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A RECONSTRUCTION OF THE  
THEOLOGIES OF LIBERATION:  
THE LACANIAN CORRECTIVE TO  
THE ELLACURIAN SYNTHESIS

**T**his article is an attempt to reconstruct the theologies of liberation from the point of view of Lacanian psychoanalysis understood as a critically oriented science. Why the need for such a project? A historical analysis of the problem that has undergirded the development of the theologies of liberation may perhaps begin to answer this question.

**The Problem**

From Friedrich Schleiermacher to David Tracy the progressive theologies of Western Europe and North America have, for the most part, understood themselves within the limits of what Jürgen Habermas has called the “historical-hermeneutic sciences.”<sup>1</sup> That is, they have established theological knowledge through the interpretation of the meaning of transcendence. This theological knowledge has been possible only to the extent that transcendence has been grasped through the category of *praxis* (i.e., intersubjectivity, interaction, language, communication). In so far as modern theology has posited *praxis* as the very conditions of possibility for interpreting the meaning of transcendence we say it has labored under an interest in the maintenance of mutual understanding,

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<sup>1</sup> We are drawing here on the early Habermas’s idea of *knowledge-constitutive interests*. *Knowledge and Human Interests* (London: Heinemann, 1972), 301-317. Habermas’s idea of knowledge-constitutive interests provides us with a scheme for categorizing theology which is more consistent with the demands of the conditions of crisis. Indeed, the idea of knowledge-constitutive interests allows us to reconceive the theologies of liberation as the most radical theological crisis of modern theology, grasping it as a tension between the practical interest of the historical-hermeneutical sciences and the emancipatory interest of the critically oriented sciences. See Manuel Mejido, “Theology, Crisis, and Knowledge-Constitutive Interests, or Towards a Social Theoretical Interpretation of Theological Knowledge,” *Social Compass* 51, 3 (2004): 381-401.

that is, it has labored under a practical cognitive interest. This has been the case whether these theologies have situated themselves more specifically within the limits of the Kantian horizon of consciousness (i.e., Schleiermacher and Joseph Maréchal), the Heideggerian horizon of temporality (e.g., Karl Rahner and Paul Tillich), the Hegelian horizon of becoming (e.g., J. B. Metz and Jürgen Moltmann), or the postmodern horizon of language (e.g., Tracy and Jorg Rieger).

In the late 1960s theology for the first time understood itself as a “critically oriented science.” Indeed, the radicalness of the Latin American theologies of liberation stems from the fact that they were never satisfied with the practical cognitive interest of the historical-hermeneutic sciences. That is, they were never satisfied with the interpretation of the meaning of transcendence grasped through the restricted category of *praxis*. The theologies of liberation, rather, establish a theological knowledge that is “interested” in the “making” of transcendence. In other words, the theologies of liberation generate a theological knowledge that theoretically aims to grasp the invariance that exists between the Kingdom and the socio-historical conditions of misery, and praxeologically aims to overcome this invariance through the making of transcendence understood as the making of “better” history. This theological knowledge has been possible only to the extent that transcendence has been grasped through the category of social labor (i.e., the dialectic of *praxis* and *poiesis*, interaction and labor, language and work). In so far as the theologies of liberation have posited social labor as the very conditions of possibility for the making of transcendence (i.e., the making of “better” history) we say they have labored under an interest in the making of liberation, that is, they have labored under an emancipatory cognitive interest.

Rethinking the movement of modern theology in this way brings forth the historical problem of the dissimulation of the Latin American theologies of liberation.<sup>2</sup> Since the beginning the theologies of liberation had to struggle against, on the one hand, a historical-hermeneutic bias that tended to reduce their emancipatory interest to an interpretative one, and, on the other hand, the liberal argument that any attempt to implement real socialism in the Americas would lead to “totalitarianism.” Detractors from the “outside” and avatars from the “inside” contributed to the dissimulation of the radicalness of the theologies of liberation.

Situated within the limits of theology understood as a historical-hermeneutic science, detractors have mistaken the emancipatory cognitive interest of the theologies of liberation for a technical cognitive interest grounded in a vulgar

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<sup>2</sup> Manuel Mejido, *Beyond the Postmodern Condition: The Turn Towards Psychoanalysis, Liberation Theology: The Next Generation*, Iván Petrella, ed., New York, Orbis Books, 119-146.

materialism. Indeed, they have accused the theologies of liberation of subordinating faith to the “instrumental” ends of “revolutionary praxis” and reducing religion to the Marxist paradigm of production.

Liberation theologians have also contributed to the dissimulation of that crisis marked by the theologies of liberation. This to the extent that they have failed to adequately negotiate the two sets of tensions that have undergirded the history of the development of liberation theology: namely, the tension between *poiesis* and *praxis*, and the tension between the universality of the idea of liberation and the plurality of particular liberationist perspectives. Due to obscure foundations, rather than enhancing and radicalizing the liberationist point of view, the back-and-forth between these two tensions, would, with the demise of real socialism, end up de-radicalizing liberation theology to the point that the theologies of liberation began to move “back toward” theology understood as a historical-hermeneutic science.

Today under the conditions of post-modernity the dissimulation of the Latin American theologies of liberation has become an eclipse.<sup>3</sup> Postmodernism is not simply a style of thought that is skeptical of “grand narratives.” It does not simply refer to the linguistic turn in the human-social and theological sciences. It does not simply refer to that way of seeing the world that gravitates around the plurality of particulars, alterity, difference, fluidity, hybridity, and reflexivity. Postmodernism is first and foremost a historical condition that emerges in and through the “time-space compression” of the capitalist mode of production.<sup>4</sup>

The postmodern condition imposes itself as inevitable, as the “end of history” due to the hegemonic fusion of postmodern thought, liberal-democratic multiculturalism (i.e., “identity politics”), and globalized, advanced capitalism. While the postmodern turn to the plurality of particulars naturalizes global-liberal democratic capitalism to the extent that it annihilates the question of the totality (i.e., meta-narratives), the new (compressed) way of experiencing space and time under the conditions of global liberal-democratic capitalism generates the illusion of unmediated particulars.

The postmodern eclipse of the theologies of liberation is being generated from both the “inside” and the “outside.” On the one hand, liberation theologians are increasingly accepting the basic coordinates of the postmodern condition. That fundamental liberationist idea of making transcendence as the making a break

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Manuel Mejido, “Propedéutica a la problemática postmoderna II: la compresión espacio-tiempo y redes altermundialistas,” *Castalia: Revista de Psicología* 10 (forthcoming).

with the dialectic of the Americas, has today, in and through the hermeneutic conception of language, become the talking about the meaning of transcendence as the making of conversation in a public sphere that naturalizes the idea of the Free Trade Area of the Americas. On the other hand, by understanding liberation theology as a “local,” “contextual,” or “public” theology, the liberal theologies of the center are reducing liberation theology to a historical hermeneutic science. As an intellectual moment of the general social process of the assimilation of US Hispanics into a multicultural society that ideological functions as a buttress for Anglo-American hegemony, US Hispanic theology is also, in the name of “liberation,” contributing to the eclipse of the Latin American theologies of liberation.<sup>5</sup>

US Hispanic theologians have obfuscated the project of transplanting the critically oriented theological sciences of liberation in the US context with the project of hermeneutically reinterpreting these theological sciences of liberation.<sup>6</sup> This obfuscation has historically manifested itself through the restriction of the concept of *mestizaje* to symbolic-cultural conditions, the aesthetic turn, and the eclipse of the question of the relationship between popular religion and power. Today, however, with the postmodern turn to language, this tendency to hermeneutically reduce the critically oriented theological sciences of liberation is specifically taking the form of a bias in favor of the hermeneutic conception of language.

Indeed, US Hispanic theologians are today choosing language over liberation, that is, they are choosing as their frame of reference the problem of conversation among a plurality of particular ethnic groups in the public sphere over the problem of the Free Trade Area of the Americas as the latest moment of the dialectic of Anglo and Hispanic America.<sup>7</sup> This altercation between liberation and language, between public and liberation theology, is fallacious: This choice is produced by the postmodern style of thought, the hermeneutic conception of language in particular.

