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That said, we have now completed the second volume of *Radical Philosophy Review*. The journal has thus far attracted a broad range of contributors. Radical politics rarely breed agreement, and it is our hope that this dimension of radicalism will continue to regard this journal as a positive place for its most rigorous and daring expression.

Lewis R. Gordon

Six Theses toward a Critique of Political Reason: The Citizen as Political Agent

ENRIQUE DUSSEL

Translated by Christina Lloyd and Eduardo Mendieta

Abstract: The author explores the viability of rational political action—here understood as a philosophy of liberation—through an examination of practical and material, practical-discursive, strategic and instrumental, critically normative, discursive, and strategic criteria.

We will briefly articulate six theses, which are general hypotheses, for a future political philosophy. They are six moments, or constitutive determinations (one may also say general principles) of all possible political action. For now they open up a space of reflection which will form part of a *Critique of Political Reason* which I am currently elaborating.

INTRODUCTION: THE REDUCTIONIST FORMALIST FALLACY

It was the goal of Aristotle's politics of the *to koinon agathon* [the common good], Aquinas's *bonum commune*, Hegel's organic state as *Sittlichkeit* [ethical life], Max Scheler's theory of the actualization of values, and even the more recent idea and practice of the *Welfare State*, to link up *material* contents with politics.¹ These projects have met with severe criticism. Contemporary political philosophy, in fact, can be read as an attempt to uncouple substantive ethical orientations from the practice and formulation of political justice. In more recent times, the difficulty of grounding political philosophy on *material* content has been met by both liberal (such as that of Jürgen Habermas or Karl-Otto Apel) and procedural discursive (such as that of Jürgen Habermas or Karl-Otto Apel) political philosophy with the rejection of all *material* politics. Both have rejected all *material* politics because this has been seen as either particularistic or non-

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generalizable, and thus a detriment to the exercising of a pluralist and tolerant democracy; or because it can be seen as conflating political action with economics. Upon eradicating the economic and ecological level (what is material) *ratio politica* may only move within the exclusive space of formal democratic validity of the legitimate structures of political systems, or of law, or of contractual (Rawls) or discursive (Habermas) participation within the public sphere.

This could be acceptable in countries experiencing late capitalism, countries which practice the *Rule of Law*, and which due to their level of development guarantee the survival of all their citizens. Within these type of societies, legitimate is that which complies with the procedural requirements of the democratic system, of the exercise of communicative power and of the system of laws. But this appears to be insufficient for a political philosophy that reflects out of and upon the real situation of our planet, from the impoverished and peripheral underdeveloped countries, which make up 85% of the world's population. Since 1989, the *Rule of Law* in Latin America, Africa, and Asia is in a precarious state, and mere survival is in no way guaranteed for the majority of the populations in many nations in these continents. It is from this context that we discover the necessity for critical reflection within contemporary political philosophy.

I. FUNDAMENTAL POLITICS

In this first part we will sketch the first three moments of political philosophy's archetypic, that is, its foundational principles.

Thesis 1. *Ratio politica* is complex precisely because it exercises different types of rationality. It has as its foundational content the imperative to produce, reproduce and develop human life within a community, and in the last instance of humanity in general in the long run. Therefore, the practical-political claim to *truth* is universal. In this sense political reason is *practical and material*.

This first moment is so obvious that it has remained in the background, hidden away from political philosophy. I would like to give four well-known examples, and I cite them precisely because they are familiar, so as to indicate how obvious the point is. Speaking from the rationalism of a hegemonic Amsterdam, Spinoza posits in his *Theologico-Political Treatise* (1670), in chapter XVI, that:

When we reflect that men without mutual help, or the aid of reason, must needs live most miserably . . . we shall plainly see that men must necessarily come to an agreement to live together as securely and well as possible if they are to enjoy as a whole the rights which naturally belong to them as individuals. . . .²

It is reason, in effect, which serves as the medium which conserves the secure and peaceful life, and "there exists no one who does not desire to live safely, without fear, which cannot happen if each person lives according to their own caprices." The argument is based on the need to move away from a naturally chaotic state (because of our passions or inclinations, that is our animal nature) in

order to pass into a state of civil or political order which, according to reason, secures *life*. John Locke is even more explicit in his *Two Treatises of Government*, when he writes in the second treatise, chapter 2 ("The state of Nature"):

