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Propaedeutic to the Critique of the Study of U.S. Hispanic Religion: A Polemic against Intellectual Assimilation

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Marx suggérerait que, de loin en loin, quelques individus parvenaient à se libérer si complètement des positions qui leur sont assignées dans l'espace social qu'ils pouvaient appréhender cet espace comme un tout et transmettre leur vision à ceux qui sont encore prisonniers de la structure.

Pierre Bourdieu¹

In his Seminar on *L'éthique de la psychanalyse*, Jacques Lacan draws a distinction between the "knave" and the "fool" as two intellectual types:² "the right-wing intellectual," Slavoj Žižek elucidates, "is a knave, a conformist who considers the mere existence of the given order as an argument for it, and mocks the Left for its 'utopian' plans, which necessarily lead to catastrophe; while the left-wing intellectual is a fool, a court jester who publicly displays the lie of the existing order, but in a way which suspends the performative efficiency of his speech."³ While preparing a response to Miguel Ángel de la Torre's "*Confesiones de un macho cubano*,"⁴ I was inspired by the "foolishness" of our colleague's task, namely, to expose how he, as both a Hispanic and an academic, has been complicit with those forms of life that perpetuate intra-Hispanic violence, specifically in the modes of classism, racism, and sexism. In other words, the purpose of our colleague's "confession" in

¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo academicus* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1984) 47.

² Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire, livre VII: L'éthique de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1986), XIV, "L'amour du prochain," 214–6.

³ Slavoj Žižek, "Holding the Place," in Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000) 324–5.

⁴ Forthcoming in *Perspectivas: Occasional Papers* (Princeton, N.J.: Hispanic Theological Initiative).

this essay—to use the language of psychoanalysis—is to make manifest what has been repressed, and by so doing, to overcome the real (violence) that lurked behind the symptom (*machismo*). And this is why you miss the point if you remain fixated on the way our colleague has constructed and applied his class-gender-race matrix. The virtue of “*Confesiones de un macho cubano*” is found elsewhere, at a second level of abstraction if you will: De la Torre challenges us to reflect on the ways we, as Hispanics and academics, perpetuate forms of intra-Hispanic violence, both in our communities and our scholarship. U.S. Hispanic theology needs more “fools” like you, de la Torre! We need more scholars that are willing to turn their tools of analysis on themselves, and, through this reflexive gesture, unmask and destabilize the violence that lurks behind our own life-worlds and scholarship.

Given a society dominated by the liberal belief in the possibility of a harmonious “multiculturalism,” a Hispanic community which is too often oblivious to the pernicious forces of assimilation and forms of “intra-Hispanic” violence, and an academy dominated by the pragmatist myth of an integrated community of scholars, it takes the prophetic “foolishness” of a scholar that is willing to step outside the symbolic order, to expose and subvert the logic of hegemony that penetrates U.S. society, our communities, and the academy. What if this quixotic gesture of the dialectic of self-critique was the only authentic act for U.S. Hispanic theologians? What if a radical intellectual de-centering via reflexivity was the only way to ensure that we do not become part of the problem—that we do not become *arielistas* and/or *malinchistas*? “Creo que se puede intentar la santa cruzada de ir a rescatar el sepulcro del Caballero de la Locura del poder de los hidalgos de la Razón . . . Lo guardan para que el Caballero no resucite . . .”⁵

The time has come for U.S. Hispanic theologians and scholars of religion to take stock. The time has come for us to systematically reflect on our intellectual genealogies, our projects, publications, our terminology, our interlocutors. The time has come for us to reflect upon the emergence and institutionalization of the study of U.S. Hispanic religion, as well as upon our position in the academy and the academy’s position in U.S. society. As the demographic transition transpires and Hispanics become the largest minority group in the United States, and correlatively, as we Latina/o theologians and scholars of religion increase in number and move toward the center of the academy, it is imperative that we systematically reflect upon where we’ve come from, where we are, and where we are going, lest we lose sight of our

⁵Miguel de Unamuno, *Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1987) 9–10.

liberationist task; lest we become part of the problem. “Nosotros, los de entonces, ya no somos los mismos . . .”⁶

