

BOAVENTURA DE SOUSA SANTOS

Epistemologies of the South

JUSTICE AGAINST EPISTEMICIDE



ROUTLEDGE

Epistemologies of the South

This page intentionally left blank

Epistemologies of the South

Justice against Epistemicide



BOAVENTURA DE SOUSA SANTOS

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2014 by Paradigm Publishers

Published 2016 by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Copyright © 2014, Taylor & Francis.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notice:

Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Santos, Boaventura de Sousa.

Epistemologies of the South : justice against epistemicide / Boaventura De Sousa Santos.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-61205-545-9 (pbk. : alk. paper)

ISBN 978-1-315-63487-6 (eBook)

1. Knowledge, Sociology of. 2. Social epistemology. 3. Social justice—Developing countries.
I. Title.

HM651.S2483 2013

303.3'72—dc23

2013030574

ISBN 13: 978-1-61205-545-9 (pbk)

ISBN 13: 978-1-61205-544-2 (hbk)

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	viii
Manifesto for Good Living/ <i>Buen Vivir</i>	2
Minifesto for Intellectual-Activists	3
Introduction Creating a Distance in Relation to Western-centric Political Imagination and Critical Theory	19
Strong Questions and Weak Answers	20
The End of Capitalism without End	24
The End of Colonialism without End	26
The Paradox of Urgency and Civilizational Change	27
Very Old or Very New? The Example of the Yasuní Project	30
The Loss of Critical Nouns	33
The Ghostly Relation between Theory and Practice	34
Conclusion	43

Part One Centrifugal Modernities and Subaltern Wests: Degrees of Separation

Chapter 1	<i>Nuestra America</i> : Postcolonial Identities and <i>Mestizajes</i>	48
	The European American Century and the Rise of Societal Fascism	48
	The <i>Nuestra America</i> Century	51
	The Founding Ideas of <i>Nuestra America</i>	51
	The Baroque Ethos: Prolegomena for an Insurgent Cosmopolitan Politics and Culture	56
	The Limits of <i>Nuestra America</i>	64
	Counterhegemonic Possibilities for the Twenty-First Century	66
	Conclusion: Which Side Are You On, Ariel?	68

Chapter 2	Another <i>Angelus Novus</i> : Beyond the Modern Game of Roots and Options	70
	Introduction	70
	The Past in a Cage	73
	The Parable of the <i>Angelus Novus</i>	74
	Roots and Options	76
	The End of the Equation	81
	A Future for the Past	87
	Destabilizing Subjectivities	96

Chapter 3	Is There a Non-Occidentalist West?	99
	Philosophy for Sale	103
	Learned Ignorance	109
	The Wager	111
	Conclusion	114

Part Two

Toward Epistemologies of the South: Against the Waste of Experience

Chapter 4	Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges	118
	The Abyssal Divide between Regulation/ Emancipation and Appropriation/Violence	124
	Conclusion: Toward Postabyssal Thinking	133
Chapter 5	Toward an Epistemology of Blindness: Why the New Forms of "Ceremonial Adequacy" neither Regulate nor Emancipate	136
	Introduction	136
	Knowledge-as-Regulation and Knowledge-as-Emancipation	138
	The Representation of Limits	140
	The Determination of Relevance	140
	The Determination of Degrees of Relevance	144
	The Determination of Identification	146
	The Impossibility of Duration	148
	The Determination of Interpretation and Evaluation	152
	From the Epistemology of Blindness to the Epistemology of Seeing	154
	Toward an Epistemology of Seeing	156
	Conclusion	163

Chapter 6	A Critique of Lazy Reason: Against the Waste of Experience and Toward the Sociology of Absences and the Sociology of Emergences	164
	Introduction	164
	The Critique of Metonymic Reason	167
	The Critique of Proleptic Reason	181
	Conclusion	186
Chapter 7	Ecologies of Knowledges	188
	The Ecology of Knowledges and the Inexhaustible Diversity of World Experience	191
	Modern Science as Part of an Ecology of Knowledges	193
	External Plurality: The Ecology of Knowledges	199
	Relativizing the Distinction between the Internal and External Plurality of Knowledges: The Case of African Philosophy	202
	The Ecology of Knowledges, Hierarchy, and Pragmatics	205
	Orientations for Prudent Knowledge	206
Chapter 8	Intercultural Translation: Differing and Sharing <i>con Passionalità</i>	212
	On Intercultural Translation as a Living Translation	215
	Learning from the South through Intercultural Translation	222
	Conditions and Procedures of Translation	227
Conclusion		236
<i>References</i>		<i>R-1</i>
<i>Index</i>		<i>I-1</i>
<i>About the Author</i>		<i>A-1</i>

Preface

THREE BASIC IDEAS underlie this book. First, the understanding of the world by far exceeds the Western understanding of the world. Second, there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice. Third, the emancipatory transformations in the world may follow grammars and scripts other than those developed by Western-centric critical theory, and such diversity should be valorized.

A critical theory is premised upon the idea that there is no way of knowing the world better than by anticipating a better world. Such anticipation provides both the intellectual instruments to unmask the institutionalized, harmful lies that sustain and legitimate social injustice and the political impulse to struggle against them. Critical theory is therefore meaningless without a search for truth and healing, even if in the end there is no final truth or definitive cure. History shows that the most entrenched social lies have been limited in scope and duration, even if, while in force and dominant, they appear to be the very source of truth and healing.

Viewed from the perspective of the excluded and discriminated against, the historical record of global capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy is full of institutionalized, harmful lies. It is a record of social regulation in the name of social emancipation, appropriation in the name of liberation, violence in the name of peace, the destruction of life in the name of the sanctity of life, violation of human rights in the name of human rights, societal fascism in the name of political democracy, illegal plundering in the name of the rule of law, assimilation in the name of diversity, individual vulnerability in the name of individual autonomy, constitution of subhumanities in the name of humanity, putting price tags on convictions in the name of priceless values, commodification in the name of redemption, standardization in the name of choice, massification in the name of freedom, racism in the name of tolerance, constitutional wrongs in the name of constitutional rights, ontologies of inferiority in the name of Immanuel Kant's *Was ist die Aufklärung?*, inequalities after the law in the name of equality before the law, compulsive consumption in the name of happiness, and hypocrisy in proclaiming principles (St. Thomas's *habitus principiorum*) in order to cover up for the most hideous negations of *recta vita*.

