

Enrique Dussel: to the Critique of Philosophy of “Anthropological Protest”*

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Abstract—The need to rethink the classical European systems that excluded the possibility of the existence (of the idea) of the Other from the ontological order was a key factor in the self-determination of subjects representing a non-Western type of philosophical discourse. Un-ontological status deprived the Other of the right to be a subject and deprived his words of authenticity.

The author of the article analyzes the views of Enrique Dussel, one of the primary figures in the *Philosophy of Liberation* philosophical movement. An attempt to justify the existential status of the Other is made by E. Dussel by addressing European philosophers, whose ideas intended to overcome the anti-anthropological attitude and dehumanization tendencies, once begotten by the discourse of Totality. The content of the concept of the Other is clarified through its correlation with the concept of the Otherness. The explanatory potential of these ideas is revealed for the possibility of bringing the Other out of oblivion.

Keywords—Enrique Dussel; Latin American Philosophy of Liberation; anthropological protest; Totality; Other; Otherness

I. INTRODUCTION

The ideas of the Latin American *Philosophy of Liberation* were influenced by the concepts of European philosophers. Once in the Latin American reality, their concepts received a new reading and their conceptual apparatus was filled with new content. Russian researchers have previously reflected on an issue of updating European ideas in line with the *liberation* discourse [1], [2], [3], however, they haven't touched upon a group of thinkers, whose works showed the European philosophy's critical trend mainly associated with the rethinking of its foundations — F.W.J. Schelling, L. Feuerbach, and S. Kierkegaard. Having become the basic ideas for the development of Latin American thought, their concepts contributed to the solution of a problem that had arisen: to justify the status of non-European philosophical discourse in the development of the global (history of) philosophy. Representatives of this movement saw the achievement of the set objectives in

establishing and developing a critical position of the Other (el Otro) in relation to *Totality* (la Totalidad), symbolizing European philosophy.

One of the founders of the *Philosophy of Liberation* Enrique Dussel describes the Latin American reality as the Other, stemming from which one shall reshape the paradigms, determining the global historical-philosophical process, the order of participation and the ways of representation of philosophizing subjects. Thus, the centrist settings, imposed by Totality, could be overcome.

II. ONTOLOGY OF IDENTITY AND EXPERIENCE OF DOMINATION

In the *liberation* discourse, the problem of the Other and the assertion of its status is revealed in the context of philosophy's anthropological foundations. While debating G.W.F. Hegel and M. Heidegger, whose anti-anthropological ontology resulted in European philosophy's neglect to other people / the Other, Enrique Dussel builds his argumentation line along the ideas of F. Schelling, L. Feuerbach and S. Kierkegaard, representing the anthropological protest.

According to Dussel, Hegelian and Heideggerian systems, representing *identity philosophy* or *ontology of totality*, expect a special type of discourse, constituting differences only within the limits of the existential horizon. In self-contained systems the status of the Other (*Otherness*, la Alteridad) is devalued since the system's concept of *Sameness* (lo Mismo) doesn't encompass a plethora of images of the real world. In this respect, there is a representative example of Hegel's comprehension of America as “the possibility of spirit”, as of something that hasn't yet happened and that is, therefore, “beyond history”. America's non-historical status is fortified in a non-existential position, described by the conception of *geographical non-existence* (el no-Ser geográfico) [4]. Hegel describes a European person, a bearer of spirit, as a condition of America's attainment of existential traits. If we transcribe this situation in historical, cultural, social, political and economic contexts, the relations with the Other, occurring within Totality, describe a number of concepts such as domination, subordination, oppression, dependence, exploitation, exclusion.

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Heidegger, included in the system of Totality, made a significant step forward with his project of the destruction of Western ontology, which, undoubtedly, is his merit in the eyes of the philosophers of liberation. Yet, Heidegger's separation of being and Dasein — ontology and ontic — is a necessary but not sufficient condition for overcoming the all-embracing European thinking, and hence the recognition of the Other in its self-worth. Following E. Dussel's reasoning, Heidegger's priority of Dasein paves the way to inequality of related Otherness, i.e. the status of Otherness on the ontical level is lower than its status on the ontological level [5]. This inequity is expressed in the ability to reduce the Other's being to Dasein, the world of things and objects, which is prone to manipulation. "Ontology of Identity and Totality thinks and includes in its borders the Other yet declares it as insignificant and secondary for the "genuine" philosophical thinking" [6].