. . . [T]hough this be a State of Liberty, yet it is not a State of Licence, though Man in that State have an uncontrollable Liberty, to dispose of this Person or Possessions, yet he has not Liberty to destroy himself, or so much as any Creature in his Possession, but where some nobler use, than its bare Preservation calls for it. The State of Nature has a Law of Nature to govern it, which obliges very one: And Reason, which is that Law, teaches all Mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his Life, Health, Liberty, or Possessions. . . . Every one as he is bound to preserve himself . . . to preserve the rest of Mankind.³

Following Hooker's line of thought, Locke shows that in the "state of nature" we are incapable of securing for ourselves the essentials needed in order to "live according to our human dignity." The state of nature is akin to a "state of war" in which the adversary may easily take our life away. And because human beings do not have power over their own lives, they cannot dispose of power so as to end their own lives. The transition to private property, in the same way, is established for being the most advantageous to life. In the first place, it is true that natural reason teaches us that once born, humans have the right to preserve their life, which entails eating, drinking, and other activities which naturally secure our survival. But, in the second place, it is through our work that we make the earth useful and available for life, and:

The same Law of nature, that does by this means give us Property, does also bound that *Property* too. . . . As much as any one can make use of to any advantage of *life* before it spoils; so much he may by his labour fix a Property in (Locke 1965: 332).

Until here Locke's argument is based always on human life. Suddenly, however, thanks to money great possessions may be accumulated, which permit the exchange of truly useful goods and articles. Once money enters the fore the meaning of Locke's discourse changes, beginning with chapter 6 of the *Second Treatise*, and he no longer employs life as his fundamental argument. The primary end of political or civil society now becomes the defense of property. Life definitively loses its significance.

Similarly, Jean-Jacques Rousseau writes in book 1, chapter 6 of his *Social Contract*:

I suppose men to have reached the point at which the obstacles in the way of their preservation in the state of nature show their power of resistance to be greater than the resources at the disposal of each individual for his maintenance in that state. That primitive condition can then subsist no longer: and the human race would perish unless it changed its manner of existence.⁴

In order to avoid extinction, in order to preserve life it is necessary to move to a higher "form of association." Life is once again the basis of the argument.

I would now like to refer to two contemporary philosophers who have suffered persecution firsthand. The first one is Hans Jonas, a Jewish philosopher who lived through the Nazi persecution and exiled himself in the United States, and who developed an ethics of life as responsibility. The other is Ignacio Ellacuría, a Christian philosopher who was assassinated by the military dictatorship orchestrated by the Pentagon and the CIA for his political commitments in El Salvador. One is a philosopher of the struggle for life in the first part of the twentieth century, and the other in the second part. For humanity, since its origin, human life was a non-problematic natural event. It was death which always appeared as enigmatic. Biology was still a science, devoid of any ethical obligations. When the "Roman Club" first exposed the "limits of growth" in 1972, life began to appear problematic, not just theoretically but ethically pressing and anguishing. The vulnerability, imitation, precariousness, and even the beginning of extinction of life on the planet is now seen as the possible collective suicide of humanity:

Take, for instance, . . . the critical vulnerability of nature to man's technological intervention—unsuspected before it began to show itself in damage already done. This discovery, whose shock led to the concept and nascent science of ecology, alters the very concept of ourselves as a causal agency in the larger scheme of things. It brings to light, through the effects, that the nature of human action has *de facto* changed, and that an object of an entirely new order—no less than the whole biosphere of the planet—has been added to what we must be responsible for because of our power over it.⁵

Which is put more pointedly later on in the following way:

Bacon's formula says that knowledge is power. Now the Baconian program by itself, that is, under its own management, has at the height of its triumph revealed its insufficiency in the lack of control over itself, thus the impotence of its power to save not only man from himself but also nature from man . . . power has become self-acting, while its promise has turned into threat, its prospect of salvation into apocalypse. Power over the power is required now before the halt is called by catastrophe itself—the power to overcome that impotence over against the self-feeding compulsion of power to its progressive exercise (Jonas 1979: 141).

Illustrating the fundamental constitution of the "materiality of history," and after analyzing the presence, materiality, spatiality, and temporality of historical being, Ellacuría arrives at the "biological basis of history." He writes:

Even though society is not an organism . . . different human groups are those which biologically see themselves as forced to make history. Many of the natural as well as optional realizations are due to fundamentally biological

determinants . . . Even more so when we attend to the riches and plenitude of the necessities and the biologically considered life powers.⁶

Unlike the two aforementioned philosophers, Franz Hinkelammert situates himself more decidedly within the strict sense of "human life" and advances the importance of material content in its economic aspect, which includes the ecological dimension. This is best illustrated in his work, *Democracy and Totalitarianism*:

Certainly, one cannot assure the material reproduction of human life without at the same time assuring the reproduction of material nature. Since the process of production is a transformation of material nature into items which satisfy the necessities based on work processes, the exploitation of nature will always mean the destruction of human life.⁷

The task of *ratio politica*, therefore, in so far as it is practical-material reason, is to deal with the production, reproduction, and the development of human life in community. Macro-politics manages the stated imperative at the level of humanity as a whole, in the "long run," and takes political responsibility of the production and reproduction of the biosphere (ecology), thereby working as the systems of the division of labor, production, distribution, and exchange (economy). When we say "in the long run," we refer to the next five thousand years, for example. Approximately five thousand years ago the planet, with sufficiently mature civilizations like those of Mesopotamia and Egypt, was populated by 60 to 100 million human beings. At the end of the twentieth century, humanity will have almost multiplied its demographic occupation by a hundred-fold. Overpopulation, the finitude of non-renewable resources, global warming, the hole in the ozone layer in the South Pole, all demonstrate that, materially, "planetary macro-politics" should adopt new criteria for the production, reproduction, and the development of human life or life will soon disappear. In economic production, the politician should implement criteria which would lower the rate at which non-renewable resources (petroleum, for example) are used; increase the use of recyclable fixed resources (iron or copper); increase the use of renewable resources (solar or hydraulic power, wood, synthetic plastics, alcohol combustion, etc.). From Aristotle to Rawls, never did politics have to occupy itself with these duties. *Materially* speaking, it has now become an absolute priority. But it is the end of modern politics as advanced by figures such as Machiavelli in the Renaissance, Locke in capitalism, Bacon in the scientific revolution. Political philosophy still has not subsumed this dimension. The green parties, knowing little political economy, are the products of a material newness and will play a major role in the third millennium.

The carrying out of other ecological-economic activities on the international, national, regional, ethnic planes of practice-material political reason are partial, fragmentary aspects, specific to this fundamental criterion of political truth,

which is at the same time an ethico-political material principle. This concerns the political duty of production, reproduction, and development of human life for all humanity, and as its condition of possibility, also the preservation of the biosphere. This "duty" is the fundamental deontic material principle of all politics that may be possible. And this is because the citizen is a living corporeality, a needing subjectivity, and a self-reflexive subject who has human life in its charge (its, as well as that of all humanity in the last instance). In a lucid, and convincing manner, Hinkelammert writes:

The material reproduction of human life is the ultimate instance of all human life and its liberty [a point we will discuss in the second thesis]: the dead man, or the man threatened by death—ceases to be free, independently from the social context in which he lives (1990: 8).

The material aspects of power still remain to be examined. In fact, since Schopenhauer being or reality is seen as Will (*Willen*). In our case it translates to "Will to Live" (*Willen zum Leben*) which registers in Nietzsche as the "Will to power" (*Wille zur Macht*), which could rightly be interpreted as mobilizing and actualizing "power" which arises from life so as to create life, and thus even as the ultimate basis for such a Power. But this material question of politics should be more rigorously treated in a lengthier project. It is also the citizen's "Will to Live" which serves as the ultimate basis of the material conception (not solely procedural formal) of legitimacy, as we will indicate further on.

Thesis II. *Ratio politica* should discursively, procedurally or democratically achieve validity (formal legitimacy) through the effective, symmetrical and democratic public participation of all the affected, who are citizens as autonomous subjects, and who exercise the complete autonomy of the political community of communication. It is this political community of communication, as the intersubjective community of popular sovereignty, that then serves as the source and destination of law. Its decisions therefore have a *validity* claim or universal political *legitimacy*. In this sense, *ratio politica* is *practical-discursive political reason*.

We now enter a much more traveled terrain. It deals with the discursive moment of the consensus, of autonomy, freedom, popular sovereignty, which could be called, according to Jürgen Habermas, "Democracy-Principle"⁸ (if we keep in mind that the principle enunciated in thesis one could have been called the "Life-Principle"). The material principle of the exercise of political reason cannot constitute itself, nor can it wield power without the mediation of the political-discursive reason. In other words, if we pose the question: "How do we politically produce human life in community?" The only answer would be "It can only be decided democratically or discursively according to the laws institutionalized by public legitimacy or validity". In other words: democratically.

All the hypothetical theory of modern contractualism is based on the moral and

political exigencies of that which is normative, which in turn originates in the free and symmetrical participation of those affected. Upon reading Rousseau's formulation in *The Social Contract*, which treats the problem of original consensus, we find that it is necessary:

... to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before (Rousseau 1973: 174).