Given the peculiar pervasiveness and intensity of the institutionalized, harmful lies running our contemporary world, the adequate recognition of injustice

and the possible overcoming of oppression can only be achieved by means of an epistemological break. The focus on such an epistemological break is what best distinguishes the theory expounded in this book from the Western-centric critical tradition. The latter, of which the most brilliant exemplar is the Frankfurt School, has failed to account for the emancipatory struggles of our time, in part at least because it shares with the bourgeois thinking it criticizes the same epistemological foundations that suppress the cognitive dimension of social injustice, and thus renders universal the Western understanding and transformation of the world. Moreover, it sees itself as a vanguard theory that excels in knowing about, explaining, and guiding rather than knowing with, understanding, facilitating, sharing, and walking alongside.

This book aims to depart from this Eurocentric critical tradition. It proposes a *teoría povera*, a rearguard theory based on the experiences of large, marginalized minorities and majorities that struggle against unjustly imposed marginality and inferiority, with the purpose of strengthening their resistance. The critical theorizing laid out in this book seeks to be non-Eurocentric because it prepares the ground for both valorizing non-Eurocentric conceptions of emancipation or liberation and for proposing counterhegemonic understandings and uses of Eurocentric concepts, such as human rights, the rule of law, democracy, and socialism. This book stands on its own but it will benefit from a reading in conjunction with my forthcoming *Epistemologies of the South: Reinventing Social Emancipation*. The wager of this latter book is that vast political landscapes of emancipation and liberation will emerge once the epistemological work proposed in the current book is accomplished.

This volume starts with a preamble presented in a counterpoint mode, a counterpoint between an imagined manifesto for good living/*buen vivir* and a minifesto thus designated in order to challenge the grandiose purposes underlying modernist manifestos. The manifesto presents the imagined voices of social movements with which I have been working over the years. The minifesto presents my own response, highlighting the limitations of writing at a time of impossible radicalism, as this book intends to show. In order best to visualize the counterpoint structure, the manifesto is printed on the even pages, the minifesto on the odd pages.

In the introduction I defend the need for creating a distance in relation to Western-centric political imagination and critical theory. I show the reasons why the Western-centric critical tradition (Marxism included) fails to account for the forms of struggle, social actors, and grammars of liberation that have developed in the last twenty years. In the past decade the World Social Forum has provided a dramatic illustration of this failure.

The book is divided into two parts. In the first part, I show that in order to be solid and convincing the critique of Western modernity must take into account the complexity and internal diversity of this social, political, and cultural paradigm. What is usually called Western modernity is a very complex

set of phenomena in which dominant and subaltern perspectives coexist and constitute rival modernities. Critiques of predominant Western modernity tend to ignore this fact. To that extent they run the risk of becoming reductionist and of being like the very conceptions of modernity they criticize, that is, mere caricatures. In Chapter 1, drawing on a famous essay by the nineteenth-century Cuban intellectual-activist José Martí, I identify some Calibanesque views on America and Western modernity. In Chapter 2, I resort to Walter Benjamin's *Angelus Novus* in order to analyze the turbulence that is currently shaking one of the grounding metaphors that underlies modern identities (or, rather, modern processes of identification): the double metaphor of roots and options. In Chapter 3, I ask whether a non-Occidentalist West is possible. Resorting to two early modern philosophers, Nicholas of Cusa and Blaise Pascal, I show how alternative understandings of Western modernity were set aside because they failed to fit the capitalist-colonial enterprise.

In the second part, by means of various approximations, I expound my criticisms of the dominant epistemologies (Northern epistemologies) and present my own epistemological proposal, which I have been calling epistemologies of the South, a set of inquiries into the construction and validation of knowledge born in struggle, of ways of knowing developed by social groups as part of their resistance against the systematic injustices and oppressions caused by capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. In Chapter 4, the central chapter of my postcolonial or decolonial approach, I analyze the abyssal lines drawn by the dominant abyssal thinking of our time through which both human and nonhuman realities existing on the other side of the line are made invisible or even actively produced as nonexistent. This results in the most radical forms of social exclusion. In Chapter 5, I approach invisibility from another angle, which I call the *epistemology of blindness*. Taking the epistemological foundations of modern economics as an extreme example, I show the different mechanisms through which the immense lot of the unseen is generated. In Chapter 6, and still from another perspective, which I term the sociology of absences and the sociology of emergences, I show how the laziness of dominant modern forms of reason leads to an enormous waste of social experience that otherwise might be useful to identify emancipatory possibilities. In Chapter 7, I focus on ecologies of knowledges; I present the outline of the epistemologies of the South by showing how the sociology of absences and the sociology of emergences open up the possibility both for ecologies of knowledges and for intercultural translation. Finally, in Chapter 8, I deal with intercultural translation that I conceive of as the alternative both to the abstract universalism grounding Western-centric general theories and to the idea of incommensurability between cultures.

This is a book soaked in tragic optimism, neither radical pessimism nor radical hope. Nothing is so oppressive as to eliminate the sense of a nonoppressive alternative. But, on the other hand, no such alternative is strong or convincing enough to avoid running the risk of somehow conflating itself with oppression.

If the human condition were slavery, there would be no need for the institution of slavery. Conversely, if the human condition were freedom, there would be no need for constitutions and human rights. The human condition is the condition of humans carrying a heavy load of history on their shoulders and half-blindly choosing ways of making the load easier to carry.

