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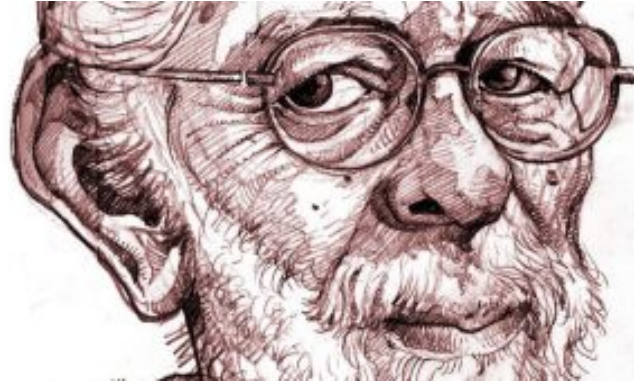
Juan J. Paz And Miño Cepeda
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Enrique Dussel: Liberating Thought in Latin America

From philosophical and historical reflection, Dussel founded the thought or philosophy of Latin American liberation... In Latin America, freedom is, at the same time, a real process in social liberation from internal and external systems of oppression and exploitation. It is a movement of history that cannot be stopped.



It is generally believed that in history - as well as in economics, which are "sister" sciences in this regard - if there is no data to prove the facts, reality has simply been replaced by imagination and verbiage. To a large extent, there is reason, because history and economics cannot be made without concrete, existing, verifiable data in sources. There is a reason why it is argued that these two are the most "empirical" social sciences of all.



Enrique Dussel: Philosopher and liberation theologian

'In memoriam' of one of the main referents of the decolonial turn and, in the political field, of the Latin American left

But, at the same time, believing that the truth lies in the "data" is a matter that the Greek philosophers already clarified in antiquity and that the thinkers of the Enlightenment refuted since the eighteenth century. Undoubtedly, it is necessary to examine a multitude of data and facts in order to be sure in the analysis, but behind them are hidden the thousand and one factors that originate them and that the researcher must make clear. The Enlightenment considered that historians were not, strictly speaking, called to know the world, but to provide the data and facts to *know* it, which was the responsibility of philosophers, the only ones capable of looking for the *reasons* that are hidden behind events. Understanding the *meaning, rationality and purpose* of historical events corresponded to what came to be known as *the philosophy of history*.



Portrait of *Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel* by Schlesinger, Oil on canvas, 36 X 28.8 cm, 1831. Alte Nationalgalerie Collection, Berlin.

["Philosophy, certain that reason governs the world, will be convinced that what has happened is subject to the concept and will not overturn the truth, as is fashionable today." Friedrich Hegel](#)

In 1820, the German idealist philosopher [G.W.F. Hegel \(1770-1831\)](#) gave some famous lectures that were only published in 1837 and have been translated and edited into Spanish

as "[Lessons on the Philosophy of Universal History](#)". For Hegel, "*reason rules the world*," which means that events in history have a *raison d'être*, an inner work hidden in world history and that it must be demonstrated. With impressive erudition, he traversed the four epochs in which he comprised universal history: the Eastern World (China, India, Persia, Western Asia, and Egypt); Greek World; Roman World; and the Germanic World, with Byzantium, the Middle Ages and the Contemporary Age, which flows into the Germany of his time. Among all the passions, wars, advances, infamies, altruisms, goodness or evils, universal history moves (*dialectically*) to an *end*: to achieve the *freedom of the spirit*. It is not the one that liberals think, nor the individual one ("historical individuals" are victims of *the cunning of reason*, which mobilizes them as its instrument). It is the *freedom* of the *general spirit*, which passes from the conscience of the family to civil society and culminates in the State. Not just any law, but what Hegel calls the *rule of law*. Nor is this path to *freedom* the one that, distorting Hegel, Francis Fukuyama proclaimed, with enormous media publicity, as the "end of history" (1992). This political scientist argued that, with the collapse of socialism in the USSR, the world was entering a general era, in which the *free enterprise/market economy* and *Western democracy* definitively triumphed, an idea that, years later, he had to retract, in the face of the historical failure of neoliberalism.

In this Hegelian journey from East to West, America is not part of "universal" history. Here, the *universal spirit* is not realized. America is pure *geography*, which prevents the *self-consciousness* of freedom. Even in North America, the state is only *the protector of property*. Therefore, it does not enter into the *state of freedom* that Hegel conceives. America is in the "prehistory" of humanity. What happens there is nothing more than an "echo of the Old World" and a "reflection of other people's lives". For Hegel, "[in future times its historical importance will be revealed, perhaps in the struggle between North and South America.](#)"



The Argentine/Mexican philosopher [Enrique Dussel](#) ([24/12/1934-5/11/2023](#)), who passed away a few days ago and is one of the most solid thinkers in the region, widely recognized and remembered, had a deep knowledge of Hegel's philosophy of history. With well-founded scholarship, Dussel questioned the Westernist and Europeanist vision. In his numerous studies he vindicated the cultures of Mesopotamia and the Middle East, as well as those of Asia and Africa. But he paid special attention to the history of the native peoples of the Americas. He understood perfectly well that the scheme of historical division into Prehistory and Ancient, Middle, Modern and Contemporary Ages, which Hegel had used, was useless. [Latin America](#) has nothing to do with the prehistory of humanity in the terms applied to the origin and first social formations. Nor is it part of Antiquity, nor of the Middle Ages. For millennia, autonomous cultures developed in the Americas and the great civilizations of the Mayas, Aztecs and Incas were the result of all previous social evolution. These societies are part of the universal culture. They came up with powerful developments and insights. And this history is the least known, often diminished in the official histories of the different

countries and relegated in the Europeanist and Westernist visions. But the American advances were destroyed by conquest, invasion and colonization by the mercantilist powers of Europe. Thus, Latin America became part of "universal" history only in the Modern Age, but as a region subjugated and dominated by colonialism. Thanks to independence, the region took over the reins of its own construction. So it is necessary to distinguish between Pre-Columbian America, Iberian America (or Hispanic America for the most part) and Latin America.

Dussel sought to clarify the very character of Latin American history. And he understood very well that, in his *dialectic*, the region took the path of freedom, understood, moreover, as the axis of social liberation, on the one hand, and *liberation from colonialism, capitalism and imperialism*, on the other. For this reason, he was a Marxist intellectual committed to the causes of the Latin American peoples, to social movements, the Cuban Revolution, Bolivarianism and the ideals of the left in the world.

From philosophical and historical reflection, Dussel founded the thought or *philosophy of Latin American liberation*. A vision that moves away from Hegelian philosophy. It does not end in an ideal state that embodies the freedom of the spirit, as Hegel did, but in the investigation of reality, on the basis of his historical knowledge, in order to understand that in Latin America freedom is, at the same time, a real process in *social liberation* from internal and external systems of oppression and exploitation. It is a movement of history that cannot be stopped.

Juan J. Paz-y-Miño Cepeda for La Pluma, Ecuador November 13, 2023

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