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<sup>5</sup> Manuel Mejido, “The Construction of Liberation: Towards a Linguistic Rights Paradigm,” *Rethinking Latino/a Religions and Identities*, Miguel de la Torre y Gastón Espinosa, eds. (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, forthcoming).

<sup>6</sup> Manuel Mejido, “The Fundamental Problematic of US Hispanic Theology,” *New Horizons in US Hispanic/Latino(a) Theology*, Benjamín Valentín, ed. (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2003), “The Illusion of Neutrality: Reflections on the Term ‘Popular Religion,’” *Social Compass* 49, 2 (2002): 295-311, “Theoretical Prolegomenon to the Sociology of U.S. Hispanic Popular Religion,” *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 7, 1 (August 1999): 27-55, “Propaedeutic to the Critique of the Study US Hispanic Religion: A Polemic Against Intellectual Assimilation,” *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* (2003), and “A Critique of the ‘Aesthetic Turn’ in U.S. Hispanic Theology,” *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 8, no. 3 (February, 2001): 18-48.

<sup>7</sup> Manuel Mejido, “The Postmodern: Liberation or Language?,” *Handbook of Latino/a Theologies*, Edwin Aponte and Miguel Angel de la Torre, eds. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, forthcoming 2006).

Only a “return” to the foundations of the theologies of liberation against the postmodern condition can overcome this dissimulation and eclipse. Elsewhere we have proposed to realize this “return” through a retrieval of Ignacio Ellacuría’s *Philosophy of Historical Reality*.<sup>8</sup>

The fundamental task of *Philosophy of Historical Reality* is to put forth historical reality as the ultimate manifestation of reality, as the proper object of philosophy. Ellacuría develops the concept of historical reality as the synthesis of the Hegelian-Marxian dialectic and Xavier Zubiri’s radicalization of Scholastic realism.<sup>9</sup> Historical reality is physical, not conceptual; material, not ideal; concrete, not abstract. Historical reality encompasses the material, biological, individual, and social moments of reality. And when it is considered in its totality, as a dynamic and differentiated structure of its moments, functions, and relations, historical reality forms a transcendental system - intramundane metaphysics. But what exactly constitutes the radical nature of the Ellacurian task? The answer to this question is implicit in Ellacuría’s synthesis: The radicalness of the fundamental task of *Philosophy of Historical Reality* is its attempt to overcome the idealism of Western thought, not as an abstract intellectualized project, but to the extent that this idealism has, on the one hand, impeded the development of the Latin American philosophies and theologies of liberation, and, on the other, to the extent that it has ideologically legitimated the hegemony of liberal-democratic capitalism as the latest moment of the dialectic of the Americas.

“Our discussions of Hegel, Marx, and Zubiri,” writes Ellacuría in the Introduction to *Philosophy of Historical Reality*, “have been by no means trivial for they tease out, and, in a certain sense, prepare the ground for what we are arguing here is the object of philosophy”<sup>10</sup> Hegel, Marx, and Zubiri prepare the ground for the elucidation of historical reality as the proper object of philosophy to the extent that they understand the object of philosophy to be the real and physical (and not logical and conceptual) unity of all things - that is, in other words, to the extent that each, in his own way, attempts to overcome the idealism of Western thought. Hegel and Marx, against Transcendental Idealism and the philosophy of identity respectively, grasp this real unity through the

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<sup>8</sup> Manuel Mejido, “A Return to the Foundations of the Critically Oriented Theologies of Liberation,” *The Journal of Religion and Society* 8 (2006): 1-52.

<sup>9</sup> Manuel Mejido, “Ignacio Ellacuría’s *Philosophy of Historical Reality*: Beyond the Hegelian-Marxian Dialectic and the Zubirian Radicalization of Scholastic Realism,” *Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 17 (2006 forthcoming), “Beyond Nomological, Hermeneutic, and Dialectical Knowledge: Zubiri’s Radicalization of Scholastic Realism and the Hidden Ground of the Human-Social Sciences,” *The Xavier Zubiri Review* 6, 61-71, and “Xavier Zubiri,” *Diccionario de teólogos y teólogas*, Justo González, ed. (CLIE: Barcelona, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Ignacio Ellacuría, *Filosofía de la realidad histórica* (San Salvador: UCA, 1990), 30.

dialectic as what uncovers the illusion of an immediate knowledge that abstracts from the totality of things. While Zubiri, against voluntaristic rationalism, phenomenology, and the existential analytics of *Dasein*, grasps this real unity through a radicalization of Scholastic realism that returns to the primacy of reality, and thus uncovering the “entification” and “logification” of the totality of things.

Ellacuría’s appropriation of the Hegelian-Marxian dialectic can best be understood as an attempt to develop a *social theoretically oriented theory of knowledge* that pushes beyond Zubiri’s “ontological assumption of a structure of the world independent of the knower” by grasping the knower and the structure of the world as mediated by the synthetic activity of social labor.<sup>11</sup> With the insights of the Hegelian-Marxian horizon, Ellacuría, on the one hand, uncovers to what extent Zubiri’s idea of historical reality remains within the limits of “traditional theory,” and, on the other, pushes into the realm of “critical theory” with the idea that the knower is always involved in the making of historical reality.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Ellacuría’s philosophy of historical reality is not driven by the *technical* cognitive interest of the *empirical analytical sciences*; nor is it driven by the *practical* cognitive interest of the *historical-hermeneutic sciences*. It is driven rather by the *emancipatory* cognitive interest of the *critically oriented sciences*.<sup>13</sup> That is, philosophy of historical reality, like psychoanalysis, does not seek to *explain* or *interpret* the world, but rather to *transform* it through a *historical praxis* that aims to “*hacerse cargo de la realidad*” [“engage reality”], “*cargar con la realidad*” [“tarry with reality”], and “*encargarse de la realidad*” [“take charge of reality”].<sup>14</sup>

But this critically-oriented philosophical science has as its object and is mediated by a historical reality that is open and innovative par excellence. This critically-oriented philosophical science is a science of the human being (for Zubiri the “animal of realities”) that is made possible only to the extent that the human being is always already *relegated* to the transcendental power of historical reality.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the Zubirian radicalization of Scholastic realism adds the dimension of *relegation* to the idea of a critically-oriented philosophical science. Only because the historical praxis that is generated by the critically-oriented philosophical science of historical reality is always already relegated (through the human being) to the transcendental power of historical reality is it possible, on the one hand, to address the question of what “ought” this historical praxis

<sup>11</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest*, 43-63.

<sup>12</sup> Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*. New York: Seabury, 1972).

<sup>13</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest*, 309-310.

<sup>14</sup> Ignacio Ellacuría, “Hacia una fundamentación del método teológico Latinoamericano,” *Estudios Centroamericanos* 322-23 (1975): 409-25.

<sup>15</sup> Manuel Mejido, Ignacio Ellacuría’s *Philosophy of Historical Reality: Beyond the Hegelian-Marxian Dialectic and the Zubirian Radicalization of Scholastic Realism*.”

be, and, on the other, to claim that this historical praxis is related to a reality that is not strictly intramundane.

Historical reality is open, open to the future. This is why there emerges the problem of what ought to be made, the problem of how we ought to make the aperture of historical reality (the classical problem of how we ought to order society). For it is clear that some historical realities are more open (that is, more just) than others. It is clear that, in the realm of potential freedom that is history, there always exists the choice of making or not making historical reality open - that is, of making or not making historical reality just. Indeed, the freedom to make can be actualized as making historical reality unjustly close in upon itself, or more specifically, as unjustly closed or sutured for some.<sup>16</sup> In this horizon of what ought to be made is situated the Ellacurian problem of ethics: namely, the problem of the making of liberation through the making of "better" history, that is the problem of how ought one exactly "*hacerse cargo de la realidad*," how ought one exactly "*cargar con la realidad*," and how ought one exactly "*encargarse de la realidad*."