I have worked on this book for many years. I am indebted to much precious support from many colleagues and collaborators over the course of that time. I am afraid I will not be able to mention them all. This book owes a lot to Maria Irene Ramalho, to our many stimulating dialogues and challenging interdisciplinary exchanges, and to her inspiration regarding my incursions into literary theory. She has also helped on occasion to render some of my ideas into English. My committed research assistant of many years, Margarida Gomes, has once again brought competence and professionalism to support my research and to prepare the manuscript for publication. Over the years my books in English have benefited from the invaluable support of Mark Streeter as an outstanding copy editor. The invisible hand of my devoted secretary, Lassaete Simões, makes itself present, directly or indirectly, in everything I have written for the past twenty years. My colleagues João Arriscado Nunes and Maria Paula Meneses were precious collaborators in crucial moments of my research. Over the years, my doctoral and postdoctoral students at the Universities of Coimbra, Wisconsin–Madison, Warwick, and London were a constant source of inspiration for me to embark on novel topics and perspectives. At different moments of my research, I could always count on the unfailing support of collaborators, colleagues, and friends: Agustín Grijalva, Alison Phipps, Allan Hunter, Ana Cristina Santos, António Casimiro Ferreira, António Sousa Ribeiro, Armando Muylema, Bill Whitford, Carlos Lema, Cesar Baldi, César Rodríguez-Garavito, Claire Cutler, Conceição Gomes, Cristiano Gianolla, David Larraz, David Schneiderman, Diane Soles, Efua Prah, Élida Lauris, Emílios Christodoulidis, Erik O. Wright, Gavin Anderson, Heinz Klug, Immanuel Wallerstein, Ivan Nunes, James Tully, Javier Couso, Jeremy Webber, João Pedroso, Joaquín Herrera Flores, John Harrington, José Luis Exeni, José Manuel Mendes, Joseph Thome, Juan Carlos Monedero, Juan José Tamayo, Len Kaplan, Liliana Obregón, Luís Carlos Arenas, Marc Galanter, Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, Maria José Canelo, Mario Melo, Mary Layoun, Michael Burawoy, Michael Wall, Neil Komesar, Raul Llasag, Raza Saeed, Rebecca Johnson, Sara Araújo, Sílvia Ferreira, Tiago Ribeiro, and Upendra Baxi. My heartfelt thanks to all of them, and I just hope the end result will not disappoint them. Last but not least, a very special word of gratitude to Dean Birkenkamp of Paradigm Publishers for the extraordinary incentive he gave me for the swift completion of this book and its timely publication.¹

1. This book was completed in the framework of the research project “ALICE—Strange Mirrors, Unsuspected Lessons” (alice.ces.uc.pt), coordinated by me at the Centre for Social Studies (CES) of the University of Coimbra, Portugal. The project has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme (FP/2007-2013)/ERC Grant Agreement n. 269807.

This page intentionally left blank

Epistemologies of the South

Manifesto for Good Living/ *Buen Vivir*¹

It is time to change the conversation. The past had better be large and demand little. The future had better come closer. Let's enlarge the present and the space of the world. Let's move on. Let's travel with crude maps. Between theory and action there may be correspondence, but there is no sequence. We will not necessarily reach the same place, and many of us will not even reach any recognizable place, but we share the same starting point, and that's enough. We are not all headed to the same address, but we believe we can walk together for a very long time. A few of us speak colonial languages; the large majority of us speak other languages. Since only a small number of us have voice, we resort to ventriloquists, whom we call rearguard intellectuals, because they go on doing what they have always done well: looking back. But they have now received a new mission from us: to care for those of us who lag behind and bring them back into the fight and to identify whoever keeps betraying us at the back and help us find out why.

We know Marx, even though Marx may not know us. The grand theory is a recipe book for famished people. We are neither universal nor eternal. We discard all the philosophies that do not value what we are. We know Gandhi, and Gandhi knows us. We know Fanon, and Fanon knows us. We know Toussaint L'Ouverture and Toussaint L'Ouverture knows us. We know Patrice Lumumba, and Patrice Lumumba knows us. We know Bartolina Sisa, and Bartolina Sisa knows us. We know Catarina Eufémia, and Catarina Eufémia knows us. We know Rosa Parks, and Rosa Parks knows us. But the large majority of those who know us are not well known. We are revolutionaries with no papers.

We have heard that there are many accredited intellectuals who specialize in certifying ideas that supposedly concern us. They dwell on what for them is this side of the line, that is to say, in inaccessible neighborhoods and fortified institutions they call universities. They are erudite libertines and cherish impunity.

Who are we? We are the global South, that large set of creations and creatures that has been sacrificed to the infinite voracity of capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy,

1. The concept of good living/*buen vivir* derives from the Quechua word *sumak kawsay* and is central to the conception of social emancipation whose epistemological foundations are laid out in this book. The political implications of this concept are analyzed in detail in my forthcoming *Epistemologies of the South: Reinventing Social Emancipation*.

Minifesto for Intellectual-Activists

This book begins by acknowledging its limited capacity to contribute to the success of all those rallying for good living/*buen vivir*—if for no other reason than because it is written on this side of the line. To be sure, its thinking is on the other side of the line, but its life, as a book, cannot but be on this side of the line. It will be read by those who least need it. Those who, in my judgment, might benefit from it will not be able to read it. If they could, they would probably have no interest in doing so, and if they did, they would most probably not understand it. This book is thus, at best, a reluctant ally, even if the solidarity it expresses is not reluctant at all. In any case, an ally is, at most, a relative.

The second reason for its scanty contribution is that, unlike in other eras—for instance, the extraordinary seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe—in the global North of our time radical ideas are not translated into radical practices, and vice versa; radical practices do not recognize themselves in available radical ideas. This double opacity is due to several reasons that will be analyzed in the book. One of the most important is no doubt the fact that the established powers today have efficient means with which to prevent the encounter between ideas and practices beyond what befits the genetic code of the status quo. Radicalism has become antinature, *aberratio entis*. It has been a long time since 1677, when the European powers mobilized (for example, by hiring spies) to find out if, in his last living moments, Spinoza had renounced his “pantheistic atheism” and converted to Christianity; the impact of Spinoza’s capitulation to the “evidence” that human beings are natural believers was eagerly expected.

In our time, genuine radicalism seems no longer possible in the global North. Those who proclaim themselves as radical thinkers are either fooling themselves or fooling someone else, since their practices are bound to contradict their theories. Most of them work in institutions such as universities that require protective hats and gloves to deal with reality. One of the tricks that Western modernity plays on intellectuals is to allow them only to produce revolutionary ideas in reactionary institutions. On the other hand, those who act radically seem to be silent. Either they have nothing intelligible to say, or if they were to speak, nobody would understand them outside their circle of action, or they might even be thrown in jail or killed.

Given the above circumstances, how is one to write about social emancipation? To avoid misleading anyone and being misled in turn, it would be better

and all their satellite-oppressions. We are present at every cardinal point because our geography is the geography of injustice and oppression. We are not everyone; we are those who do not resign themselves to sacrifice and therefore resist. We have dignity. We are all indigenous peoples because we are where we have always been, before we had owners, masters, or bosses, or because we are where we were taken against our will and where owners, masters, or bosses were imposed on us. They want to impose on us the fear of having a boss and the fear of not having a boss, so that we may not imagine ourselves without fear. We resist. We are widely diverse human beings united by the idea that the understanding of the world is much larger than the Western understanding of the world. We believe that the transformation of the world may also occur in ways not foreseen by the global North. We are animals and plants, biodiversity and water, earth and Pachamama, ancestors and future generations—whose suffering appears less in the news than the suffering of humans but is closely linked to theirs, even though they may be unaware of it.