In that spirit, this essay calls for what since the time of Immanuel Kant has been termed *critique*—that is, a critique of U.S. Hispanic theology and the study of U.S. Hispanic religion. In other words, this essay calls for a reflection on the conditions of possibility for the emergence and transformation of the study of U.S. Hispanic religion. Let me be clear and get to the heart of the matter: critique here is not to be understood as the Kantian, Neo-Kantian, or phenomenological project of reflecting on the conditions of possibility of transcendental categories of thought, morality, or judgment, universal values, cultural forms, linguistic structures, and religious a priori. For we would then be falling captive to the idealism that both Latin American liberation theology and liberation philosophy have warned us about, an idealism that legitimated the interlocked endeavors of the Enlightenment and Conquest-Colonization. Nor is critique here to be understood as the pragmatist project of reflecting on the conditions of possibility of a community of scholars that always reach understanding through certain procedures. For we would then be falling captive to the liberal “integrationist” ideology that so suffuses our lives, the same liberal ideology that legitimated U.S. hegemony in Latin America. This liberal worldview generates what in Hegelese can be called the spurious *teología de conjunto*: that is, the vacuous idea of a communitarian theology that is given, already there, in contradistinction to something that emerges only after the life-and-death struggle for recognition has taken place. Rather, critique here, as I am using the term, is to be understood as the critical philosophical and theoretical project of reflecting on the conditions of possibility of a scholarly knowledge and a set of academic practices that are produced in a society suffused with power asymmetries, a society that is always contested and never harmonious, and this holds *a fortiori* if you are a minority. Understood in this sense, critique is always dialectical, and, for us, it becomes the task of reflecting on the possibilities of the study of U.S. Hispanic religion in light of what historically has been known as the *problem of knowledge*.⁷ Only this understanding of the relationship between knowledge and the real-life

⁶Pablo Neruda, *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada* in *Obras completas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1956) 77–78.

⁷Space permits only a few comments: The insight that all knowledge is socially constituted was first given systematic philosophical form at the end of 19th century through the critique of positivism. Thus emerged the *problem of knowledge*. Charles S. Peirce repudiated the notion that scientific progress was linked to the internal dialectic of methodological principles deduced from the a priori laws of a Kantian transcendental consciousness. He understood scientific growth, rather, as a logic of

process will produce the true *teología de conjunto*—that is, a communitarian theology that receives its substance and is realized only by tarrying with forms of intra-Hispanic violence and the threat of intellectual assimilation.

This project we are calling the critique of the study of U.S. Hispanic religion is not something that can be accomplished in an essay; nor is it something that a handful of theologians and scholars of religion can realize on their own. If it is to be efficacious, and if it is to be an exercise that changes both our academic practices and our intellectual paradigms, the project of critique must be carried out by the community of Hispanic theologians and scholars of religion in an institutional framework. Perhaps the next ACHTUS meeting can be dedicated to this endeavor of self-critique? Perhaps the next anthology on Hispanic theology can engage this project? The purpose of this essay is thus very limited: first, to argue the need to develop a critique of the study of U.S. Hispanic religion; second, to propose what such a project would entail. In a word, the purpose of this essay, as the title intimates, is to marshal a *propaedeutic to the critique of the study U.S. Hispanic religion*. As we shall see, this project necessarily implies a polemic against intellectual assimilation.

I contend that the critique of the study of U.S. Hispanic religion, if it is to be carried out appropriately, must include four tasks. First, we must expound the philosophical and theoretical point of departure for our critique, which, as I have already suggested, should be the problem of knowledge. For reasons that will become clear below, this point of departure must be developed from two perspectives: from above, a

inquiry that functions through the semiotic mediation of a community of investigators. And here we have the Peircean pragmatic turn: Scientific truth is understood as the correspondence between an object of inquiry, scientific signs and a community of scientists. *Collected Papers*. Volume V. Pragmatism and Pragmatism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), Paragraph 311, 186–7 and Paragraph 553, 390–1. Similarly, Wilhelm Dilthey marshaled a critique of the cognitive reductionism of the nomological sciences, arguing that all theoretical knowledge must be understood against the backdrop of a pre-scientific lifeworld of intersubjectively shared meaning structures. *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, in *Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Works*, Vol. 1, eds. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989) 448. Epistemology, he contended, was not grounded in the structure of cognition, but rather in the being-their-for-me of a totality of lived experience. For Dilthey, thus, the problem of knowledge was ultimately a problem of meaning—a problem that could only be properly addressed by a philosophical hermeneutics. *Patterns and Meaning in History: Thoughts on History and Society*, ed. H. P. Rickman (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962) 79. This line of thought would provide the ground for the phenomenological critiques of positivism expounded by Edmund Husserl (*The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*) and Martin Heidegger (*The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*).