At its core, the oblivion of the Other is a consequence of deformation, a violation of a human/human relationship. E. Dussel is looking for a way to reshape the ontological foundations of Totality, to restore anthropological connections, to bring the Other out of oblivion, concealment (*el en-cubrimiento*). According to him, the defining moment in the history of European discourse is the emergence of a critically inclined group of philosophers, whose ideas seek to overcome the basic logical (ontological) relations and plan movement to the Other.

III. BEYOND THE TOTALITY HORIZON

Enrique Dussel regards F. Schelling as a key figure in whose conceptual construction European philosophy rethinks itself. Dussel uses as a reference point Schelling's division of philosophy into negative and positive categories, as well as the assertion of the idea of positivity of unthinkable (*la positividad de lo impensable*), which is "further" (*mas allá*) than dialectical ontology of Identity (*la Identidad*) of being and thinking.

Schelling defines the tradition of modern philosophy that has found its completion in the Hegel's system as negative, fundamentally limited — this is the philosophy of mind that has turned on itself and has comprehended own limits. The negative philosophy is the one of identity, taken on its own, incomplete and unadulterated, requiring a "positive" complement. In the latter the logical isolation is open; the rationality of logical thinking is replaced with the irrationality of being. While maintaining the appearance of the system, the positive philosophy remains essentially open. Its pursuit of the complete, all-encompassing and perfect knowledge, given in the Revelation, determines its incomplete character.

Schelling brings positivity of unthinkable — inaccessible to reason God's openness — beyond Hegel's Absolute idea, constituting positivity of "external" idea in relation to the Absolute one. "Further" than logos as an all-encompassing mind is logos as a word of the Other, through which a new area is formed, located "further" than thinking. That area is the sphere of the Other, that could only be accepted in faith. Faith comprehended metaphysically and not theologically, is

for Dussel a state of openness of a subject to the absolute and genuine freedom of the Other (God) and, as such, it becomes an opportunity to leave totalizing mind behind.

F. Schelling initiates the process of internal decomposition of "rationalist idealism in an existential sense" [7], bringing the explanation of personality into the positive philosophy's focus and leaving the negative philosophy just the comprehension of existence. The liberation philosopher sees Schelling's merit in leading the Other to exteriority, thus recognizing the existence of "prius, which Hegel left at the level of consciousness" [8].

The critical line finds its continuation in L. Feuerbach's works. Post-Hegelian's opposition to idealism (and religion) reinforces the internal dynamics of anthropological pursuit and makes it radical. His challenge is to "return philosophy from the realm of the dead" into the earthly realm of those endowed with souls and bodies. Feuerbach reduces theology to anthropology by introducing a formula of "reducing all that is supernatural to nature by way of man, and in reducing all that is superhuman to man by way of nature" [9].

The basis for the humanization process of the divine was G.W.F. Hegel's interpretation of the Absolute idea. According to Dussel, by denying God of Hegel's Totality, Feuerbach affirms the Christian God-Creator, yet, reducing Him to man, removes the dualistic principle of soul and body, postulated by R. Descartes. Denying abstract and just thinking Self, Feuerbach asserts feeling and bodily Self thus re-opening an individual. Dussel appeals to I. Kant, who provides different from the panlogistic interpretation of "validity". If Hegel reduces reality to reason, Kant notes that "reality in every phenomenon is a sensually perceived object" [10]. In this regard, Dussel articulates Feuerbach's fundamental idea (also consonant with Kant's conceptions), found in the anthropological principle. Identifying the concepts of truth, reality, and sensuality, Ludwig Feuerbach asserts the object of perception in its relation to Self: "an object is found where there is an entity, affecting Self, where the independent activity of Self finds a boundary in the activity of another entity" [11].

By reducing the conception of the object in its immediate sense to the conception of Other's Self, the German philosopher mediates it by the conception of You. Thus, Feuerbach bears down insoluble for abstract philosophy issue about the mutual impact of independent entities: "sensuality solves the mystery of interaction". In turn, attributing ontological value to sensuality, Feuerbach opens being through man that was impossible in the Hegelian system.

The strengthening of the German philosopher's opposition-leaning attitude can be traced in his rejection of the Cartesian Self — lonely and self-contained. From Feuerbach's point of view, the human essence is revealed in unity and in communication with You or rather is based "on the reality of the difference between You and Self".