The most fortunate of us are alive today but afraid of being killed tomorrow; they have food today but are afraid of having none tomorrow; they till the land they inherited from their ancestors today but fear lest they be expropriated tomorrow; they talk with their friends in the streets today but are afraid that tomorrow there will be only wreckage; they care for their families today but are afraid of being raped tomorrow; they have jobs today but are afraid of being laid off tomorrow; they are human beings today but are afraid of being treated like animals tomorrow; they drink pure water and enjoy virgin forests today but fear lest tomorrow there will be neither water nor forests. The least fortunate of us are those whose fears have long since become reality.

Some of us were able to participate in the meetings of the World Social Forum in the first decade of the third millennium. We are solidary with the participants, even though they have not said everything about us, let alone the most important things. In any case, they have shown that we are many more than our enemies think, that we think better than they do about their world and ours, and that we are bold enough to act under the conviction that, in certain circumstances, it is possible to fight aircraft-carrier-ideas with kite-ideas, even though an aircraft carrier is an aircraft carrier and a kite is a kite. This is exactly what some of us have been demonstrating while venting our outrage at the beginning of the second decade of the millennium, in the streets of Cairo and Tunis, Madrid and Athens, New York and Johannesburg—in a word, in the streets of the world where it has recently been discovered that the wealthy countries are merely the countries of the wealthy people (whereas the 99 percent, the poor and their families, live outside the neofeudal enclaves that belong to the 1 percent, the superrich families). Many of those outraged at indignity are not, like us, on the other side of the line, but we hope to be able to build alliances with them.

Where are we going? Some of us are headed toward social emancipation, others to socialism of the twenty-first century, *buen vivir* socialism, others to communism, others to *sumak kawsay* or *sumak qamaña*, others to Pachamama or *umma*, others

to acknowledge the impossibility of being radical and to write from such an acknowledgment. The radical acknowledgment of said impossibility is all that is left over from the radicalism of Western modernity. What is left over is not negligible and therefore must not be viewed with nostalgia. It is, on the contrary, the sole way of imagining the new. Before us there are more ruins than well-defined plans. But ruins may be creative too. Starting anew means rendering creativity and interruption possible under hostile conditions that promote reproduction and repetition. The point is not so much to imagine new theories, new practices, and new relations among them. The point is mainly to imagine new ways of theorizing and of generating transformative collective action. By acknowledging how powerful the constituted impossibility of radicalism is, we will be better equipped to imagine new constituent possibilities.

To write from the perspective of the impossibility of radicalism means to start by acknowledging two impossibilities and to go on writing between them: the *impossibility of communicating the unsayable* and the *impossibility of collective authorship*.

The impossibility of communicating the unsayable. For the last two hundred years, the relation between knowing and acting has lost its general character and been reduced to the relation between knowledge validated by modern science and rational social engineering (Santos 2007b). As a result, all that was arbitrarily conceived of as being outside this highly intellectualized and rationalized field was ignored or stigmatized. Outside was the dark world of passions, intuitions, feelings, emotions, affections, beliefs, faiths, values, myths, and the world of the unsayable, which cannot be communicated save indirectly, as Kierkegaard would say. Various kinds of positivism managed to demonstrate that what was left out either did not exist (was an illusion) or was unimportant or dangerous. Such reductionisms allowed for geometrical correspondences between theory and practice. However, as both theory and practice became disembodied from their unsayable “halves,” it became impossible to account for the complexity and contingency of the relationships between them. Being imagined as reflected in the same mirror, both theory and practice became reciprocally blind. Now, blind people guided by blind people are not doubly blind, but they do not see better either.

Theoreticians and intellectuals in general are not prepared for either joys or sorrows, for either mourning or the celebration that the ralliers for good living/*buen vivir* talk about. The former know how to name these affections, as Spinoza called them, but do not live them; moreover, they are incapable of making the absence of such affections into a problem for thought or reason. They are not prepared to integrate that which thought has separated, meaning life itself. If life could make distinctions, it would make many, but certainly not this one between affections and reason, lest it deny itself as life. This is particularly true of the life of transformative action in which the reality consists of giving life to what does not yet exist and can only come about by reasonable affections and affectionate

to *ubuntu*, still others to human rights, others to real and true democracy, others to dignity and respect, others to plurinationality, others to interculturality, others to social justice, others to *swadeshi*, others to *demokaraasi*, others to *minzhu*, others to food sovereignty, others to solidary economy, others to ecosocialism and the fight against large dams and megaprojects. We have been warned that every concept tends to become a conceptual monster. We are not afraid.

What we all have in common is that we all have to fight against many obstacles in order to live with dignity—that is to say, to live well. There are many obstacles, but they all have a family resemblance: capitalism among humans and between humans and nature, colonialism, patriarchy, fetishism of commodities, monocultures of knowledge, the linear time of progress, naturalized inequalities, the dominant scale, and the productivism of economic growth and capitalist development. The obstacles to a life with dignity are very different, but they all have something in common: to wit, the infinite accumulation of unequal differences on the unjust behalf of very few. We are the dispossessed of the earth because we are considered ignorant, inferior, local, particular, backward, unproductive, or lazy. The immeasurable suffering we get from this and the waste of world experience it brings about are unjust, but they are not historical fatalities. We fight against them under the conviction that they can be eliminated. But our struggle depends less on our objectives than on the quality of our actions and emotions in striving to attain them.

What do we want? The world is full of opportunities to live well, both regarding ourselves and mother earth. We want to have the opportunity to take advantage of them. We know better what we do not want than what we want. Those living in what they themselves call “this side of the line” think a lot about us. For the most fortunate of us, they organize fairs in our villages with many bazaars and stalls for counseling. They display transgenic foodstuffs, bibles, intellectual copyrights, certified consultants, empowerment recipes, structural adjustments, human rights, private property, nicely wrapped democracy, bottled water, and environmental concerns. We read once that Socrates, walking through the square and seeing many deluxe products, remarked, “So many things in the world that I do not want!” Socrates would be today a rallier for good living/*buen vivir*. We do not want to be spoken about. We want to speak for ourselves. We do not want to be seen on the other side of the line. We want to eliminate the line.