critical theoretical, archaeological, and world-systems perspective to the problem of knowledge; from below, an ethnographic sociological perspective on intellectual production and the academic field. In a second task, which would correspond to the approach from above to the problem of knowledge, we must attempt to elucidate the two paradigms involved in the emergence and development of the study of Latino religion: the liberationist paradigm which emerged in Latin America during the 1960s; and the liberal paradigm which crystallized as the central discourse in the U.S. academy with the emergence of pragmatism at the end of the nineteenth century. For our third task, which would correspond to the approach to the problem of knowledge from below, we must reconstruct the genesis and transformation of the study of U.S. Hispanic religion. However, if we are to be consistent with the challenges posed to us by the problem of knowledge, we must understand this third task specifically as the analysis of the development of a particular section of the U.S. academic field constituted by certain stocks of knowledge, a specific community of scholars and institutions which materialized around the “invention” of a particular object of analysis—U.S. Hispanic religion. Finally, for our fourth task we must seek to construct a new ground for the study of U.S. Hispanic religion which, taking as its point of departure the conscious and unconscious struggle of Hispanics in the U.S. academy against intellectual assimilation elucidated via the critical reconstruction developed through the first two tasks—that is, elucidated via the “foolish” gesture of reflexivity—sets out to destabilize the dominant philosophical presuppositions, theories, and interpretations of religion in the U.S. academy. And, then, in the space opened up by critique, as a second moment of this fourth task, we should aim to elucidate, first, the phenomenology of struggle as the point of departure for the analysis of U.S. Hispanic reality, and, second, the ideological and emancipatory aspects of Hispanic religion, both of which have been suppressed by the liberal tendencies of the U.S. academy. Following is an outline of the four tasks I argue should constitute the critique of the study of U.S. Hispanic religion:

Four Tasks Constituting the Critique of the Study of U.S. Hispanic Religion

The First Task:

Exposition of the Problem of Knowledge as the Proper Philosophical and Theoretical Point of Departure

- i. From Above: Critical Theoretical, Archaeological, and World-systems approach to the Problem of Knowledge

- ii. From Below: Scholarly Knowledge, Intellectual Production, and the Academic Field

The Second Task:

Elucidation of the Liberationist and Liberal Paradigms

- i. Liberationist Paradigm: Socio-Historical and Philosophical Foundations, Scientific Study of Religion, and Theology
- ii. Liberal Paradigm: Socio-Historical and Philosophical Foundation, Scientific Study of Religion, and Theology

The Third Task:

Reconstruction of the Genesis and Transformation of the Study of U.S. Hispanic Religion

- i. Genesis: Between Liberation and Liberalism
- ii. Transformation: The Liberalization of the Liberationist Paradigm

The Fourth Task:

Construction of a New Ground for the Study of U.S. Hispanic Religion

- i. Critique of the U.S. Academic Field via the Destabilization of Dominant Interpretations
- ii. The Phenomenology of Struggle, and U.S. Hispanic Religion as Ideology and as Emancipation

The First Task:

Exposition of the Problem of Knowledge as the Proper Philosophical and Theoretical Point of Departure

In the first task we should aim to bring forth the philosophical and theoretical point of departure, or, in other words, the frame of reference for the project of critique. Specifically we must demonstrate how the relationship between knowledge and the real-life process can be adequately grasped only by interlocking two approaches: A social theoretical, structural, archeological, and world-systems approach from above that aims to analyze the social foundations of knowledge and the correlation between general modes of knowledge and socio-historical and structural conditions; and an ethnographically motivated sociology of knowledge from below that aims to critique the intellectualizing intent of scholastic knowledge and analyze the relationship between intellectual production and an academic field on the one hand, and the academic field and its socio-historical location on the other.