All moments of reality are transcendental to the extent that they participate in the giving of self to reality. If the transcendental of, for example, natural reality is the process of nature as actualized in and through mutations, the transcendental of history is the freedom to make as actualized in and through the making of what ought to be made. But, because historical reality is the ultimate manifestation of reality, its transcendental is at the same time the transcendental of reality as such, the transcendental of intramundane metaphysics. In other words, the transcendental of historical reality is also the transcendence of reality to "what is not necessarily, nor exclusively intramundane," the transcendence of reality to the extramundane.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, for Ellacuría the aperture to transcendence is the aperture of history, such that the problem of the making of the Kingdom interlocks with the problem of the making of better history, the problem of grace interlocks with the problem of the ought, the problem of soteriology interlocks with the problem of ethics. "*Hacerse cargo de la realidad*," "*cargar con la realidad*," and "*encargarse de la realidad*," have now an eschatological function. This is the point of departure of the critically-oriented theological sciences of liberation.

Indeed, grounded on the Ellacurían synthesis, that is, grounded on the idea of a critically-oriented philosophical science of historical reality, the critically oriented

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<sup>16</sup> Ignacio Ellacuría, "Historización de los derechos humanos desde los pueblos oprimidos y las mayorías populares." *Estudios Centroamericanos* 502 (1990): 589-96.

<sup>17</sup> Ignacio Ellacuría, *Filosofía de la realidad histórica*, 601.

theological sciences of liberation generate a theological knowledge that is “interested” in its own liberation - a liberation achieved through the liberation of socio-historical misery, through the making of “better” history. The critically-oriented theological sciences of liberation, in other words, generate a theological knowledge that, as a system of thought, theoretically aims to grasp the invariance that exists between present historical conditions and the Kingdom of God, and, as a social movement, praxeologically aims to overcome this invariance through the transformation of history into the Kingdom.

The theologies of liberation have historically labored under, not the Scholastic analogy of being, the Kantian horizon of consciousness, the Heideggerian horizon of time, the Hegelian horizon of becoming, nor the postmodern horizon of language, but under the horizon of historical reality. Today the Ellacurian category of historical reality stands, on the one hand, as a critique of the postmodern reduction of reality to the hermeneutic conception of language. And, on the other hand, the idea of historical reality stands as that surplus that cannot be integrated into US-style liberal-democratic capitalism, into the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

This *return* to the foundations of the theologies of liberation, however, does not suffice. For that the theologies of liberation are not reducible to the postmodern condition does not imply that they are exempt from the challenges generated by this condition. A return to the foundations of the theologies of liberation must be completed by a *reconstruction* of these foundations. This reconstruction must guide the theologies of liberation through the linguistic turn, but without reducing them to the hermeneutic conception of language. We see the possibility of such a linguistified corrective to the theologies of liberation in Lacanian psychoanalysis understood as a critically oriented science.

In the second half of this article we will, first, introduce the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science, and, second, outline the Lacanian corrective to the Ellacurian synthesis.

### **The Idea of Psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science**

The idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science emerges in and through the attempt to use that science inaugurated by Freud as a corrective to the reductionistic tendency of the Marxian tradition that does not fall captive to the historical-hermeneutic reduction of the emancipatory cognitive interest. Psychoanalysis, unlike hermeneutics, is not satisfied with the understanding of

intersubjective meaning structures. It rather attempts to transform symbolic-cultural distortions through the therapeutic power of language. Rather than idealistically grasping symbolic-cultural conditions as intentionally communicated meaning structures that constitute an integrated lifeworld, psychoanalysis grasps these conditions in light of the problem of corrupted, distorted, and excommunicated desires, memories, and dreams that have been repressed.

Psychoanalysis, like the critique of ideology, is driven by an emancipatory cognitive interest. Both attempt not only to interpret but also to change the world. The revolutionary is driven by the interest in transforming the socio-historical conditions of misery. The analyst is driven by the interest in transforming the pathological state of the patient. With the guidance of psychoanalysis Marx's natural history of the self-formation of the human species is recast as the problem of the struggle to liberate the human being from both the external compulsion of nature and the internal compulsion of culture. The synthetic activity of social labor can now be properly understood as the dialectic of the poietic transformation of the material-economic through labor and the praxeological transformation of the symbolic-cultural through language. The problem of rectifying social labor becomes the problem of overcoming both alienation in and through labor and anxiety in and through language. This psychoanalytic corrective to the critique of political economy, moreover, becomes increasingly important as societies emancipate themselves from the compulsion of external nature. Indeed, in advanced capitalist societies the problem of internal compulsion is the primary problem. For a certain level of economic development does not automatically translate into symbolic-cultural integration. Here the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science becomes indispensable.

In as much as the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science functions as a corrective to the critique of political economy's reduction of social labor to *poiesis* and the hermeneutic tradition's reduction of social labor to praxis; inasmuch as it grapples with the problem of the relationship between metapsychology and social theory,<sup>18</sup> and the problem of the grounding of the human-

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<sup>18</sup> The idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science is first and foremost the problem of the relationship between metapsychology and social theory. As we have suggested, the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science emerged as an attempt to provide a corrective to the critique of political economy. This is definitely the case from a historically oriented point of view: It was historical materialism that turned to the new science, psychoanalysis, in an attempt to overcome the reduction of social labor to *poiesis*. But eventually, however, as psychoanalysis developed, expanded, and gained autonomy, it became increasingly clear that it would need to turn to social theory to ground its base concepts. This is already evident in the development of Freud's meta-psychology: Thus, for example, against his early reductionistic biologism, the mature

social sciences<sup>19</sup> and philosophy;<sup>20</sup> inasmuch as it grapples with the problem of the grounding of language,<sup>21</sup> psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science is a theory of reality and religion, and from here it can serve as the ground for a theological reflection that aims to take the theologies of liberation through the linguistic turn. Indeed psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science provides the possibility of theoretically overcoming the postmodern reduction of social reality to the hermeneutic conception of language, and therapeutically going beyond the naturalization of global liberal-democratic capitalism.

On the one hand, as they struggle with the postmodern eclipse of liberation, the theologies of liberation need to turn toward psychoanalysis and not the human-social sciences or philosophy. On the other hand, once having situated themselves within the horizon of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science, once having chosen the emancipatory cognitive interest in transformation over the practical cognitive interest in interpretation, the theologies of liberation need turn specifically to Lacanian psychoanalysis. Among the different formulations of psychoanalysis, Lacanian psychoanalysis, to the extent that it labors under a poststructuralist conception of language, is especially suited for the task of reconstructing the theologies of liberation. Lacanian psychoanalysis posits a Real beyond language that manifests itself as the desire of a broken and divided

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Freud would attempt to develop a social theoretical theory of instincts. Indeed, the problem of social theory's dependence on meta-psychology and meta-psychology's dependence on social theory, this is what sustains the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science.

<sup>19</sup> The idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science is, moreover, the problem of the grounding of the human-social sciences. The perpetual back and forth between meta-psychology and social theory generates the problem of the foundations of the human-social sciences. As meta-psychology and social theory struggle with their respective points of departure, not only does each turn to the other for assistance, but in and through this turning to the other each, from its own point of view, uncovers the problem of the interdependence of the individual and the social totality. This problem of interdependence is nothing more than the problem of the foundations of the human-social sciences. This is evident from the work of Lévi-Strauss. To lay the foundations for a cultural anthropology Lévi-Strauss turns to psychoanalysis for a theory of the transmission of the symbolic-cultural.

<sup>20</sup> The idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science is the problem of the relationship between meta-psychology and social theory. It is also the problem of the grounding of the human-social sciences. But ultimately it is no other than the problem of grounding epistemology, ontology, metaphysics – the problem of the grounding of philosophy. The radicalness of this claim can only be properly understood from the perspective of the movement of the problem of knowledge. With the Kantian inversion the problem of metaphysics becomes a problem of epistemology. For many years epistemology was approached from the perspective of the nomological sciences of nature. That is, the problem of grounding philosophy was formulated as a problem of the conditions of possibility of, for example, physics. In a post-positivist age, by struggling with the problem of grounding the human-social sciences, psychoanalysis at the same time struggles with the problem of grounding philosophy. Indeed, it could be argued that, as the science of desire, psychoanalysis provides the foundations for both the human-social and natural science.