Where do we live? We live in Chiapas, in the Andes, in Amazonia, in the squatter settlements of big cities, in the lands coveted by new and old colonizers in Africa and Asia, in the ghettos of global cities, on the banks of rivers where they want to build dams and on the hills where they want to mine for ore and minerals and destroy life, in the new plantations using slave labor in the United States, Brazil, and Bangladesh, in the world’s maquiladoras, where we produce, with sweat and sorrow, the consumerist pleasure of the masters. We actually live where tourists never go or, if they do, where they would never deign to live. The world is divided by two kinds of borders: those we accept with reservations and those we refuse without reservation. The former are the national borders wherein

reasons. The concern of intellectuals is the life of thought, and that has little to do with the life of life. *Lived life*—as much as Spinoza's *natura naturata*—is supposed to be less than thought, but *living life* and *natura naturans* are surely more than thought.

By calling myself an intellectual-activist I wish to suggest a possible way of living the impossibility of communicating the unsayable in a productive way, thereby creating new possibilities. This book resorts frequently to indirect communication; it was itself thought through on the basis of much indirect communication.

The impossibility of collective authorship. As far as authorship goes, this book has diffuse limits. In recent years I have been an activist in the World Social Forum process and have been deeply involved in the struggles of the indigenous peoples of Latin America. I am unable to determine to what extent my thoughts are part of a collective without a name and without clear outlines. Of my own is only what is expressed individually and with full awareness of a double absence: the absence of that which could be formulated only collectively, were it susceptible to rational formulation, and the absence of that which cannot be rationally formulated, either individually or collectively. Half this book will forever remain unwritten. I write what I am able to write with this in mind. I am part of a collective by being aware of how I separate myself from it in order to write.

To write from the perspective of the impossibility of radicalism is today more promising than before owing to three factors: *the end of the game of dogmas*; *the mission of the rearguard theory* with which the ralliers have entrusted the intellectuals; and *the inexhaustible diversity of the world* and what it shows, or what it lets be seen, regardless of the possibility of its being spoken.

The end of the game of dogmas. For the past two hundred years the social struggles against the old dogmas have almost always been fought on behalf of new dogmas. As a consequence, social emancipation became a new social regulation, and the old orthodoxy was replaced by the new one. What was a means became an end; what was rebellion became conformity. Now the social movements rallying for good living/*buen vivir* show that it is possible to fight against old dogmas without doing it in the name of new dogmas.

According to such movements, social emancipation presupposes social regulation; an emancipated society that is not regulated is not conceivable. But there is a difference between regulating emancipation and emancipating regulation. Regulating emancipation consists of applying to the new conditions the same logic of regulation (if not necessarily the same kind of regulation) that presided over the old conditions, now overcome; emancipating regulation, on the other hand, consists of establishing as a new kind of regulation the condition for that which it aims to regulate. If the purpose of social emancipation is to build a democracy-without-end, emancipating regulation involves deepening and diversifying democratic solutions as transformative practices create the need for them. Only this will prevent means from becoming ends; new idols from replacing old ones and demanding of citizens the same kind of submission as before;

we were born or raised. We accept them to save our energies and because we think they are a lesser obstacle compared to the other borders. The others are the walls, trenches, ditches, barbwire fences, cordons of police cars, and checkpoints; above all, they are the maps that have traced the abyssal lines in people's minds, laws, and politics and banished us to the other side of the line. The worst borders are the borders that cannot be seen, read, heard, or felt on this side of the line, that is to say, in Kakania, whose capital is Excrementia. We live on the other side of the line that someone traced while thinking of us but aiming at not thinking of us anymore. We are invisible, inaudible, and illegible because the success of previous revolutions decided not to include us. If our here is invisible, our now is even more so. According to those revolutions, we have, at most, a past, but no future. We were never allowed to write the history books.

How do we live? Always at risk of dying for causes other than illness, of being wounded or killed but not in friendly games; on the verge of losing home, land, water, sacred territories, children, grandparents; always at risk of being displaced long distances to flee war or of being confined in our barrios or in concentration camps; at risk of finding that our popular, solidary, cooperative savings may be worth nothing because they do not count toward the GDP; at risk of seeing our rivers contaminated and our forests deforested in the name of what they call development; at risk of being humiliated, without the power to respond because we are of an inferior gender, race, class, or caste; at risk of being the target of wealthy kids' tricks, which may prove fatal to us; at risk of impoverishment, of being helped as poor without giving a bad conscience to those helping us; at risk of being considered terrorists for wanting to defend our mother earth; at risk, indeed, for facing so many risks, of ending up conforming.

What kind of passion urges us? The most subjective and diverse passion because grounded in the most intensely and diversely lived truth: that we deserve a life with dignity, a free life because free from the fear of violence and dispossession, a life to which we are entitled, and that fighting for it is possible and that we might succeed. We are the children of a passionate truth and a truthful passion. We passionately know that reality is not reduced to what exists and that most of what does not exist could and deserves to exist. Time does not allay our passion. Our brother Evo Morales had to wait five centuries to become president after Pope Paul III stated in his 1537 bull that Indians had souls. It was a cunning bull from which we started to arrive at where we are now.

Against whom do we fight? On this side of the line everything is seductive; on the other side of the line everything is scary. We are the only ones who know, from experience, that there are two sides to the line, the only ones who know how to imagine what they do not live. Our context is the urgency of a life with dignity as a condition for everything else to be possible. We do know that only a civilizational change can guarantee it, but we also know that our urgency can bring about such change. We must live today in order to live a long time, and vice versa; we have to live a long time in order to live today. Our *durées* and times

new rules from being naturalized as necessities of life, as was the case with the old rules; the struggles against the elimination of alternatives from leading to a society without alternatives; political actions adopted to restore politics vis-à-vis technical solutions from becoming a solution of political technique; limits to freedom of action and creativity from becoming exactly the same as the old ones; nonconformity, which made change possible, from turning into change-hindering conformity; the emotions, fantasies, and aspirations invested in social change from being condemned for what they are; the new functions that broke with the old ones from becoming structures blocking new functions; the historicization of that which was considered ahistorical from turning into a new ahistorical truth; the necessarily relative unconsciousness of all those engaged in change involving risks from becoming the maximum possible consciousness of those benefiting from the change. The aim is, in sum, to prevent the weapons of the once oppressed from becoming the weapons of the new oppressors. I believe that, according to the good-living ralliers, this is the only way to turn the journey toward the end in view into a journey without end.

