

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

One of my greatest honors as a human rights scholar and advocate has been to translate this book and several other notable texts by Enrique Dussel. His death in November 2023, as this book was entering production, was a great loss for all who were inspired by his work and example (globally and especially in Latin America) and has deep additional personal resonance for those of us who had the privilege of his persistently generous mentorship and support. This book is dedicated to his memory.

There are two different, intertwined dimensions to translation processes of this kind. The challenges in terms of linguistics, style, and terminology are the most obvious and often daunting ones, and will be briefly discussed below. Others are of a more conceptual character, which relate to the transdisciplinary nature of Dussel's work. These are especially striking in this book, because they embody what is in essence a highly unusual process of disciplinary "translation" in itself that lays a foundational, epistemological bridge between Marxist scholarship and that of liberation theology.

This highlights what is most polemical about this book as it exposes and explores the theological threads embedded in Karl Marx's thinking, which disrupt the deep, generalized misunderstanding of his work as supposedly antireligious or explicitly atheist, as Stalinist or Maoist dogma came to dictate. Meanwhile it is worth noting, in a deadly dialectical twist, how those associated with liberation theology in Latin America and

beyond have been systematically silenced, persecuted (both by right-wing military dictatorships sustained by the United States, and by the Vatican) and killed for their supposed complicity with, or echoing of, Marxist discourses.

This book and Dussel's monumental work and life as a whole have been dedicated to the in-depth exploration of the emergent architecture of the principle of liberation throughout human history, which includes but transcends Marxism and the secularist and faith-based revolutionary and national liberation movements that it has inspired, as well as modernity and its origins in coloniality, racism, patriarchy, and ecocide. These are the echoes that we can hear in the Zapatista Indigenous autonomous communities of Chiapas, Mexico, or in the streets of Puno, Cuzco, and Lima, and throughout Peru, today. Dussel's heterodoxy in this sense is an approach that ends up being the most faithful to the origins of both Christianity and Marxism and to their most transformative contemporary expressions, which are echoed in other faiths from Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam to Indigenous spiritualities throughout the world.

Dussel has also been a crucial mentor and inspiration for me—not only as one of the most significant forerunners of what has become known as decolonial thought and the commensurate rethinking of human rights history, theory, and praxis from below but as my colleague (and rector) during the period when I was based as a research professor at the *Maestría en Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos* (Master's Program in Defense and Promotion of Human Rights) at the *Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de México* (Autonomous University of Mexico City). This has included Dussel's reiterated support for key human rights initiatives—including the International Tribunal of Conscience—that seek to hold Mexican and US officials accountable for serious, generalized violations of the rights of migrants in transit on Mexican territory and at the border (who, like Dussel, have sought protection from persecution) and the negation of the right to a dignified life in their countries of origin.

The most important goal of the linguistic dimensions of this translation has been to adequately render and reflect the essence of Dussel's meaning, voice, and style in English, for a contemporary “transmodern” and intercultural audience, on a global scale, thirty years or more after most of the book was first published in Spanish. This has implied many difficult choices along the way, including the need to navigate the

book's labyrinth of reliance on texts by Marx, the Bible, and historical, theological, and philosophical scholarship in multiple languages, from classical Greek, Hebrew, and Latin to German, French, and Spanish, among others. It also includes the need to balance the book's specialized character and corresponding language with its intended accessibility to a broader audience.

Dussel's Spanish is recognizably both Argentine and Mexican in origin, but also has a deeply continental, hemispheric dimension as a quintessential expression of contemporary Latin American identity and consciousness, which is deliberately intended to also have global, cosmopolitical, and scientific significance and recognition. The methodology of this translation was thus also framed as part of the positioning of Dussel's work not only as Latin American or from the perspective of the Global South but as an oeuvre of truly global sweep and stature. This was underlined by my physical location in Taiwan, at the other edge of the world, during most of the translation and revision process, as I sought to read and understand Dussel more deeply from the perspective of Sinophone, Buddhist, and Taoist spirituality and civilization, as well as that of my own multiracial Colombian immigrant roots and longtime residency in Mexico.

In disciplinary terms, this book and its method of translation deeply reflect Dussel's convergent formation and vocations as a historian, theologian, and philosopher. The text also includes the beginning of an autobiographical reflection that has become increasingly evident in his work amid the regional and global reflections and commemorations that it so powerfully evokes and should inspire. This book and its multiple potential resonances should be at the heart of these observances.

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