Or as Spinoza defines it:

A body politic of this kind is called a Democracy, which may be defined as a society which wields all its power as a whole. The sovereign power is not restrained by any laws, but everyone is bound to obey it in all things (Spinoza 1951: 205).

All contractualist theories, including John Rawls's and Robert Nozick's, fall into an inevitable aporia due to their metaphysical individualism (and in some cases quasi-anarchical, in terms of the intrinsic perverseness of the state as an institution). Given that a human being is an individual and free being by nature, all "institutions" inevitably produce a certain repression, discipline, and constraint which is contrary to nature. Leftist anarchy—such as proposed by Bakunin—also holds that all "institutions" are perverse, because they "repress" pristine and communitarian human liberty. Bakunin proposes to destroy institutions by means of direct action; Nozick proposes to reduce them to the most "minimal" influence possible. Kant clearly posed the question in his *The Metaphysic of Morals*:

... one can locate the concept of right directly in the possibility of connecting universal reciprocal coercion with the freedom of everyone. That is to say, just as right generally has as its object only what is external in action, so strict right, namely that which is not mingled with anything ethical, requires only external grounds for determining choice.⁹

Law as the external factor imposes itself upon the faculties of desire (material, always egotistical), on all individuals by "coercion" (*Zwang*), because "law is linked to the right to use coercion." Action according to law is not ethical ("that which is not mingled with anything ethical," as we copied above) and so it does not have any normativity, but mere external legality. The dilemma has grown in magnitude: individual morality has been excised from the coercive, external legality of law.

Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas have solved this aporia by departing from a "discursive community," thus overcoming metaphysical individualism: it is the community which behaves without unnatural constraint, as both the *source* of law (giving unto itself the laws), with discursive equality, liberty, and autonomy, and as the *destination* of the law (it needs to obey itself). Theoretically,

the one who is affected has been the symmetrical participant in the determination of the very regulations that will affect her/him. It is for this reason that the decisions that affect all are valid for all, and since they have been mediated by "the democratic principle," which regulates the institutionalization of all mediations, may then be considered legitimate. The concept of popular sovereignty, whereby the community is both the origin and destination of the law, exercised by a historic-discursive community thus resolves the aporia. The democratic principle, moreover, is not only a merely formal, external and legal procedure. Instead, it has a normative basis since it means the application of the "discursive principle" to the public political level. Habermas's contribution is formally a great advancement in the delimitation of "politico-discursive reason" and should be subsumed into a detailed political philosophy. However, once he negates the material level he inevitably falls into reductive formalism. According to Habermas, legitimacy is established in a purely discursive and formal level. He does not comprehend that a political system "loses legitimacy" once it does not acceptably treat and thereby maintain human life for its citizens. One must bring to bear the material aspect of human life and interaction when treating the concept of legitimacy, so as to enrich the purely formal or procedural conception of political justice. In postcolonial, peripheral, and poor countries, economic production is an essential political dimension of legitimacy. For example, in the present, the impoverishment of many nations due to neoliberal economic policies has entailed the delegitimation of many governments which have formally complied with the democratic principle, but have materially neglected the process of legitimization. Here, it concerns knowing how to articulate John Rawls's first principle along with the second (socio-economic) principle, a topic poorly analyzed in his *A Theory of Justice*. Furthermore, it is for this reason that his application of the "overlapping consensus" remains only at the politico-cultural level, thereby leaving behind the crucial ecological-economic and social levels.

The material principle of politics (the reproduction of human life) and the formal principle (the democratic principle) are mutually articulated in the constitution of objects proper to them, in the fluctuations of its process, thereby implicating itself within the application. Nothing pertaining to the development of human life in community can be politically decided without the mediation of the formal levels which achieve public validity or legitimacy that the discursive principle confers. But all that is democratically discussed should be oriented by the claim to practical truth of the first material principle of the imperative, abstractly and universally formulated in the prohibition of a maxim that is unable to be universalized—as Wellmer puts it: "Thou shall not kill!" It is not democratically legitimate to decide upon a collective suicide; as Wittgenstein wrote: "If suicide is permitted, everything is permitted."

In this case the citizen is a member of an intersubjective, linguistic, rational, democratic community. In other words, the citizen forms part of the democratic

participation secured by popular sovereignty; which is in turn the origin and destination of law, power, and all subsequent subsystems.