This endeavor will entail a retrieval of the critical philosophical and theoretical traditions around the problem of knowledge, such as Karl Marx's critique of the ideological function of philosophy and science,⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche's repudiation of the autonomy of pure and practical reason via his notion of the "will to power,"⁹ Georg Lukács' unmasking of the correlation between the scientific method and the capitalist

⁸Consider the following well-known passages so often repressed in an academy dominated by the liberal paradigm: "Division of labor becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labor appears. From this moment onwards consciousness can really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it really represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of 'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. But even if this theory, theology, philosophy, etc., comes into contradiction with the existing relations, this can only occur because existing social relations have come into contradiction with existing forces of production." A few pages later: "Even this 'pure' natural science is provided with an aim, as with its material, only through trade and industry, through the sensuous activity of men." And several paragraphs later: "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance" (*The German Ideology*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Second Edition, ed. Robert C. Tucker [New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978] 159-73).

⁹Nietzsche marshaled a critique of the autonomy of morality and cognition arguing that human faculties were driven by affects and suffused with interests. Intellectual activity was a manifestation of the will to power. This was a repudiation of the Kantian tradition that grounded its entire project on the transcendental status, first of "pure" and "practical reason," and later values, cultural forms, language, and the like: "Henceforth, my dear philosophers, let us be on guard against the dangerous old conceptual fiction that posited a 'pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject'; let us guard against the snares of such contradictory concepts as 'pure reason,' 'absolute spirituality,' 'knowledge in itself': these always demand that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking; these always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense. There is *only* a perspective seeing, only a perspective 'knowing'; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity,' be. But to eliminate the will altogether, to suspend each and every affect, supposing we were capable of this—what would that mean but to *castrate* the intellect?" (*On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo* [New York: Vintage Books, 1967] 119).

mode of production,¹⁰ Theodor Adorno's critique of positivism,¹¹ Max Horkheimer's critique of "traditional theory,"¹² Jürgen Habermas's notion of a "critical social science,"¹³ Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyer-

¹⁰He develops this from the historical and dialectical vantage points: "Thus we perceive that there is something highly problematic in the fact that capitalist society is predisposed to harmonise with scientific method, to constitute indeed the social premises of its exactness. If the internal structure of the 'facts' of their interconnections is essentially historical, if, that is to say, they are caught up in a process of continuous transformation, then we may indeed question when the greater scientific inaccuracy occurs. . . . The historical character of the 'facts' which science seems to have grasped with such 'purity' makes itself felt in an even more devastating manner. As the products of historical evolution they are involved in continuous change. But in addition they are also *precisely in their objective structure the products of a definite historical epoch, namely capitalism*" (Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990] 7).

¹¹Out of the critique of the Enlightenment, in particular the dialectical tradition, emerges the critical theoretical approach to the problem of knowledge. Adorno exemplifies this approach. He develops his critique of positivism not as a formal philosophical problem (Wilhelm Dilthey, Ernst Cassirer, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger) but as a socio-historical one. The modern scientific enterprise, in particular the natural sciences, are now understood as a function of a specific social structure, viz., capitalism. The philosophy of science and the social and human sciences are also critiqued to the extent that these claim objectivity or neutrality, either in the hermeneutical or nomological sense, and fail to grasp the contradiction that defines their social function. *Introduction to Sociology* (Cambridge, Great Britain: Polity Press, 2000) and Theodor W. Adorno, Hans Albert, Ralf Dahrendorf, Jürgen Habermas, Harald Pilot, and Karl R. Popper, *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1976).

¹²For instance, Horkheimer writes: "The scholarly specialist 'as' scientist regards social reality and its products as extrinsic to him, and 'as' citizen exercises his interest in them through political articles, membership in political parties or social service organization, and participation in elections. But he does not unify these two activities, and his other activities as well, except, at best, by psychological interpretation. Critical thinking, on the contrary, is motivated today by the effort to transcend the tension and to abolish the opposition between the individual's purposefulness, spontaneity, and rationality, and those work-process relationships of which society is built. Critical thought has a concept of man as in conflict with himself until this opposition is removed." "Traditional and Critical Theory," *Critical Theory*, 209–10.