<sup>21</sup> The claim that the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science is no other than the problem of grounding philosophy holds *a fortiori* after the postmodern turn to language. See, for example, Manuel Mejido, "Propedéutica a la problemática postmoderna I: el giro lingüístico," *Castalia: Revista de Psicología* 9, 11-22.

subject. The Real is more appropriate for grappling not only with the conditions of the crisis of knowledge, but also with the problem of socio-historical fragmentation. Indeed, in the hands of Slavoj Žižek the Lacanian real can serve as a linguistified corrective to that Ellacurían category of historical reality, Ellacuría's synthesis of the Zubirian radicalization of Scholastic realism and the Hegelian-Marxian dialectic.

In order to more precisely bring forth from a historical perspective the base concepts of the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science, and in order to situate the Lacanian reading of Freud and Žižek's reworking of Lacan, we will now develop a genealogy of this idea. This genealogy has four moves: Herbert Marcuse, Habermas, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and Lacan and Žižek.

Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* represents the first systematic attempt to bring together Marx's critique of political economy and Freud's meta-psychology.<sup>22</sup> It becomes evident from the very beginning, however, that this work is not only a corrective to historical materialism; it is also an attempt to push beyond certain Neo-Freudian interpretations of psychoanalysis with the help of Marx. Indeed, *Eros and Civilization* exemplifies that dialectic of social theory and meta-psychology we alluded to above.

Marcuse draws a parallel between the Freudian principle that repression (censorship of the id) is necessary for ego synthesis and the Marxian principle that the sacrifice of some (i.e., the alienation of labor) is necessary for the transformation of nature. In the work of the mature Freud this idea manifests itself as the conflict between the pleasure principle and reality principle. Here Marcuse positions himself against the dominant interpretations of Freud. Drawing on the utopianism of the Frankfurt School, Marcuse argues that a non-repressed society is possible. This claim brings forth the aim of *Eros and Civilization*: namely, to reexamine Freud's metapsychology, and in particular his theory of the instincts. Marcuse argues that we need to understand Freud's "biologism" as the materialist underpinnings of social theory. But this teases out another problem: namely the problem of Neo-Freudian interpretations of Freud. By separating the social roots of the instincts, the Neo-Freudians, Marcuse argues, tend to understand social conditions as the natural environment for the individual; that is, Neo-Freudians naturalize social conditions. Indeed, Neo-Freudian psychoanalysis is ideological to the extent that it understands the categories of psychoanalysis within the limits of existing social relations. Thus

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<sup>22</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

Marcuse's work is also an attempt to grapple with the problem of the interpretation and institutionalization of Post-Freudian psychoanalysis.<sup>23</sup>

The history of the human being is the history of his/her repression. Marcuse begins with this Freudian claim that brings forth the deep similarities that exist between psychoanalysis and the critique of political economy. It is the repression of social and biological structures that makes progress possible; for if societies were completely free of restrictions, human instincts would destroy social life. Indeed, the death drive strives toward something that society cannot permit. Socialization in Freudian terms is the subsumption of the pleasure principle to the reality principle. It is the sacrifice of instant gratification for more secured and socially acceptable future pleasure. Through the reality principle the human being develops reason and subjectivity. This subsumption takes place at two interrelated levels: on the one hand, it takes place at the philogenetic level of the species. This refers to the Freudian mythical account of the primordial horde. And, on the other hand, the subsumption of the pleasure principle to the reality principle takes place at the individual or ontogenetic level. This refers to the Freudian account of the socialization of the infant in and through the Oedipal complex. The philogenetic and ontogenetic levels are, however, dialectically interrelated, because the individual lives and relives the great traumatic events of the development of the species, and these events are recast as conflict between the individual and the species.<sup>24</sup>

Marcuse points out that repression, however, is for Freud never complete. The pleasure principle is always present in the form of unconscious desires. Freud argued that reason must be understood dialectically as repressed desire, that is, as what emerges in and through the demands of the primary instincts (i.e., the demands of the id) on the one hand, and the demands of society (i.e., the demands of the superego) on the other. This is the dialectic of repression and rebellion, the return of the repressed in the form of the prohibited history of a civilization. Thus for Freud a non-repressed society is impossible to the extent to which he understands the repression of desires to be the condition of the possibility of society. Here, against Freud, Marcuse argues that the truth of memory is derived from its function of preserving prohibited potentialities which are betrayed by the socialized individual. For Marcuse, psychoanalysis has a liberative function that comes forth when one pushes beyond the positivism to which Freud fell captive; the liberation of memory, argues Marcuse, blows up the rationality of the repressed individual. The memory of prohibited desires begins to speak the truth which reason negates. Indeed,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., Introduction.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., Chapter 1.

against Freud Marcuse argues that the liberation of the past does not end with the reconciliation of the present. Marcuse argues that the liberation of past memories can be used for the construction of a future society. Indeed, for Marcuse, psychoanalysis as the *recherche du temps perdu* (Lévi-Strauss) becomes the vehicle for future liberation.

The young Habermas situates himself in the space opened up by Marcuse. Habermas, like Marcuse, sees in psychoanalysis the possibility of a corrective to Marx's critique of political economy. Indeed, he, like Marcuse, turned to Freud to reconstruct historical materialism.<sup>25</sup> In fact, as we saw in the Introduction, it is Habermas who explicitly refers to psychoanalysis as a "critically oriented science." Habermas, however, attempts to go beyond Marcuse. This to the extent that he attempts to ground both historical materialism and psychoanalysis, he attempts to ground the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science, in a theory of language, and specifically in the hermeneutic conception of language. Indeed, for Habermas, as we saw in Chapter Three, psychoanalysis needs to be understood as a *depth hermeneutics*. Depth hermeneutics is at the same time a corrective to Marx's reduction of social labor to *poiesis* and Freud's nomologically restricted conception of metapsychology. If, on the one hand, psychoanalysis can understand itself as a depth hermeneutics only to the extent that it has gone through historical materialism, on the other hand, only when historical materialism has gone through psychoanalysis understood as depth hermeneutics will it be able to meet the challenges of the linguistic turn.

The early Habermas takes as his point of departure the comparison between Dilthey's hermeneutics and Freud's metapsychology. Although Freud modeled the interpretation of dreams after the hermeneutic model of philological research, the technique of dream interpretation goes beyond hermeneutics. Hermeneutics analyzes intentional meaning structures within an intersubjective framework that understands the problem of the corruption, distortion, and omission of meaning as an exogenous problem: that is, as a problem produced by external conditions. Psychoanalysis analyzes unintended meaning structures within an objective framework that understands the problem of the corruption, distortion, and omission of meaning as an endogenous problem: that is, as a problem produced by internal conditions. "The technique of dream interpretation," writes Habermas, "goes beyond the art of hermeneutics insofar as it must grasp not only the meaning of a possibly distorted text, but the meaning of the text distortion itself, that is the transformation of a latent dream

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<sup>25</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Chapter 10, Self-Reflection as Science: Freud's Psychoanalytic Critique of Meaning, Chapter 11, The Scientific Self-Misunderstanding of Metapsychology: On the Logic of General Interpretation, and Chapter 12, Psychoanalysis and Social Theory: Nietzsche's Reduction of Cognitive Interests, 214-288.

thought into the manifest dream.”<sup>26</sup> The problem of the “meaning of the text distortion itself” is no other than the problem of the censorship, the problem of the repression of meaning. Indeed, psychoanalysis differs from hermeneutics in that it must come to terms with the mechanism of repression.