This new stance poses a huge challenge to intellectual-activists. Particularly in the global North, the protagonism of intellectuals has been largely due to games of dogmas and orthodoxies. Dogmas are as intense concerning formulation (precise words) as direction (precise and binding instructions for action and behavior). They are so intensely directive that they confuse the reality of direction with the direction of reality. They create autonomous forms of life. Intellectuals living inside and off such games have no need of any other life. They were trained for that sort of life, and their mission is to reproduce it. Under these conditions, the challenge posed to the intellectuals by the ralliers is almost dilemmatic: either they must untrain and reinvent themselves, or they will continue to be what they already are—irrelevant. Before they choose untraining, intellectuals do wonder about the dilemma: how is it possible to fight against dogmas without resorting to other and more potent dogmas? Would leaving everything open not be the same as letting the enemy loose? Can the attempt to integrate life and thought not bring about the disintegration of both? Is anti-dogma not another kind of dogma after all?

What is promising at the beginning of the new millennium is that the ralliers for good living/*buen vivir* have created possibilities not previously foreseen or deemed admissible theoretically. These new possibilities show that irrationality is not the only alternative to what is currently considered rational, that chaos is not the only alternative to order, and that concern about what is less than true (the messy reasons and affections underlying the struggles for uncertain results) must be balanced by concern about what is more than true (the *habitus* of disproved grand theories of claiming truthfulness in their explanations of previous failures). The new possibilities emerge from new actions acted out by new players with new discourses and conceptions. They are actually not new; some of them are very old indeed; they are ancestral. They became more visible because

only stress what is useful for our struggles. Our times are not flat or concentric; they are passages between the No Longer and the Not Yet.

To a certain extent, the age of our side of the line coincides with the age of their side of the line, but the two ages are not to be confused. We and they are contemporaneous in distinct ways. Our age is potentially more revolutionary than all the previous ones. Never was so much unjust suffering caused to human and nonhuman beings; never were the sources of power and oppression so diverse and so powerful. Never as today was it possible for human beings on this planet to have any idea, however vague and distorted, of what is happening.

This is a time of reckoning at a planetary level, involving humans and mother earth. It is a time of reckoning as yet without any rules. On the one side, capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, and all their satellite-oppressions. This is what we call the global North, a political, not geographical, location, increasingly more specialized in the transnationalization of suffering: workers losing their jobs in displaced plants; peasants in India, Africa, and Latin America expropriated by the megaprojects, agribusiness, and the mining industry; indigenous peoples of the Americas and Australia who survived genocide; women murdered in Ciudad Juárez; gays and lesbians of Uganda and Malawi; people of Darfur, who are so poor and yet so rich; Afro-descendants murdered and displaced to the confines of the Colombian Pacific; mother earth struck in her vital cycles; those accused of being terrorists, tortured in secret prisons all over the world; undocumented immigrants facing deportation; Palestinians, Iraqis, Afghans, and Pakistanis who live, work, and celebrate under constant bombardments; the impoverished North Americans, shocked by the fact that capitalism and colonialism treat them with exactly the same contempt and arbitrariness with which they have treated all the other peoples of the world; the retired, unemployed, and unemployable who are prey to the law of pillaging of the financial pirates.

On the other side, our time is the time of the return of the humiliated and degraded. This is what we call the global South. We are not victims; we are victimized and offer resistance. We are many, and we use our new learning in very different ways. We do not always agree, and we even suspect that there are traitors among us. We are experts at exposing them.

Despite everything else, we have problems in common with our enemies, and our destinies have some affinities. The suffering they inflict on us and have recently increased will end up turning against them. The sanest of them have already realized as much. As the sage Voltaire used to say, the cause of all wars is theft. Now those who learned how to steal outside the house are stealing from the people inside it. If suffering, murder, humiliation, and destruction continue to escalate, the survival of the planet may be at stake. Could our enemies be already thinking of colonizing another planet where they won't need closed condominiums?

We know that the first of our struggles is against ourselves. The sage Marx said that after the philosophers were done with interpreting the world, the world would have to be changed. But there is no change without self-change, for the

the repertoire of social emancipation that had been intellectually certified has collapsed, because the fashion show of the new, which actually is the old-in-new-forms, has failed totally.

The absence of dogmas is not easy to describe, but it is felt in the pulse and easy to see. It can be seen in the urge not to squander actions, energies, aspirations, or knowledges. It can be seen in the changes in conversation and in the agreed upon silence to facilitate joint action.

To acknowledge the ralliers' novelty does not mean much. It is just a solidary manner of protecting them from being silenced. To be sure, the ralliers know by their own experience the extent to which Western modernity has specialized in techniques for silencing insurgent actions. According to dominant common sense, they deserve being silenced because they are being carried out by ignorant, inferior, backward, retrograde, local, unproductive people—in sum, by people who are supposed to be obstacles to progress and development. How to counter this powerful silencing machine without giving rise to an alternative but also silencing machine—such is the greater challenge facing intellectual-activists. Herein lie their untraining and self-reinvention.

The rearguard theory. The second reason why I consider that writing from the perspective of the impossibility of radicalism is promising has to do with the mission ascribed to intellectual-activists by ralliers for good living/*buen vivir*: to contribute to the elaboration of theories of the rearguard (more on this throughout the book). This mission is almost impossible, but to the extent that it can be accomplished, it constitutes the greatest novelty at the beginning of the millennium and is the best piece of news for those who genuinely believe that capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, and all other satellite-oppressions can be overcome.

These political experiences witnessed by ralliers for good living/*buen vivir* cause surprise because they were not conceived of, let alone foreseen, by the political theories of Western modernity, including Marxism and liberalism. Particularly significant, among many other examples, is the case of the indigenous peoples' movements in Latin America and their contribution to recent political changes in some countries. The surprise is due to the fact that both Marxism and liberalism have ignored the indigenous peoples, both as social and political actors. The great Peruvian Marxist José Mariátegui was stigmatized as "romantic" and "populist" by the Communist International for having ascribed a role to the Indians in the construction of Latin American societies. Such a surprise poses a new question to theoreticians and intellectuals in general—namely, whether they are prepared to experience surprise and wonder. This question has no easy answer. Critical theoreticians are particularly trapped in this difficulty since they have been trained in vanguard theorizing. Vanguard theory, by its nature, does not let itself be taken by surprise or feel wonderment. Whatever does not fit the vanguardists' previsions or propositions either does not exist or is not relevant.