Thesis 3. *Ratio politica*, in its dimension of strategic or instrumental feasibility, should consider the logical, empirical, ecological, economic, social, historical, etc., conditions of *real possibility* of the implementation of a maxim, a norm, law, acts, institutions; or political system. This will grant the maxim, norm, law, action, institution, subsystem, etc. political success and efficacy. In this case it concerns a strategic, or even instrumental political reason, which is positively subsumed within the ethical complexity of political reason.

All that has been indicated in that *thesis 3* should operated inside of the parameters determined by the two principles treated in the pre instrumental, *political reason*.

Max Weber distinguished between formal and material reason. The first stems from "empirical judgements" which may be developed through science; the second operates with "value judgements" which are subjective, like taste judgements, and therefore cannot be inserted into scientific discourse. The two types of aforementioned rationality in Theses 1 and 2 are unknown to Weber. This inevitably places him in the reductionism of "instrumental reason," which was so thoroughly criticized by the first Frankfurt School (Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse). Formal rationality is subject to quantification and calculation, and is aimed at ends already in place in the existing system (whether they be political, economic, technological, etc.). There exists no possibility of posing or judging ends. The ethical and political problem of strategic reason consists, precisely, in becoming aware of the compatibility of the ends of action (that is, with reference to formal rationality; for example, the goals or ends of the bureaucratic system or capitalist firm) with the possibility of maintaining human life (the truth of the end), and its legitimate democratic determination (the validity of the end). An action will be integrally political if it complies with the three principles: material-practical, formal rationality of truth, and validity of the end.

Thus, the entire problem of forms of government is not situated exactly at the level of the three enunciated principles, because these are universal, abstract conditions, even when generally speaking of feasibility.¹⁰ The democratic principle, for example, must operate in a certain discursive universal manner (such as arriving at a valid decision by means of rational arguments with the democratic participation of those affected, in a public and institutionalized way as guaranteed by law), but as such it does not necessarily stipulate a concretely determined form of government. Universal and confidential suffrage is democratic; but such suffrage is not the only possible democratic type. The democratic principle is not an ideal type of government, but rather an ethical-political, universal principle (at level A, to use Apel's distinction).¹¹ The types of democratic government, or models by means of which democracy may be exercised, are situated already at the level of political feasibility, at the level of

mediation (level B, in Apel's terminology). Political philosophy, at the abstract level (A) analyzes the criteria and principles and still studies the criteria of the specific types of government (level B); political science forms part of its particular, more theoretical, sociological, historical studies. Singular political action (level C) determines concretely the principles and criteria of forms of political organization; through it they are either executed or transformed *de facto*.

Machiavellianism means the creation of an absolutely autonomous space where political strategic reason has no normative frames. Its end is political success, and is wont to surmount conflicts which test the effectiveness of the existing political order. Such an end justifies the means. On the contrary, political normative feasibility does not deny strategic reason, the success of political action, but subsumes it, thereby enfaming it inside the exigencies of the first two principles, which in their negative universal formulation could be reduced to two prohibitions of expressed by two maxims that are not universalizable. To cite Wellmer once more: "Thou shall not kill!" and "Thou shall neither exclude nor negate symmetry to anyone affected by that about which a concrete decision is being made!"

In this case the citizen acts as agent, situated within conditions of feasibility of the means-ends, and should thereby arrive at success by means of strategic action.

Corollary 1. Only the norm, law, action, institution or system which complies with the indicated principles can make a claim to *political justice* (the ethical political) within the established order.

The three theses are universal and abstract (level A). They are ethical-political requirements actualized in strategic action and concrete tactics (level B). It is here where science and political experience (*politiké* and political *frónesis*) bring together their contributions. *Practical truth* (the reproduction of human life, although now in concrete within different fronts such as the ecological, economic, educational, etc.) is here articulated with *political validity* (with types of concrete government, with division of powers, with objective systems of laws, rights, institutions, which are the mediations of the democratic principle) and *practical feasibility* (that takes into consideration concrete conditions at all possible empirical levels, of historical space and time, of social, technological possibilities, etc.). It is political-strategic reason that manages all the complexity of this concrete level (B), which is frequently defined as political reason as such, but in this case one could not make its strategic action compatible with the requirements of human life and the validity of popular sovereignty which it supposedly serves.

In this case the citizen is a member of a ruling political order in which s/he can carry on with a certain standard of living, participate legitimately and sovereignly within political society, through necessary institutional mediations. There exists here a simultaneous claim to both political justice and efficacious strategy. But strategic reason must be equally responsible for the effects of its action, in the short run as well as in the long run, especially when the effects of political action

are *negative* (I will call victims all those who suffer such negative effects), and not when they are positive (when these effects are positive they are readily transformed into merits of political success). Such responsibility in turn brings about other types of political rationality: critical political rationality as public principle for the development of human life and for the struggle for the recognition of needed new rights (new spaces of future validity and legitimacy).