¹³Habermas delineates a "critical philosophy of science" which has as its task the uncovering of the correlation between "logical-methodological rules" and "knowledge-constitutive interests": "There are three categories of processes of inquiry for which a specific connection between logical-methodological rules and knowledge-constitutive interests can be demonstrated. This demonstration is the task of a critical philosophy of science that escapes the snares of positivism. The approach of the empirical-analytic sciences incorporates a technical cognitive interest; that of the historical-hermeneutic sciences incorporates a practical one; and the approach of critically orientated sciences incorporates the emancipatory cognitive interest. . . ." *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971) 308.

abend's social theoretically motivated critique of the Popperian philosophy of science,¹⁴ Michel Foucault's "archaeological" de-centering of the knowing subject,¹⁵ and Immanuel Wallerstein's "historical reconstruction of the social sciences."¹⁶

¹⁴The works of Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend are significant to the extent that they advance the critique of knowledge specifically through a social theoretically motivated critique of the philosophy of science. Both took issue with Popperian neo-positivism, repudiating the idea that the natural sciences are structured and transformed solely through the force of logical-methodological procedures deployed in an autonomous scientific sphere. Karl Popper, *Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1959), *Conjectures and Refutations* (London: Routledge, 1989), and *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Vol. 2: *The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx and the Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971). See also Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, eds. *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). Both addressed this reification by uncovering the structural or institutional conditions for the possibility of scientific methods and theories. Their most poignant attack on traditional philosophies of science was the insight that "normal science" was antithetical to critical inquiry. Kuhn's theory of "scientific revolutions" rejected the view that scientific growth occurred through "accretion," that is through coherent advances gained through formal methodological procedures. Rather Kuhn understood scientific growth to be the result of "paradigm" shifts caused by structural changes like, for instance, changes in education, habits, and problem-solving practices. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Third Edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996) and Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, eds. *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). Feyerabend radicalized Kuhn by making power asymmetries and domination a central aspect of his analysis. He suggested, for example, that "interests, forces, propaganda, and brainwashing techniques" play a substantial role in the development of science, and concluded that the only way to achieve advancements in science was through methodological and theoretical "anarchism." Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge* (London: Verso, 1975). Albeit from within the strictures of the philosophy of science, Kuhn and Feyerabend pointed to the importance of a structural approach to the problem of scientific knowledge.

¹⁵Michel Foucault's "archaeology of knowledge," his methodological and epistemological reflections on the human sciences, marshals what is perhaps the most radical critique of the centrality and unity of the knowing subject or community both at the ontological and epistemological, theoretical and methodological levels, and thus represents what is perhaps the most devastating critique of the philosophy of science, the history of ideas, traditional approaches to the sociology of knowledge (Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Karl Mannheim), and even of the most critical of the social theoretical approaches to the problem of knowledge. Unlike the critical theoretical tradition which grounds its critique on the Marxist analysis of the relationship between systems of knowledge and socio-economic conditions, and unlike the structuralist tradition which grounds its critique on the relationship between systems of knowledge and linguistic formations, values, cultural forms, the unconscious, etc., Foucault's archaeological critique aims to understand the emergence and development of systems of knowledge through the interrelationship of systems of "discourses," "statements," and "archives." His analysis is aimed at that ontological

Through this retrieval the following theses are made manifest:

- i) All knowledge is socio-historically mediated and has a social function, and thus, all scholarship that fails to reflect on its socio-historical conditions of possibility functions as ideology.
- ii) Discourses on the social world are particularly susceptible to socio-historical distortions as in the human and social sciences, the practice of constructing an object of analysis is always conditioned by the specific socio-historical relationship that exists between the intellectual, the scientific discourse, and the social reality being interpreted. This is the case because, willy nilly, scholarly discourses on the social world have specific—but not necessarily conscious—social investments and interests in that very world they aim to analyze.

space located between language and socio-economic conditions—the discursive space; and its situated in that epistemological space located between philology and history, psychology and sociology—the archaeological space. *L'Archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969).