Habermas understands Freud’s meta-psychology as first and foremost an attempt to come to terms with the mechanism of repression. Habermas believes that a theory of communicative action can provide a needed foundation to the conceptualization of this mechanism. Oriented by the theory of communicative action Habermas social theoretically recasts Freud’s meta-psychology. The problem of the censorship of desires and wishes by consciousness can now be understood as the problem of the excommunication and de-linguistification of publicly communicated interpretations. “The psychically most effective way to render undesired need dispositions harmless,” writes Habermas “is to exclude from public communication the interpretations to which they are attached – in other words, repression...Through the mechanism of repression, conscious motivations present in the public use of language are transformed into unconscious, as it were delinguistified, motives. In sleep, when the censorship can be slackened owing to the suspension of motor activity, repressed motives find a language through connection with the publicly allowed symbols of the day’s residues...[T]his language is privatized.”<sup>27</sup>

Habermas maintained that Freud derived the concept of the unconscious from a specific form of disturbance of communication in ordinary language.<sup>28</sup> It is in this sense that the theory of communicative action provides the normative leverage to Freud’s metapsychology. “What is unconscious is removed from public communication.”<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the re-conceptualization of the tension between the consciousness and unconsciousness as the tension between public and private interpretations, and the reworking of the mechanism of repression as the problem of the excommunication of publicly accepted language, provides a normative ground for not only the base concepts of psychoanalysis, but also for the methodological questions regarding the analyst-patient relationship. The theory of communicative action understands the meta-psychological distinction between normal and pathological behavior in the light of a theory of democracy. “The clinical pictures of conversion hysteria, compulsion neurosis, and the various phobias,” argues Habermas, “appear only as the pathological limiting cases of a scale of misbehavior, which in part falls within the realm of normality and in part actually sets the standards of what counts as normal. In the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 222-224.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

methodically rigorous sense, 'wrong' behavior means every deviation from the model of the language game of communicative action, in which motives of action and linguistically expressed intentions coincide."<sup>30</sup>

For Habermas, the starting point of psychoanalysis is the experience of resistance, that is, the experience of that "blocking force that stands in the way of the free and public communication of repressed contents."<sup>31</sup> Psychoanalysis does not, like the cultural sciences, aim to understand symbolic structures in general; rather, it aims to understand these structures only to the extent that it leads to self-reflection. Psychoanalysis replaces the praxeological work of interpreting with the emancipatory work of remembering: "Working-through designates the dynamic component of a cognitive activity that leads to recognition only against resistances."<sup>32</sup> Indeed, "the derivation of the structural model from experiences of the analytic situation," writes Habermas, "links the three categories ego, id, and super-ego to the specific meaning of a form of communication into which physician and patient enter with the aim of setting in motion a process of enlightenment and bringing the patient to self-reflection."<sup>33</sup> Yet the fundamental problem with Freud's metapsychology, Habermas argues, is that the language in which the theory developed is narrower than the language in which its technique is described.<sup>34</sup> This is how Habermas, from the point of view of a hermeneutic conception of language, understands Marcuse's critique of Freud's nomological restriction of psychoanalysis. Habermas thus attempts to correct these shortcomings with a theory of language. This is precisely the idea of psychoanalysis as a depth hermeneutics.

We can now, from the point of view of the genealogy of the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science, see how from the beginning Habermas was in a certain way overdetermined to move in the direction he did. In the final analysis, depth hermeneutics posits the intersubjectivity of the analytic dialogue as its conditions of possibility. For depth hermeneutics the therapeutic language of the analyst functions positively, it brings about, makes present, and discloses the cure. From the point of view of the history of psychoanalysis the question becomes: does the hermeneutic conception of language which grounds the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science as a depth hermeneutics do justice to the radicalness of the Freudian metapsychology? The answer according to Deleuze and Guattari is "no."

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* represents a paradigm shift in the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science.<sup>35</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, like Habermas, aim dialectically to bring together Marx and Freud, historical materialism and psychoanalysis, the problems of social exploitation and psychic repression. Yet their approach to the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science is radically different. While Habermas labored under a hermeneutic conception of language, Deleuze and Guattari labor under the poststructuralist conception of language. Indeed, the authors of *Anti-Oedipus* were perhaps the first to systematically develop the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science from the point of view of poststructuralism, and, in this sense, they prepare the ground for Žižek's reworking of Lacan. The best way to bring forth this shift that takes place in the history of the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science with Deleuze and Guattari is to recall the difference that exists between the hermeneutic and poststructuralist conceptions of language.

For the hermeneutic conception of language, language discloses the *logos* and makes it present. Indeed, the universality of the *logos* manifests itself in the hermeneutic tradition through the presupposition that everything can be linguistified, the presupposition that in the end language will set things right. But this presupposition is valid only if we accept the claim that in the beginning was a meta-language, and that in the beginning this meta-language spoke, constituting the being of all beings. Indeed, language for hermeneutics functions positively as presence, disclosure, and understanding. By contrast, the poststructuralist conception of language is a critique of the logocentric metaphysics of presence; it is a decentering of the knowing subject, an attempt to reinsert Western thought in the horizon of nihilism. Language for poststructuralism no longer functions positively as presence, disclosure, and understanding. It rather functions negatively as lack, dissimulation, and alienation.

Deleuze and Guattari's poststructuralist interpretation of the Freudian metapsychology represents a radicalization of psychoanalysis. On the one hand, it can be said that Deleuze and Guattari, like Foucault, critique psychoanalytic knowledge from the point of view of the postmodern decentered subject. But, on the other hand, it can also be said that Deleuze and Guattari use psychoanalysis to marshal a postmodern critique of the idealism lurking behind the hermeneutic conception of language. Indeed, for Deleuze and Guattari the ground of psychoanalysis is no longer the intersubjectivity of communicative action. It is now, rather, the desire of both the patient and the analyst. Moreover, it can be

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<sup>35</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *L'Anti-Oedipe: Capitalisme et schizophrénie*, (Paris: Minuit, 1972).

said, on the one hand, that the authors of *Anti-Oedipus* critique the essentialism of Marx's historical materialism. For them there is no longer nature which as prime matter is transformed by human beings into the form of history. For Deleuze and Guattari subsume the category of prime matter as desire. For them there is first and foremost the metaphysics of desire, which is the metaphysics of desiring-production. But, on the other hand, Deleuze and Guattari critique the Freudian reduction of the socio-historical totality to the family with the help of historical materialism. Desiring production cannot be separated from social production. But, in the final analysis, the radicalness of Deleuze and Guattari's idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science can be gauged according to the fundamental aim of *Anti-Oedipus*, namely to replace psychoanalysis with *schizoanalysis*.<sup>36</sup>

It is not correct to say that Deleuze and Guattari pave the way for Lacan, for the project of a schizoanalysis was already indebted to Lacan.<sup>37</sup> Why then, if we are attempting to develop a genealogy of the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science, have we engaged Deleuze and Guattari before engaging Lacan—if in fact Lacan comes chronologically first? Our justification is the following: first, Lacan repudiated *Anti-Oedipus*. This means, obviously, that he also repudiated Deleuze and Guattari's interpretation of his work.<sup>38</sup> Second, while Deleuze and Guattari do draw on Lacan, the bulk of the argument that undergirds *Anti-Oedipus* is in fact not Lacanian. If we had to select a Neo-Freudian that most influenced Deleuze and Guattari it would be Wilhelm Reich and not Lacan.<sup>39</sup> Third, due to its broad historical and philosophical scope, *Anti-Oedipus* provides an excellent introduction to the poststructuralist conception of psychoanalysis which is indispensable for grappling with Lacan, and Žižek's more "orthodox" appropriation of Lacan.

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<sup>36</sup> Freud took as his point of departure the neurotic and his/her reality. For Deleuze and Guattari the schizophrenic and his/her fantasy is the point of reference. "A schizophrenic out for a walk," they argue, "is a better model than a neurotic lying on the analyst's couch." *Ibid.*, 2. The schizophrenic brings forth the problem of desiring-production the primary concern of a materialist psychiatry "which conceives of and deals with the schizo as *homo natura*." Indeed, "Schizophrenia is the universe of productive and reproductive desiring-machines, universal primary production as 'the essential reality of man and nature.'" *Ibid.*, 3. Schizoanalysis thus implies a critique of Freud's Oedipus: "The great discovery of psychoanalysis, was that of the production of desire, of the productions of the unconscious. But once Oedipus entered the picture, this discovery was soon buried beneath a new brand of idealism: a classical theater was substituted for the unconscious factory; representation was substituted for the units of production of the unconscious; and an unconscious that was capable of nothing but expressing itself—in myth, tragedy, dreams – was substituted for the productive unconscious." *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 310-311.

<sup>38</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: the Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999), 250-251. See also François Regnault, *Conférences d'esthétiques lacanienne* (Paris: Agalma 1997).

<sup>39</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *L'Anti-Oedipe*, 118.