II. CRITICAL POLITICS

The discourse of political philosophy enters into a second moment. It is now necessary to take charge of current and future effects of political action. The positive effects rightly confirm the effectiveness of measures taken and success of existing structures. Only when *negative* effects turn preponderant, and thus intolerable and unacceptable, does reflection over the actions or systems which produced them arise. Such reflection, or "critical politics," serves to make a critique of political structures which produce ecologically destructive effects or human victims. Both negative effects warn us about the need to rectify the causes of political action. Black American senior citizens, postcolonial countries oppressed by the globalization process, exploited classes, excluded populations, the marginalized, poor immigrants, ethnic groups, and so many other social groups oppressed by the present political systems, become the objects of liberation or *critical* politics.

Thesis 4. *Ratio politica* is transformed into *critical* political reason insofar as it ought to assume responsibility for the *negative* effects of decisions, laws, actions, or institutions. It should struggle for political recognition of victims of political actions, past or present. Ethical, political critique proposes to disclose what is not true, not legitimate, what is not efficacious about a decision, norm, law, action, institution or political order. *Critical political reason* is thus defined in this sense.

John Locke, that bourgeois "revolutionary" whom we have seen justify property as the end of political society, will propose negatively, at the end of *The Second Treatise on Government*, in chapter 19, "Of the Dissolution of Government," a position akin to Max Horkheimer's in *Critical Theory*, when he writes: For when the *People* are made *miserable*, and find themselves *exposed to the ill usage of Arbitrary Power*, cry up their Governors, as much as you will for Sons of *Jupiter*, let them be Sacred and Divine, descended or authorized from Heaven. . . . *The People generally ill treated*, and contrary to right, will be ready upon any occasion to ease themselves of a burden that sits heavy upon them (p. 463).

In the same vein, Horkheimer writes in "Traditional and Critical Theory":

Traditional theory may take a number of things for granted: its positive role in a functioning society, an admittedly indirect and obscure relation to the satisfaction of general needs, and participation in the self-renewing life process. But

all these exigencies about which science need not trouble itself because their fulfillment is rewarded and confirmed by the social position of the scientist, are called into question in critical thought [*Kritischen Denken*]. The goal at which the latter aims, namely the rational state of society is forced upon him by present distress [*Not der Gegenwart*]. The theory which projects such a solution to the distress does not labor in the service of an existing reality but only gives voice to the mystery of that reality.¹²

Material negativity serves as the point of departure for political criticism. In this case the citizen is the victim unjustly repressed or excluded from the current political order, barred from the possibility of participation, and from the possibility of the reproduction of his/her life. The state is then considered antidemocratic and thereby illegitimate. The three principles enunciated in the first part are here dealt with in a negative manner. In taking the perspective of the oppressed, political criticism initiates "a scientific diagnosis of the State's pathologies," as Hermann Cohen advanced.¹³ It becomes evident that self-preservation is the end of a political system when it starts to produce an intolerable number of victims, repressed, "disciplined," and alienated members of society. The "self-preservation of the political system" (for example, the existence of slavery alongside Athenian democracy in Aristotle's time) is advanced as the ultimate criterion against the very reproduction of human life itself. For this reason, who places his trust in life is criticized from the perspective of the "self-preservation of the existing system." The "valorization of value" (the ultimate criterion of capital) puts in question the reproduction of life (of the worker), but this last one should supersede the former. The critique of the self-reproduction of the system from the perspective of the development of the human life of the victim is the fundamental criterion for all critical politics, the criteria of all necessary political "transformation." Marx's political economy and the ontology of Emmanuel Levinas both concur. It is already given that the agent of political, institutional transformation cannot be only the state, even when there exists a certain possibility for internal transformation of the state. It is the "new social movements" of civil society, which with a renewed claim to political justice, transform the state. From here arises the interest in a structural critique of "micro-power," from the standpoint of difference, as was proposed by Michel Foucault. Those excluded from the political order (the insane, prisoners, homosexuals, etc.) corroborate through the "disciplinary" punishments inflicted upon them by the existence of the ruling system. The mere reality of the marginalized serves as a social, critical criterion. The question has yet to be adequately formulated and examined in contemporary political philosophy.