¹⁶Immanuel Wallerstein's claim that academic and political debates about contemporary social reality are not just over the empirical analysis but also over the tools of analysis themselves points to the particularly empirical nature of the epistemological problem of the human sciences. This is why debates in the human sciences over nomothetic and idiographic approaches, synchronic and diachronic analysis, objective and subjective modes of knowledge, and structure and agency must be understood not only in terms of formal social theoretical categories like Habermas's notion of "knowledge-constitutive interests," but also in terms of concrete empirical conditions—that is, in terms of the socio-historical location of this debate. Kuhn, Feyerabend, and Foucault demonstrated how scholarly knowledge is always shaped by, and thus must always be understood in terms of larger institutions, paradigms or discourses. Wallerstein demonstrates how these discourses can only be fully understood against the socio-historical context in which they developed. Thus, from a "world-systems perspective," he historically reconstructs the social sciences teasing out the homologies that exist between these sciences and the socio-historical conditions in which they developed. Diachronically, Wallerstein traces the changes in the structure of the social sciences sparked by the transformation of the world system in 1945 and 1989. Synchronically he shows how the north-south dichotomy which transpired after the Second World War has also affected the structure of the social sciences. Unlike John Meyer and his colleagues who focus on integrating effects which global cultural forms have had on intellectual discourses, Wallerstein argues rather that systemic power asymmetries linked to socio-economic disparities have been a central socio-historical determinant for the recent development of the human sciences. *The End of the World as We Know It* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999) and *Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

- iii) The conflicts and contradictions of a particular society manifest themselves in that society's academic field in the mode of an intellectual struggle, and this holds *a fortiori* for the sub-field of all those disciplines that have as their proper task discourses on the social world.
- iv) Through the process of critical reflection, that is, through the process of unmasking the social determinants of intellectual practices and production, the academic field is revealed as one of the loci of the struggle of socially marginalized people: viz., the struggle over the interpretations of the world which is one dimension—the theoretical dimension—of the general struggle.

The second approach to the problem of knowledge will entail an engagement of Bourdieu's ethnographically inspired sociology of knowledge as it complements the "from above" social philosophical and theoretical, structural, archaeological perspectives, through a critique of the intellectualizing gaze of scholastic reason, the uncovering of the logic and interests of academic practices, and the social function of the academic field.¹⁷ Bourdieu's insights provide methodological and theoretical substance to the more formal reflections of the retrieval just outlined, allowing us to build a model that can guide us in our the analysis of the study of Latino religion, its genesis and transformation. Paradigms do not float around but are linked via carriers and institutions to a specific set of practices, and thus they are always being negotiated and renegotiated, produced and reproduced on the ground. From below, then, the following emerges: Agents negotiate paradigms through their continuous interactions with others and institutions, that is, agents negotiate paradigms through a field. With the Bourdieuan lens, paradigms or discourses are understood as overdetermined stocks of knowledge internalized as a *habitus* actualized in a *field*. From above, paradigms—which transcend academic fields, both diachronically and synchronically—enable and shape these. From below, however, paradigms appear as epistemological and ontological presuppositions, methodological practices, intellectual genealogies, text milieus, categories of thought, meta-theoretical claims, language games, which, through the socializing function of education, the disciplining function of authoritarian academic structures, and the normalization of intellectual institutions, are always ready to hand, that is,

¹⁷Pierre Bourdieu, "Condition de classe et position de classe," *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 7 (1966) 201–29, *Le sens pratique* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), *Homo academicus*, and *Méditations pascaliennes*.

always function as the ground or point of departure of any conversation, curriculum, course, scholarship, research project, conference.

The Second Task:

Elucidation of the Liberationist and Liberal Paradigms

In the last few years it has become increasingly evident that the studies of U.S. Hispanic religion being produced within the U.S. academy suffer from a certain kind of intellectual schizophrenia. Both theological and social scientific approaches to Latino religiosity alike appear to be caught between what historically have been two antagonistic perspectives. On the one hand, studies of Hispanic religion understand religion as a vehicle of empowerment, critique, and liberation immersed in a social system defined by antagonism, contradiction, and domination. As it will become clear below, this perspective can be traced back to a worldview we will call the *liberationist paradigm*. On the other hand, these same studies also work into their analysis an understanding of Latino religion as a vehicle of socialization and a promoter of social harmony and assimilation immersed in a social system which—in the final analysis—is defined by equilibrium, order, and congruence. Analogously, this second social theoretical approach can be genealogically linked to a broader intellectual program we will call here the *liberal paradigm*. The epistemological, methodological, and theoretical difficulties that this intellectual ambiguity creates for those that are interested in the study of Hispanic religion will only gradually crystallize through the pages of this work. Likewise, the more general relationship between intellectual production and existential conditions which this state of affairs is symptomatic of will slowly emerge. At the outset we are only able to describe this obfuscation that suffuses a particular section of the U.S. academic field we call here the study of Hispanic religion with the following nebulous formulation which has been abstracted from its own historical development and social conditions: Analyses of Latino religion are caught between two conflicting intellectual worldviews, the liberationist and liberal paradigms.

