother-to-brother, sister-to-sister, brother-to-sister, sister-to-brother) or politics insofar as (quantitatively) it has a much greater frontier of influence, and (qualitatively) it functions as the first conditioned conditioner of the other three moments—that is, of erotics (3.2), of pedagogy (3.3), and of antifetishism (3.4).

3.1.1.2 To simplify the exposition, though it is already ab-

*The terms "sexuality" and "erotics" are sometimes interchangeable, but erotics is broader and more comprehensive; eroticism extends to nonsexual ambits (e.g., gluttony). See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).