Thesis 5: *Ratio politica*, in as much as it is critique, should discursively and democratically, from the standpoint of excluded and stigmatized social actors, assume responsibility for: (a) negatively judging the political order as "cause" of

its victims, (b) it should then organize necessary new social movements so as (c) positively to propose alternatives to the existing political, legal, economic, educational, etc., systems. It is thus that from the struggles for the recognition of those excluded there emerge new systems of rights. These critical social movements have a growing claim to *legitimacy* (critical validity) before the decreasing legitimacy of the political order in power. Transversally they also claim universality. It is in this sense that political reason is *critical-discursive political reason*.

The excluded, victimized citizen now changes him/herself into an agent of transformation as a member of a "critical community" who struggles for the recognition of rights in civil society, in hopes of institutionalizing her/his demands within political society, the state, in the future. In the *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx's materialism, juxtaposed against the individual, cognitivist, static and functional materialism of Feuerbach, is shown in all its anthropological dimensions (with respect to living corporeality), as well as in all of its critical or negative, practical, and social aspects (for it is concerned with a subject who is immersed in "social relations"). Marx speaks of "human activity" that is carried out by the community of victims itself:

The coincidence of the transformation of circumstances and of human activity or self-transformation can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice*.¹⁴

One should refer back to thesis 2 when studying this precise level; a level which is not that of a solipsistic and merely theoretical subject, but rather which is the level of practical or strategic subjects, in critical position, and whose own transformative praxis within the system which excludes and dominates them is the very condition of possibility of the enunciation of a critical judgement (objective truth):

The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical question*. Man must prove the *truth*, i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice (*Ibid.*, italics added).

Marx discovered the "point of departure" of praxis (the critical community of the oppressed, the proletariat in its moment and specific perspective), upon affirmatively responding to the ethical interpellation of the oppressed themselves, who in turn liberate themselves.

When discussing the organization of a community of the oppressed we should not forget the genius of Rosa Luxemburg, whose praxis made explicit the convergence of *strategic praxis* and *principles* (which should be distinguished from theory, even though Luxemburg does not explicitly do so). Upon criticizing the opportunists or reformists of the German Social Democratic Party, she asks herself: What distinguishes them from revolutionaries? She then answers:

A certain hostility to "theory." This is quite natural, for our "theory," that is, the principles of scientific socialism, imposes clearly marked limitations to practical activity—insofar as it concerns the aims of this activity, the means used in attaining these aims, and the method employed in this activity. It is quite natural for people who run after immediate "practical" results to want to free themselves from such limitations and to render their practice independent of our "theory."¹⁵

As one may observe, theory (which Luxemburg places within quotation marks) is something more when considered in its entirety: for the moment it may be described as a *series of principles*. These principles are the ones already elaborated. These principles, ethical and political conditions of possibility of the law, norms, actions, subsystems, political institutions, and limits which enframe possibilities, are those which "impose strict parameters upon political activity" in Luxemburg's analysis. In other words, it is not possible to exercise "any political action" nor use any means, nor choose any political end, etc. One may only discursively decide "those actions which are possible" within the strictly defined parameters circumscribed by said principles. In a startlingly precise manner, in terms of strategic organization, Luxemburg indicates that the "principles" limit and contain criteria for decision "with reference to (a) the ends to be achieved, (b) the *means* for struggle which are applied, and c) finally the *modes* of struggle." These three levels of strategic-instrumental political reason define the horizon of mediations. Our great intellectual politician clearly describes the ways in which strategic reason should be articulated alongside a democratic, material reason, otherwise known as *strategic-critical* political reason. It has now become possible to understand that political material and democratic-formal critical reason "posit" the ends of strategic-critical political reason. It is from these posited ends that we may discover means (not "any" mean is acceptable, just as not "any" end will do), and utilizes tactical methods for a concrete actualization that does not contradict the aforementioned principles. For this reason, not just any method is possible, since all of these remain enframed inside the political possibilities permitted (or dictated) by the enunciated principles.

A strategic-critical political reason is not a strategic reason which simply intends to realize ends imposed by tactics or circumstances. This would be Max Weber's position, for whom "ends" are inevitably those of the given culture, or the ruling tradition, and that as such should be accepted—a conservative yet irrational stance, since reasons cannot be given, based on practical principles, in favor or against existing ends. Strategic-critical political reason, on the contrary, only allows for efficacious endeavors compliant with ethical macro-politics and critical politics. If one tries to liberate the victims, success will then depend on compliance with the conditions of possibility of that liberation, and in order to comply, the citizen cannot separate "praxis" from "theory."