Yet Dussel notes that the issue of the Other in Feuerbach's works was designed but stayed unresolved. Schelling releases God (as the Other) from Hegelian Totality,

bringing Him “further”, beyond its limits, Feuerbach doesn’t constitute the Other (as You) in the divine’s exterior realm, leaving it inside the system. Stressing the social and communicative nature of human essence, articulated by Feuerbach, Enrique Dussel comes to the understanding of the Other (a Latin American) as a condition for the full disclosure of the human essence of the European Self. “For a person, the highest reality is another person (...). Sensually perceived You is the exteriority of mind (*Self*) [author’s annotation and italics — O.B.] is the real existence” [12]. European Self, blind to the differences between You and the Other, is encapsulated in its solitude, thereby retaining abstract, formal logical character of the relationship between Self and You, preventing their “dialogue” as a transition to “true dialectics” [13].

Worth noting, that Dussel misses Feuerbach’s insufficient development of the problem of dependence, which is deemed to be of importance in the context of our topic. The feeling of dependence on nature, which the German philosopher saw as the basis of religion, is revealed by him in interpersonal relations in the form of this feeling’s natural departure from the sphere of religion. Yet, focusing on the problem of absolving a person from the sense of dependence, Feuerbach withholds the need of getting rid of dependence per se, which in the social context is determined by various forms of exploitation that distort the relationship of Self-You and the Other.

The problem of search of philosophy’s anthropological foundations gets a new start in conceptions of Søren Kierkegaard. Taking “existence” as a referential concept, the Danish philosopher makes ethics to the center of anthropological problems, thereby deepening it. Kierkegaard postulates the existence, denying systematization, as the basis of reality, its irrefutable and fundamental fact. Interiorization of truth is thus the consequence of the reduction of the ontological basis to human personality. By denying the universal, abstract nature of truth and its involvement exclusively in the process of cognition, S. Kierkegaard takes it to the *interior* of man, providing his own understanding: “the truth is not what you know but what you are” [14]. The shapes of the problem of the Other are outlined in antithesis *existence — system*. The problem receives its solution in the context of analysis of the change of types of existence as “ways of being in truth”. Kierkegaard reduces the movement of existence to three modes: *aesthetic*, *ethical* and *religious*. Their distinctive feature is the degree of complexity within which a personality is formed (and hence its ethical reality).

In the first case, hedonism becomes the determinant of existential experience. The principle of pleasure, which constitutes its content, subjugates an individual restraining his spiritual and intellectual potencies, preventing their development and consequentially turning him into a deserter, escaping the need for self-determination. Existential rootlessness and void of an *aesthetic person* speak of unauthenticity of his existence.

An *ethical individual* is a kind of counter-measure to an *aesthetic person*. The choice, defining self-identity, is a

constituent moment. The modus in its center is virtue. By combining with it the concept of duty, an *ethical individual* submits himself to it, actualizing Self in service. In such an experience, he finds himself as unique and singular. By denying Self as an end in itself and establishing it as a means, Self/singularity implements the universality. Despite the more complicated modus of a form (in comparison with the aesthetic modus), ethical modus retains the traits of inauthentic existence.

A person finds his existential authenticity only in the religious modus. Captivated by faith, by the desire for the Absolute, an individual experiences the highest degree of concentration of his spiritual powers and potencies. As a result, Self is crystallized in its fullness and integrity, acquiring a purpose. If for the description of the first two existential modes one may use the concept of movement [15], then the third modus imposes on the concept, not just restriction but prohibition. S. Kierkegaard defines that transition as a “leap” only possible in faith. A distinctive feature of a *religious individual* is his infinite interest in the reality of the Other, i.e. God, in relation to Whom a person must be constantly determining himself.

Dussel is impressed by Kierkegaard’s metaphysics. The latter removes Hegelian identity which had previously abolished the distinction between God and man and, overcoming pantheism, reveals the Other at the theological level. Dussel sees the Danish philosopher’s radical anti-Hegelian attitude in the definition of God as an object of faith: “faith understands the reality of the Other not as a possibility but as something absurd, incomprehensible. Absurdity is the revelation of the eternal truth in time.” [16] According to Kierkegaard, absurdity is an instrument of generating a universal conflict in the Hegelian rational systematic world, where absurdity finds its ground in the said conflict. Absurdity contradicts logic, has no sense, and denies Totality its foundation.