The early Lacan takes as his point of departure the critique of associationist psychology, on the one hand, and, the critique of the Anglo-American behaviorist interpretation of Freud, on the other. The problem with associationist psychology according to Lacan is that its empiricist underpinnings voluntaristically reduce the “function of the real” to the “function of truth.” Against associationist psychology Lacan proposes a phenomenological approach that will be able to get to the problem of the interpretation of language as such.<sup>40</sup> The problem with the Anglo-American behaviorist interpretation of Freud, Lacan argues, is that it reduces Freud’s metapsychology to the problem of the adaptation of the individual to society, to the problem of strengthening the ego with the end of integrating it into reality. Indeed, the idea of metapsychology as “human engineering” and the myth of the “autonomous” ego eclipse the radicalness of the Freudian metapsychology. Against Anglo-American behaviorism Lacan turns to dialectics and structuralism.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Lacan since the very beginning interpreted Freud in light of the continental tradition, and, in particular, Alexandre Kojève’s reading of Hegel, Alexandre Koyré’s philosophy of science, de Saussure’s structuralism, Lévi-Strauss’s cultural anthropology, and the Surrealists’ (Salvador Dalí, André Breton, and Georges Bataille, in particular) interpretation of hysteria.<sup>42</sup>

The most succinct way of describing the Lacanian project is to say that Lacan attempts to take Freud through the linguistic turn. What are perhaps Lacan’s two most celebrated assertions substantiate this claim: namely that “the unconscious is structured like a language” (“*l’inconscient est structuré comme un langage*”);<sup>43</sup> and that “the unconscious is the discourse of the Other” (“*l’inconscient, c’est le discours de l’Autre*”).<sup>44</sup> But, as we have already suggested, Lacan takes Freud specifically through the poststructuralist conception of language. For Lacan the Freudian decentering of the knowing subject has generated an “epistemological rupture”<sup>45</sup> that makes defunct the hermeneutic interpretation of psychoanalysis, this to the extent that the hermeneutic tradition posits a series of presuppositions which the Freudian “Copernican revolution”<sup>46</sup> has proven defunct. Although Lacan takes issue specifically with Ricoeur’s interpretation of Freud,<sup>47</sup> the

<sup>40</sup> Jacques Lacan, “Au-delà du ‘Principe de réalité,’” in *Ecrits*, I (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966), 72-91.

<sup>41</sup> Jacques Lacan, “Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse,” in *Ibid.*, 243-244.

<sup>42</sup> Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan: esquisse d’une vie, histoire d’un système de pensée* (Paris: Fayard, 1993).

<sup>43</sup> Jacques Lacan, “L’inconscient freudien et la nôtre,” in *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, Le Séminaire, Livre XI (Éditions du Seuil, 1973), 28.

<sup>44</sup> Jacques Lacan, “L’instance de la lettre dans l’inconscient ou la raison depuis Freud,” *Ecrits*, I, 522.

<sup>45</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, “Éclaircissement,” *Ecrits*, I, 539.

<sup>46</sup> Jacques Lacan, “Psychologie et métapsychologie,” in *Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse*, Le Séminaire, Livre II (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978), 11-23.

<sup>47</sup> Jacques Lacan, “La sexualité dans les défilés du signifiant,” in *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, 172.

Lacanian critique of hermeneutics can also be extended to the Habermasian theory of communicative action as Žižek has recently maintained.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, for Lacan the fact that the Freudian metapsychology has demonstrated the impossibility of the scientist's discourse requires a shift to a poststructuralist conception of language. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that for Lacan, psychoanalysis provides the ground for the poststructuralist conception of language. In any case, Lacan attempts to take Freud through a conception of language that comes closest to Derrida's. Both Lacan and Derrida take as their point of departure de Saussure. However, while Derrida reworks de Saussure with his *différance*, Lacan reworks de Saussure as "the primacy of the signifier over the signified" ["*suprématie du signifiant sur le signifié*"].

De Saussure grounds modern linguistics with the algorithm: S/s which reads: signifier over the signified.<sup>49</sup> The radicalness of this formulation, as it is well known, is that it established the arbitrariness of the sign. De Saussure defined the signification "sign" as the difference between a signifier and a signified, and specifically as the signifier different from its signified. For de Saussure language was the negative movement of signs: while traditionally the signifier was understood as serving the function of representing the signified, Lacan argues that the signifier has primacy over the signified and its signification.<sup>50</sup> Read in this way de Saussure's algorithm becomes more than an argument in favor of nominalism. It now becomes a theory of how in reality the signifier enters into the signified, that is, it now becomes the poststructuralist foundations of Freud's meta-psychology. Now the unconscious can be understood to function as a "chain of signifiers" against which the signifieds of the subject are always slipping and sliding.<sup>51</sup> It can now be grasped as the "symbolic overdetermination of the subject."<sup>52</sup> "The unconscious," argues Lacan "are the effects of language on the subject, it refers to that dimension where the subject is determined in and through the development of the effects of language; and it is precisely for this reason why we say that the unconscious is structured like a language."<sup>53</sup>

Indeed, the subject for Lacan is always the subject of a chain of signifiers, the subject is always the subject of and subject to the movement of the unconscious; it is precisely in this sense that the subject is symbolically overdetermined. We now have a first approximation of the meaning of the Lacanian barred subject

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<sup>48</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, 2.

<sup>49</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Ecrits de linguistique générale*.

<sup>50</sup> Jacques Lacan, "L'instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient ou la raison depuis Freud," *Ecrits*, I, 495.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 499.

<sup>52</sup> Jacques Lacan, "L'agressivité en psychanalyse," in *Ecrits*, I, 107.

<sup>53</sup> Jacques Lacan, "La sexualité dans les défilés du signifiant," in *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, 167.

(\$): The subject is barred, it is incomplete, it is always fading to the extent that it can never produce enough signifieds, to the extent that it lacks the words; the subject is barred to the extent that it is at the sway of the chain of signifiers, it is barred to the extent that it is the slave of language, and *a fortiori* the slave of that discourse to which s/he is thrown into at the moment of his birth, that discourse that already knows its name.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to the inversion of de Saussure's algorithm, the other pillar upon which stands Lacan's interpretation of Freud is what we have already referred to as the Lacanian metaphysics of desire. Desire for Lacan no longer refers to the desire for this or that object. Desire for Lacan does not refer to the empirical movement of pleasure,<sup>55</sup> but to a fundamental ontological property of the human being, a property which Freud alluded to when he spoke of going beyond the "pleasure principle," when he spoke of the "death drive."<sup>56</sup> Desire, for Lacan, no longer inheres in either the subject or the object; it encompasses both. The "function of desire," argues Lacan, can be understood to be first and foremost as the "function of non-being" [*fonction du désir...comme le manque-à-être*].<sup>57</sup> Indeed, desire in the Lacanian sense refers to an essential lack, a primordial loss. Desire is *objet petit a*[*utré*]. Here the poststructuralist conception of language looms large: we can now say that for Lacan, language functions as lack, dissimulation, and alienation precisely because it is the expression, the movement of desire. Although Lacan's conception of desire has elements of Spinoza's metaphysics,<sup>58</sup> it is most marked by Kojève's reading of Hegel. We may recall that Kojève understood the subject of thought as the subject of desire. We may recall that Kojève recast the Hegelian master-slave dialectic in light of the subject of desire.<sup>59</sup> Drawing on Kojève, Lacan develops the history of the Freudian subject as the perpetual alienation of the "I" (ego) into the imaginary "me," an alienation that takes form in and through the desire to be recognized by the Other of the symbolic order. For desire for Lacan is ultimately "the desire of the Other."<sup>60</sup> Indeed, "the desire of the human being," he writes, "finds its meaning in the desire of the other, not because the other holds the keys to the desired object, but because the human being's first object is to be recognized by the other."<sup>61</sup>

Thus from another angle, the Lacanian subject is said to be barred, it is said to be

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<sup>54</sup> Jacques Lacan, "L'instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient ou la raison depuis Freud," *Ecrits*, I, 492.

<sup>55</sup> Jacques Lacan, "Du sujet de la certitude," in *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, 39.