Difference, as manifested in new social movements, should be affirmed through democratic practices that nonetheless open themselves up to the universality (transversality) of political society as a whole. The struggle for recognition of such difference is, at the same time, a struggle for the universal development of human life in general.

Thesis 6: *Ratio politica*, as "ratio liberationis," should strategically organize and actualize the efficacious process of transformation, whether it is (a) negative or destructive (that is *de-constructive*) of the unjust structures of the current system, (b) whether it be *constructive* of aspects of the political order, or at the level of the system of rights and law, the economy, ecology, education, and so on. These maxims, norms, actions, institutions raise a strategic claim to be *possible* transformations (liberation as critical feasibility). This is the whole question of the possible utopia, real although not present). This is what is called *critical-strategic political reason*.

In this case the citizen is the subject of liberation, within the intersubjectivity of a movement which has initiated an activity of efficacious transformation. This was clearly the case with George Washington struggling for the emancipation of his country, which transformed New England into the United States of America. It is this very same liberating *ratio politica* that also drove Miguel Hidalgo to act against Spain in order to convert New Spain into Mexico, and Martin Luther King among black Americans, or the feminists within *machista* political orders, or Fidel Castro to stand against the empire of the day.

What we have thus far indicated architectonically is, strictly, an introduction to Marx's famous formulation in his eleventh *Theses on Feuerbach*: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to *transform* it" (Marx: 1975: 423; *translation slightly altered*). In this aphorism, Marx, does not reject philosophy, as Korsch thought, but rather signals that philosophy should cease to be mere hermeneutical theory so that it may develop as a critical discourse which would enable real and practical transformation of the world. Such philosophical discourse cannot but be a practical philosophy, a *Politics of Transformation*, a non-reformist Politics of Liberation. The Western Marxist tradition, since Lukács, derailed itself by turning to fields such as ontology, the critique of ideological, aesthetics, mere political economy, but it never attempted to develop a politics as "first and practical philosophy" that would analyze the criteria and principles that would ground the necessary "transformation of the world." The Ethics of Liberation has attempted this in diverse ways, since the 1960s.

Corollary 2. Only that maxim, norm, law, action, or institution which complies with the six indicated conditions of possibility may *claim* to be able to build fair political structures, as legitimate transformations of the established order, through the mediation of the creation of new norms, laws, institutions or political order.

The objective of the liberating political act is to create a new political order which responds to the demands of the oppressed. The person who acts according to responsibility for the Other and in compliance with the indicated conditions, may make a claim to be able to establish a more just order. History will judge whether or not such an order was indeed effective. Overall, honest political conscience intended to realize with strategic feasibility that new order with the symmetrical participation of all affected. In other words, such a transformative process can claim validity because it was attempted while being guided by the democratic principle, and as such it may claim to be a renewed political justice. History, as advanced by Walter Benjamin and the Ethics of Liberation, is a *justicia semper renovanda*, as is called for in the clamor of all victims, and by new social movements in civil society.

NOTES

1. *Material* here is retained, even if it is not the most elegant English and a more appropriate term would be content [*Inhalt*], because by now it has become common to take this term as an antonym of *formal*. *Material* means value-content, and refers to a substantive ethical view or value, in opposition to formal which refers to procedures or universal rules for the determination of maxims and norms. The dichotomy material/formal parallels the opposition between procedural universalism (Kant) and contextual, hermeneutical, historical substantive ethical theories (Aristotle, Hegel). [Translators' note]
2. Benedict de Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise*, trans. by R.H.M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1951), p. 202.
3. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (New York: New American Library, 1965), p. 311. Italics in original.
4. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. G.D.H. Cole (London: Everyman's Library, 1973), p. 173.
5. Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979), pp. 6-7.
6. Ignacio Ellacuría, *Filosofía de la realidad histórica* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1991), p. 79.
7. Franz Hinkelammert, *Democracia y totalitarismo* (San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 1990), p. 31.
8. Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996).
9. Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals in Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 389.
10. See Norbert Bobbio, *La teoría de las formas de gobierno en la historia del pensamiento político* (Mexico: FCE, 1989).
11. See my article "Principles, Mediations, and the Good as Synthesis: From 'Discourse Ethics' to 'Ethics of Liberation,'" in *Philosophy Today*, Supplement 1997, pp. 55-66.
12. Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell and Others (New York: Continuum, 1982), pp. 216-17.

13. Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism*, trans. Simon Kaplan (New York: Ungar Publishing Corp., 1972 [1919]), p. 23.
14. Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, translated by Rodney Livingston and Gregor Benton (London: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 422. *Translation slightly altered*.
15. Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution* (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), p. 59.