To answer positively to the challenge of allowing oneself to be surprised presupposes that the process of untraining and reinvention is in progress and

obstacles to life with dignity, or to living well, reside in ourselves, to the extent that we conform to indignity and deny that the difference between what is imposed on us and what we desire is much smaller than we think.

What certainties do we have? As all human and nonhuman animals, we specialize in possibilities, passages between the No Longer and the Not Yet. The only certainties we have concern possibility and the wager. All other certainties are paralyzing. We have partial knowledge of the conditions that allow us to proceed and believe that such conditions are partial themselves. We follow the sage Fanon, according to whom each generation must find its own mission from within relative opacity and then go on to fulfill or betray it. Our possibilities are far from being infinite, and they only become definite according to how we move. We reflect as we run. Our way is semi-invisible and semiblind. The very certainty concerning the shackles from which we wish to free ourselves is treacherous because, with time, the shackles may feel comfortable and turn into ornaments. And they may also induce us to put shackles on those close to us.

What kinds of knowledge are available to us? Our knowledge is intuitive; it goes straight to what is urgent and necessary. It is made of words and silences-with-actions, reasons-with-emotions. Our life does not allow us to distinguish life from thought. All our everydayness is thought of every day in detail. We think of our tomorrow as if it were today. We have no important questions, only productive questions.

Our knowledge flies at low altitude because it is stuck to the body. We feel-think and feelact. To think without passion is to make coffins for ideas; to act without passion is to fill the coffins. We are voracious in getting the diversity of the knowledges we are interested in. There are many knowledges looking for people eager to know them. We squander no knowledges that might help us in our struggle to live well. We mix knowledges and combine them according to logics that are not limited to them. We do not want authors' copyrights; we want to be authors of rights.

Our kind of knowledge is existential and experiential; it is therefore both resilient and flexible, disturbed by all that happens to us. Unlike what goes on in Kakania, here among us, ideas are people; they have weight and pay fines for excess weight; they wear clothes and may be incarcerated for indecent exposure; they make appeals and get killed for that.

How do we get educated? We are the educators with the fewest credentials in the world. Our bodies and our lives are the squandered knowledge of the world, the knowledge that is objective vis-à-vis ourselves and subjective vis-à-vis our enemies. All we know of them is theirs and ours; all they know of us is theirs. Universities have a full inventory of departments, books, careers, computers, reams of papers, uniforms, privileges, erudite discourses, chancellors, and officials; yet they do not educate at all. Their mission is to turn us into ignorants so that we may be treated as ignorants in conscience. At most, they teach us how to choose

proceeds successfully. Intellectuals willing to let themselves be taken by surprise are those who are no longer surprised by the imagined novelties, however extravagant and seductive, of vanguard theories, having reached the conclusion that the time of vanguard theories (the time of linearity, simplicity, unity, totality, and determination) is over. Once intellectuals enter the untraining process, the academicist, overintellectualized, and stagnated character of vanguard theories becomes gradually more obvious.

I wrote this book having in mind the creation of an affective-intellectual horizon in which rearguard theories may emerge through their contributions to the success of the struggles of ralliers for good living/*buen vivir*. Rearguard theories can only validate themselves by their practical results, by the evaluation of the changes made by all their protagonists, among whom the intellectual-activist is always a minor figure. That is to say, rearguard theories are, borrowing from Schopenhauer, *parerga* and *paralipomena*, minor parts of nontheoretical forms of life. They are actions of theoretical intervention woven inside forms of life. They do not wash their hands like Pontius Pilate; nor are they a Greek chorus. They specialize in skeletons, drawings, registrations, envelopes, and postal addresses—important things but far from important enough.

The inexhaustible experience of the world and indirect communication. The third reason why I consider the present moment promising for writing from the perspective of the impossibility of radicalism is today's increased awareness that the cultural, cognitive, social, ethnic-racial, productive, political, and religious diversity of the world is immense; besides its capacity to be described and represented, such diversity can be seen, shown, felt, and poetically expressed. Many factors account for this, and some of them will be analyzed in the book, but the most important one is the recent visibility of ralliers for good living/*buen vivir* and the internal diversity they reveal and celebrate. This is a kind of diversity that totally subverts the monocultural diversity of *National Geographic* or eco-ethno-cultural tourism. It is diversity with its own criteria for diversity, which, unlike monocultural diversity, turns inert simultaneity into complex contemporaneity. Unlike the touristic or entertaining gaze, which creates acts of simultaneity among noncontemporaneous people, the diversity of the ralliers for good living/*buen vivir* creates encounters among different contemporaneities—that is to say, among different forms of being contemporaneous. It reveals the polychromy and polyphony of the world without turning them into discontinuous and incommensurable, radical heterogeneity.

Unity lies in no essence. It lies in the task of building good living/*buen vivir*. Herein reside the novelty and the political imperative: to enlarge contemporaneity means to amplify the field of reciprocity between the principle of equality and the principle of the recognition of difference. Thus, the struggle for social justice expands in unsuspected ways. To the injustice regarding wealth distribution, based on the conventional concept of social justice, many other dimensions of injustice are added, having varied temporal durations and hence carrying distinct

between two evils. We educate ourselves by learning how not to choose between either. When some day we enter the university—that is to say, when we occupy and decolonize it—we will not merely open the doors and redecorate the walls. We will destroy both so that we may all fit in.

What are our weapons? All weapons of life, none of death. In truth, only those weapons with proper names in our own languages belong to us. All the others are taken from our enemies as war trophies or unintended heirlooms: democracy, human rights, science, philosophy, theology, law, the university, the state, civil society, constitutionalism, and so on. We learn that, when we wield them autonomously, they frighten the enemy. However, borrowed weapons are efficacious only when used together with our own weapons. We are competent rebels. We follow sage Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, according to whom top politicians do not understand anything; above all, they do not understand the essential: that their time is over.