<sup>56</sup> Jacques Lacan, "Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse," in *Ecrits*, I, 316.

<sup>57</sup> Jacques Lacan, "Du sujet de la certitude," in *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, 37.

<sup>58</sup> Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*.

<sup>59</sup> Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la philosophie de Hegel*.

<sup>60</sup> Jacques Lacan, "Du sujet de la certitude," in *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, 47.

<sup>61</sup> Jacques Lacan, "Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse," in *Ecrits*, I, 266.

fading, split, broken to the extent that it is thrown into the world by its desire, to the extent that it is at the sway of non-being, to the extent that it is the perpetual failure of the synthesis between the "I" and the "me," to the extent that it desires to be recognized by the other, to the extent that it is doomed to exist between the real, imaginary, and symbolic. We can perhaps better understand the interplay of these elements by briefly considering Lacan's celebrated "mirror stage."<sup>62</sup> The point of departure of the mirror stage is comparative psychology: the infant around the age of six months, although surpassed in terms of instrumental intelligence by the chimpanzee, already recognizes his/her image in a mirror. That the infant is able to recognize his/her image although s/he is dependent on the mother shows, Lacan argues, on the one hand, how the "I" is prior to the objectification of the subject in the dialectic of identification with the other in and through language, but, on the other hand, how this "I" is grounded on a primordial misrecognition [*méconnaissance*], namely that "I" am "me." This is the paradox, this is the Lacanian interpretation of Lévi-Strauss's claim that the human being lives since the beginning between nature and culture, between the raw and the cooked. Though from one angle (from the point of view of "nature") the human being appears more autonomous than other animals, from another (the view of "culture") the human being is more determined. For the human being, Lacan argues, suffers from a fundamental organic insufficiency. With the Surrealists, Lacan says that human reality is never enough.<sup>63</sup>

So the infant is born into a world that already knows his/her name. In the beginning s/he exists as a mutilated, fragmented body [*corps morcelé*]. S/he has no orthopedic or linguistic capacities. S/he does not grasp her/his body as a totality. S/he is completely dependent on the parents. All his/her needs are met. Early on the infant experiences no lack, no anxiety, and no separation. This state in which the infant is complete and feels no loss is in the state of the Real. As the infant develops physiologically and psychically, s/he begins to separate his/herself from the parents. One day the infant looks into the mirror and sees his/her reflection and thinks: "that is me." But this is not the case, for the "me" that the child sees is only a reflection, an image of the "I." The identity which the infant establishes between the "I" and the "me," Lacan tells us, is only imaginary. That the "me" is the "I" is a fantasy, it is the realm of the Imaginary, the place of error. Eventually, the child begins to speak and thereby enters the Symbolic world of language. This passage to language coincides with the separation from the parents, and the emergence of desire. Language thus always has the mark of loss. Language always expresses the absence of the Real as *objet petite a*. Thus the realization of the subject, for Lacan, is, on the one hand, the

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<sup>62</sup> Jacques Lacan, "Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je," *Ecrits*, I, 92-99.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

problem of the imaginary function of the “me,” and, on the other, the problem of being recognized by the other in and through language. The “I” that exists as “me” in the symbolic is never integrated and it takes the form as the desire for the other. From here stems the symbolic resistance. In the unconscious is written this story of the barred subject.

### **The Linguistified Corrective to the Ellacurian Synthesis**

The idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science – and in particular the Lacanian perspective – can serve as a linguistified corrective to the theologies of liberation. That is to say, in other words, the genealogy we have just elucidated, that genealogy that was inaugurated by Marcuse, and can be traced through the early Habermas, Deleuze and Guattari, and up to Lacan and Žižek, can provide the theologies of liberation with the perspective needed to negotiate the linguistic turn but without reducing liberation to language. The idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science stands as an alternative to the hermeneutic conception of language. It stands as an alternative to the reduction of liberation theology to a public theology. It stands as an alternative to the naturalization of the latest movement of the dialectic of Hispanic and Anglo America, US-Style liberal democratic capitalism as it manifests itself today in the mode of the Free Trade Area of the Americas. Indeed, we maintain that the Latin American theologies of liberation need to be reconstructed in light of the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science.

We may recall that elsewhere we realized the return to the radical foundations of the theologies of liberation specifically as a return to the Ellacurian idea of historical reality. This is because historical reality, we argued, is the fundamental concept of the Latin American theologies of liberation. The theologies of liberation have not labored under the Scholastic horizon of being, the Kantian horizon of consciousness, the Heideggerian horizon of time, the Hegelian horizon of becoming, nor the postmodern horizon of language, but the Ellacurian horizon of historical reality. Historical reality is first a theory of reality. It is then a theory of religion. And then, and only then, it functions as the ground for the theologies of liberation. We now propose to reconstruct the radical foundations of theologies of liberation by reconstructing the concept of historical reality specifically in light of the Lacanian Real and Žižek’s claim that Capital is the Real of our time.

We suggested that Ellacuría’s philosophy of historical reality is not driven by the technical cognitive interest of the empirical analytical sciences; nor is it driven by

the practical cognitive interest of the historical-hermeneutic sciences. It is driven rather by the emancipatory cognitive interest of the critically oriented sciences. Ellacuría's philosophy of historical reality, we said, like psychoanalysis, does not seek to explain or interpret the world, but rather to transform it through a historical praxis that aims to "*hacerse cargo de la realidad*," "*cargar con la realidad*," and "*encargarse de la realidad*." We are now in a position to better understand what the reworking of Ellacuría's three-fold charge in light of the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science implies. Now the claim we posited at the outset becomes essential. As we suggested, psychoanalysis is not satisfied with the understanding of intersubjective meaning structures. It rather attempts to transform symbolic-cultural distortions through the therapeutic power of language. Rather than idealistically grasping symbolic-cultural conditions as intentionally communicated meaning structures that constitute an integrated lifeworld, psychoanalysis grasps these conditions in light of the problem of corrupted, distorted, and excommunicated desires, memories, and dreams that have been repressed. The theologies of liberation, like psychoanalysis and the critique of ideology, are driven by an emancipatory cognitive interest. All three attempt not only to interpret but also to change the world. The revolutionary is driven by the interest in transforming the socio-historical conditions of misery. The analyst is driven by the interest in transforming the pathological state of the patient. The theologian is driven by interest in the realization of the Kingdom understood as a "this-worldly," socio-historical project. Now, for example, Juan Carlos Scannone's historical-hermeneutic notion of the passive listening (*la escucha*) of the popular voices becomes clear.<sup>64</sup> The idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science pushes beyond this interpretative restriction of the function of "listening." Psychoanalysis, Lacan reminds us, is also a science of "listening": The analyst must take as his/her point of departure the patient's interpretation of reality. Indeed, psychoanalysis is possible only in and through the act of "listening." Yet psychoanalysis "listens" with the aim of liberating the patient from suffering.

This brings us to that fundamental principle that has historically driven the theologies of liberation: The theologies of liberation, we have argued, aim to establish a theological knowledge that is "interested" in the "making" of transcendence. In other words, the theologies of liberation generate a theological knowledge that theoretically aims to grasp the invariance that exists between the Kingdom and the socio-historical conditions of misery, and praxeologically aims to overcome this invariance through the making of transcendence understood as the making of "better" historical reality. We can now reinterpret this principle in

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<sup>64</sup> Juan Carlos Scannone, *Teología de la liberación y doctrina social de la iglesia* (Buenos Aires, Guadalupe, 1987), 246-251.

light of the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science.