The Other by his very presence reshapes what can be called the content of epistemic states — with faith is included in it along with knowledge. In this regard, the Danish philosopher is akin to idealist F. Schelling, who justifies the possibility of a posteriori knowledge (positive philosophy) through a priority of the Revelation. Dussel appeals to Schelling’s understanding of faith as knowledge of “the most reasonable”, as “only in it there is something in which every doubt is dissolved, something so positive that any further transition to something other is abolished” [17].

Dussel considers the breakthrough to the transcendent, conceptualized by S. Kierkegaard in the theological version of the Other, to be undoubted merit of the Danish philosopher. Yet this explanatory model, from the Latin American thinker’s point of view, suffers from insufficiency and therefore doesn’t allow drawing the Other out of “oblivion”. Kierkegaard opposed existence to reason but failed to overcome ethical subjectivism and European individualism. In his “leap” to God, he vaulted over anthropology. Dussel doesn’t consider this issue specifically but it seems that this point requires further discussion.

The impossibility of solving the problem of the Other goes beyond the limitations imposed by Kierkegaard on the ethical modus. By stating ethics as the highest and the ultimate task of an individual, urging the latter to submit to the “rational canons” [18], the philosopher frees ethics from religious and metaphysical premises, therefore “simplifying” it. In ethically simplified modus only accomplished deeds are incriminating and so the necessity of repentance for the unaccomplished deeds is abolished. The ethical modus becomes similarly irrelevant in the case of the salvation of the corrupted sensual will, for only faith can be its salvation. Kierkegaard rejects Feuerbach’s formula of anthropological humanism “man to man is God” because of its nonsense and emptiness. Instead, he pushes such existentials as sin and repentance beyond the boundaries of ethics into the religious modus, ascribing them the categorical meanings. In this context, sin is a violation of God’s commandment, and not a deed, contradicting the norms of human life. Sin is a result of a person falling from God’s grace but not from other people. Similarly, only in relation to God will it be necessary to repent that “he first loved us” and not vice versa [19].

By “leap” to God Kierkegaard removes the need for European Self to feel guilty in front of the Others for the sin of Conquista (el pecado de la Conquista). Let us interpret this event as suggested by E. Dussel, through the prism of the biblical myth of Cain and Abel: “Cain killed Abel. He killed his brother — the Other. By killing the Other, he committed fratricide” [20]. Following this logic, Kierkegaard’s ethics don’t require from Self repentance for the fact that the Other through the openness first loved Self, before Self loved the Other.

The appeal to the ideas of the representatives of the anthropologically inclined line of European philosophy allows Dussel to design the objectives that contribute to the solution of the problem of the Other, and to the justification of its status in the context of the development of modern philosophical discourse, namely:

- To reveal the concept of the Other;
- To determine a place of the Other (as the sphere of its location) in the ontological order with due regard to its presence/inclusion;
- To identify methodological requirements and conditions allowing the Other’s interpretation;
- To determine the nature or type representing the Other’s discourse.

In its final form, the problem of the Other receives its solution in the context of Dussel analyzing the works of the French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, who conducted a subsequent and thorough criticism of M. Heidegger’s ontology. That issue has already been conceptualized in the Russian research papers [21] and therefore the present article doesn’t presuppose its re-discussion.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Latin American philosopher’s articulation of issue of the Other was a continuation of the reaction, that arose

within the European discourse and was aimed at overcoming the conceptual systems, that had been proposed by the taxonomist philosophers, genetically consistent with Antiquity, Aristotle, in particular, and reaching their climax in Hegel’s philosophy. The discourse, emerging from the priority of the principle of universality, ultimately led to the loss of personality in the form of the anthropological principle. This was the trigger for the search and construction of new ontological projects, in which there would be no place for an individual.

As is evident from the presented reasoning, the basis for the transition from philosophy of essence to philosophy of existence was (Hegelian) system in its “inverted” form. A group of reformers — F. Schelling, L. Feuerbach, S. Kierkegaard, and E. Dussel, who rightfully belongs to them, — preserves the thematic and subject traits of traditional philosophy and offers newfound solutions to old issues. The degree of irrationality of being acts as a measure of their opposition: *positivity of unthinkable* (F. Schelling), *human sensuality* (L. Feuerbach), *existence* (S. Kierkegaard), and *the Other* (E. Dussel).

Dussel’s desire to align philosophical thinking on the anthropological dimension of issues may be evaluated as a way to solve the “regional” problem of the Other, through which it is possible to move to the understanding of the “universality” in human development, that is, to carry out the transition from the European paradigm of “universal contextualism” to Latin American “contextual universalism”.

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