Joy and celebration are what the victims feel when they stop being victims, when their suffering is turned into resistance and fight. We are artists embodied in life, and ascendant is our art. The only ugly and sad truths are those imposed on us. The truths with which we offer resistance are beautiful and joyous.

On which kinds of allies can we count? Even if we are a large majority, there are very few of us. We must get together before others try to come together with us. We ask for help but use it only to become independent of it. As we free ourselves from help, we free help itself. We ask democracy for help in order to free democracy. Democracy was invented out of fear of us, and we have always been afraid of it. Today we are not afraid, but neither do we have any illusions. We know that when we take possession of democracy, our enemies will go back to their old inventions: dictatorship, violence, theft, the arbitrary manipulation of legality and illegality. We will fight for the democratization of democracy until it frees itself from the fraud into which they have turned it. We will ask the help of human rights in order to render them unnecessary. They turned us into a global multitude of objects of human rights discourses. When we all become subjects of human rights, who will remember the concept of human rights? Could the human contain the nonhuman? We ask for the help of liberation theology to free us from theology.

Our allies are all those who are solidary with us and have a voice because they are not on our side of the line. We know that “solidarity” is a trap word. To decide unilaterally with whom one is solidary and how one is solidary is to be solidary with oneself alone. Unlike what has been the case up until now, we put conditions on solidarity. Alliance with us is demanding because our allies have to fight against three kinds of enemies: our enemies, their enemies, and the commonsensical view that there is no connection at all between the two previous kinds of enemies. Specific enemies include comfort and discomfort once certified by the same indifference-producing factory; laziness and its older sister, the laziness of whoever commands action; temporary apathy and equally

modes of contemporaneity: the historical injustice of colonialism and slavery; the sexual injustice of patriarchy, gynophobia, and homophobia; the intergenerational injustice of hatred against the young and against sustainable models of development; the ethnic-racial injustice of racism and xenophobia; and the cognitive injustice committed against the wisdom of the world on behalf of the monopoly of science and the technologies sanctioned by science.

Structural (not functional) diversity is as seductive as it is threatening. It is seductive for those who see in it the reason for the end of dogmas and the opportunity to imagine and create other life possibilities. If the diversity of the world is inexhaustible, then utopia is possible. All possibilities are finite, but their number is infinite. The constituted experience is nothing more than a provisional and localized concretization of the constituent experience. The fact that the existing reality is so far away from ideals does not prove the impossibility of the latter; rather, it only proves that current reality is without ideals. However, such diversity is also threatening, particularly in the global North, because it reveals the isolation of the West. The affirmation of the diversity of the world marks a turning point in Western exceptionalism. Once seemingly originary (*archetypus*) and ascendant, showing the way forward to the “rest,” it has become derivative (*ectypus*) and descendent, a conception of the world and a mode of experiencing society and nature that are being proven unsustainable.

Acknowledging this autonomous and enabling diversity is perhaps the crucial feature of the process of untraining, as partly reported in this book. It is from this perspective that I propose epistemologies of the South. Such an acknowledgment works as a safety net against the abysses into which one falls when one loses the certainty that scientific knowledge is the only valid kind of knowledge and that beyond it there is only ignorance. It is the most efficacious antidote against Wittgensteinian silencing, which is totally prey to monolanguage and monoculture. What cannot be said, or said clearly, in one language or culture may be said, and said clearly, in another language or culture. Acknowledging other kinds of knowledge and other partners in conversation for other kinds of conversation opens the field for infinite discursive and nondiscursive exchanges with unfathomable codifications and horizontalities.

The three reasons mentioned above as favoring writing from the perspective of the impossibility of radicalism may indirectly facilitate the emergence of intellectual-activist or rearguard intellectuals, as ralliers for good living/*buen vivir* call them. On the other hand, some ralliers may eventually read this book and even become interested in their reading. As far as I am concerned, however, what remains written in this book is a thought-action experiment, a gym of ideas in which I prepare myself to become a rearguard intellectual, hence a competent rebel. What the ralliers may learn from me is but a faithful mirror of what I go on learning from them.

temporary enthusiasm; the paradox of running risks just in order not to run risks; lack of arguments and excess of arguments to justify both action and inaction; abstract thought without body or passion; catalogues of principles to read rather than to live; understanding and representations geared to statistical homogeneity; criticism without irony, satire, or comedy; the belief that it is normal to be thought of as a whole and only act individually; the desire to please those who despise us while despising everybody else; a preference for still life and dread of living nature; the twin obsessions of being a client or having clients; the twin fears of losing wealth or loosing poverty; the twin uncertainties of whether the worst is over or about to come; the obsession of obsession, the uncertainty of uncertainty, the fear of fear. Only later come our enemies, those against whom we must rebel together.

In part, the enemies against whom our allies have to fight are themselves, how they came to be what they are and have to stop being themselves if they want to be our honest allies. As our comrade Amílcar Cabral once said, they will have to commit suicide as a class, which cannot be easy.

How do we build our alliances? The world is oversized for human beings and nature. The oppressive world is oversized for the oppressed. No matter how many the oppressed are, they will always be few, and fewer they will be if they are not united. Unity makes strength, but the best strength is the strength that builds unity. We have neither leaders nor followers. We organize ourselves, mobilize ourselves, reflect, and act. We are no multitude, but we do aspire to be a multitude of organizations and movements. We follow the sage Spinoza, but only to the extent that he does not contradict the sages Gandhi and Rosa Luxemburg: spontaneity disorganizes the status quo only to the extent that it organizes itself in order not to turn itself into a new status quo.

We start from purpose and action. Our problems are practical, our questions productive. We share two premises: our suffering is not reduced to the word “suffering,” and we do not accept unjust suffering and instead fight for the something better to which we are entitled. Ambiguity does not paralyze us. We do not have to coincide; we have to converge. We do not have to unify; we must generalize. We translate into one another reciprocally and are very careful lest some engage more in translation than others. It is not important to agree on what it means to change the world. It is enough to be in agreement about the actions that contribute to changing it. To such an agreement many emotions and sensations contribute, which assert and criticize without words. Translation helps us define the limits and possibilities of collective action. We communicate directly and indirectly by means of smiles and affects, by the warmth of hands and arms, and by dancing, until we reach the threshold of joint action. The decision is always autonomous; different reasons may lead to convergent decisions. Nothing is irreversible, except the risks we run.