We have understood “interest” here in terms of the early Habermas’s idea of knowledge-constitutive interests. That is, “interests” here has meant an “emancipatory cognitive interest,” a knowledge that interlocks knowledge and interests. We have just alluded to the psychoanalytic interpretation of this idea of “interest”: namely that the analyst engages the patient to the extent that s/he is interested in the patient’s liberation from a pathological state. But this no longer suffices. For our genealogy of the idea of psychoanalysis as a critically oriented science, and, in particular, our turn to Lacanian psychoanalysis, has destabilized the Habermasian notion of emancipatory cognitive interest in the same way that it destabilized the hermeneutic conception of language. The Lacanian interpretation of Freud destabilizes the discourse of modernity, of the subject, of self-reflection, etc. Lacanian psychoanalysis drives a wedge through the Habermasian idea of emancipatory cognitive interest to the extent that this idea is grounded in the Kantian-Fichteian idea of self-reflection as liberation from dogmatic dependence, the idea of reason’s interest in its own liberation from compulsion. Indeed, just as Lacanian psychoanalysis destabilizes the idea that psychoanalysis is grounded in communicative action (i.e., intersubjective reason), it destabilizes the idea that the emancipatory cognitive interest is the ground of psychoanalysis, the critique of political economy, and of course, the theologies of liberation. Indeed, from the Lacanian point of view it becomes clear that the ground of critique is found elsewhere. For it would be absurd to say that Lacan’s poststructuralist conception of language annihilates the conditions of possibility of psychoanalysis. Lacan does not fall captive to the postmodern annihilation of the totality. Lacan does not fall captive to nihilism. As Žižek has suggested, Lacan believes in an absolute – i.e., the Real – and he believes in the Cartesian subject – i.e., the unconscious. For Lacan the ground of psychoanalysis and of all the other sciences – the ground of critique, the ground of the absolute and the subject – is found not in the dialectic of reason but in the metaphysics of desire. More specifically, Lacan argues that the ground of psychoanalysis is found in the desire of the analyst, a desire that is revealed to the analyst to the extent s/he undergoes psychoanalytic treatment, to the extent that s/he reflects on his/her own desire. Here is why we maintain that, from the point of view of Lacanian psychoanalysis, the liberationist idea of an emancipatory cognitive interest in the transformation of historical reality into the Kingdom should now become the *desire to transform historical reality into the Kingdom*.

The other term we need to recast is “making,” as in the “making” of transcendence. We have suggested that Ellacuría does not understand “making” through the restricted historical-hermeneutic category of interaction. He understands “making” rather from the perspective of the Marxian idea of the

synthetic activity of social labor. That is, Ellacuría understands “making” as being constituted by the dialectic of interaction and labor, *praxis* and *poiesis* as it takes form through the self-formative process of the human species, as it takes form in and through historical reality. Thus when Ellacuría states in *Philosophy of Historical Reality* that “the truth needs to be made” he means that a transformation of historical reality in its totality needs to be “made,” a transformation through both interaction and labor. Ellacuría calls this “making,” which we have also called “transformative-making” “historical *praxis*.” We, from a Lacanian perspective, understand historical *praxis* as “working-through.” Working-through now refers to that struggle to overcome the pathological state of misery in the light of socio-historical resistance, it means working-through liberation as the overcoming of the anxiety of language and the alienation of labor.

Finally, we need to recast the idea of “better” historical reality (as in the “making,” or “working-through” of “better” historical reality) as the “working-through” of liberation. As we suggested above, precisely because historical reality is open to the future, there emerges the problem of what ought to be made, the problem of how one ought to make the aperture of historical reality. For some historical realities are more open than others. It is clear that, in the realm of potential freedom that is history, there always exists the choice of making or not making historical reality open. Indeed, it is clear that the freedom to make can be actualized as making historical reality close in upon itself, it can be actualized as the suturing of historical reality. In this horizon of what ought to be made is situated the Ellacurian problem of ethics: namely, the problem of the making of liberation through the making of “better” history, that is the problem of how ought one exactly “*hacerse cargo de la realidad*,” how ought one exactly “*cargar con la realidad*,” and how ought one exactly “*encargarse de la realidad*.” We can now understand this normative idea of “better” historical reality in terms of the Lacanian notion of the “cure.” Working through resistance brings forth transference and with transference emerges the “cure.” The Lacanian cure, we may recall, is no longer the nomologically restricted attempt to bring a pathological state back into the realm of what is “normal.” It is rather the problem of bringing forth the Real desire of the subject that has been eclipsed by the symbolic order of the Other, on the one hand, and the imagination of the me, on the other. This cure is achieved through the perpetual dialectic between the desire of the analyst and the desire of the patient in and through transference. In like fashion we argue that for the theologies of liberation the “cure” is the other side of liberation, the Kingdom. Transference for the theologies of liberation has an eschatological function. The liberationist “cure” is discerned in and through the dialectic between the desire of the theologian and the desire of the people. Indeed, the ultimate ground of the liberationist cure is thus the undergoing

struggle for liberation. Here the metaphysics of desire receives its theological supplement in the desire of the mystic and the desire of the prophet that from one side and the other have since the beginning attempted to annihilate the desire of the priest and the other guardians of the status quo.

Thus, in the light of Lacanian psychoanalysis understood as a critically oriented science, the fundamental principle guiding the theologies of liberation is recast as follows: the theologies of liberation generate a theological knowledge that is driven by the desire to work-through transcendence. That is, the theologies of liberation generate a theological knowledge that, on the one hand, theoretically aims to bring forth the barred Subject (\$) of socio-historical misery, that imaginary "me" of the alienated "I" of the underside of the symbolic order, as lacking the Real, i.e., the Kingdom. And, on the other hand, the theologies of liberation praxeologically aim to overcome this alienation, this lack, by working-through transcendence, that is by traversing the primordial fantasy ( $\$ \langle \rangle a$ ), by coming to terms with its desire (*objet petit a*) as the desire for liberation, as the desire to realize the Real in and through the historical praxis of transforming language and labor (i.e., social labor), the socio-historical conditions of \$'s resistance to symbolization, alienation, anxiety, lack. Table 1 summarizes the reconstruction of the theologies of liberation in light of psychoanalysis.

This liberationist turn to Lacanian psychoanalysis, this linguistified corrective to liberation which we have only begun to sketch out, needs to be elucidated in and through the dialectical fusion of the Ellacurian historical reality and the Lacanian Real. This is another project.

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**Table 1**  
**The Reconstruction of the Critically Oriented Theological Sciences of Liberation in light of the Postmodern Eclipse**

	<i>Logical-Methodological Framework</i>	<i>Horizon</i>	<b>The Problem of the limits of Theological Knowledge</b>		<b>The Problem of God-as-Limit</b>		<b>The Problem of Transcendence</b>	
<b>Theologies of Liberation</b>	Emancipatory Cognitive Interest	Critically Oriented Science of Historical Reality, Ellacurian Synthesis of the Hegelian-Marxian Dialectic and the Zubirian Radicalization of Scholastic Realism	Liberation as the Making of "Better" History, as the Overcoming the Socio-Historical Conditions of Misery	Science of Transformation, Changing the World, Revolutionary Praxis	Kingdom as Making Historical Reality Open to the Future	Physical Reality, Intramundane Metaphysics	Transformative: making a Break with US-Style Liberal - Democratic Capitalism	Historical Praxis (Social Labor) as Overcoming the Alienation of Labor ( <i>Poiesis</i> )
<b>Postmodern Eclipse (of Liberation)</b>	Practical Cognitive Interest	Practically Oriented Science of Conversation, Plurality of Language Games	Coming to Terms with Difference, with the Particularity of Traditions	Science of Interpretation, Understanding the World, Dialogue	Other as Limit-Language	Ideation, Presence and Disclosure of Language	Conversation Among a Plurality of Particular Religious Traditions in the Public Sphere	Reaching Understanding ( <i>Praxis</i> ) In and through Language ( <i>Praxis</i> )
<b>Reconstruction</b>	Desire to Emancipate	Psychoanalysis as a Critically Oriented Science, Synthesis of the Marxian Critique of Political Economy and the Freudian Metapsychology, Ellacuría and Lacan	Liberation as Overcoming the \$ Resistance to Symbolization, as Overcoming the Imaginary "Me" of the Alienated "I"	Science of Transformation, Changing the Pathological State of the Patient, The Interlocking of Revolutionary Praxis and Psychotherapy	Kingdom as Traversing the Primordial Fantasy, as the "Cure"	Real as Absence of Lack, as What Resists Symbolization, as What Undergirds the Symbolic and the Imaginary	Transformative-Making a Break with the Free Trade Area of the Americas	Working Through (Social Labor) as Overcoming the Anxiety of Language ( <i>Praxis</i> ) and the Alienation of Labor ( <i>Poiesis</i> )