The second task, then, should deploy the social theoretical, structural, archeological, and world-systems approach from above in an attempt to elucidate these two paradigms that historically have been at play in the genesis and transformation of the field of U.S. Hispanic religion, namely, the liberationist and liberal paradigms. It is clear from the critical theoretical approach to the problem of knowledge elucidated in the first task that intellectual discourses must be understood as mediated and structured by the socio-historical conditions in which they emerge. It is not enough simply to juxtapose forms of thought and

forms of life. This is especially the case with discourses on the social world as they aim to analyze the world in which they are produced and thus are caught not only in an *epistemological* “double hermeneutic” as Anthony Giddens has suggested, but also in an *empirical*, socio-historical tension.¹⁸ In this sense it is essential that intellectual paradigms about the social world be understood socio-historically lest one fall captive to reification. And here we find the central epistemological and methodological problems of those approaches to the human sciences that can be traced back to the repudiation of the philosophy of negation—viz., positivism and pragmatism.¹⁹ It is not enough simply to analytically elucidate the “macro” conditions of a “micro” problem, to mention as background information those social spheres or elements that are in practice (i.e., methodologically and theoretically) being held constant,²⁰ or to give lip service to the material substratum of a cultural phenomenon as, for instance, ethnographers, anthropologists, and sociologists in the U.S. tend to do.²¹ Rather, social reality must be grasped dialectically which means historically, structurally, and materially.²² This is

¹⁸ This is a crucial distinction. As intimated above, though all forms of knowledge are epistemologically mediated by, and dependent on the social world, the social sciences and other scholarly discourses on the social world such as theology, because they have the social world as both ground and object of analysis, face at least two additional epistemological difficulties—one linked to the social world formally understood, and the other linked to the social world empirically understood. When Anthony Giddens argues that the social sciences face a “double hermeneutic” he is essentially referring to the first difficulty: The social sciences deploy socially mediated tools to interpret a world that is already socially meaningful in itself. Anthony Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Methods* (New York: Basic Books, 1976) 162. The second difficulty that all discourses on the social world must face is, however, potentially more pernicious to the degree to which it is overlooked by the dominant discourse on epistemology and methodology in the human sciences. This eclipsed perspective is the one that interests us here. It is the one Bourdieu develops. Once again: In the human sciences, the practice of constructing an object of analysis is always conditioned by the specific socio-historical relationship that exists between the intellectual and the social reality being interpreted.

¹⁹ Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), Theodor Adorno, *Introduction to Sociology*, and Theodor W. Adorno, Hans Albert, Ralf Dahrendorf, Jürgen Habermas, Harald Pilot, and Karl R. Popper, *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*.

²⁰ For example, the infamous *ceteris paribus* condition of non-dialectical economic theory or the so-called “background,” “macro” or “structural” section that is intended to frame those non-dialectical ethnographic studies.

²¹ See, for instance, Michael Burawoy’s epistemological and methodological critiques in *Ethnography Unbound: Power and Resistance in the Modern Metropolis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

²² Maurice Godelier, “La part idéelle du réel,” *L’Homme* 18:3-4 (July–December 1978) 155–88, *Horizon, trajets marxistes en anthropologie* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1973), and Ignacio Ellacuría, *Filosofía de la realidad histórica* (El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1990).

why it is crucial that we understand the philosophical foundations of the liberationist and liberal paradigms dialectically, in light of their socio-historical conditions of possibility. In what follows I will briefly sketch the central socio-historical factors, and then, the philosophical foundations of the liberationist and liberal paradigms respectively.

THE LIBERATIONIST PARADIGM:

The following six socio-historical factors enabled and shaped the emergence and development of the Latin American liberationist paradigm:²³

- i. The rise and fall of the Latin American left.²⁴
- ii. The rise and fall of dependency theory as a viable economic strategy for overcoming the conditions of underdevelopment in Latin America.²⁵
- iii. The religious changes that transpired in Latin America after the Second Vatican Council, in particular the emergence of the CELAM conferences within the Roman Catholic Church, the crystallization of liberation theology, and the growth of radical Protestantism.²⁶
- iv. The crystallization of an autochthonous and politicized cultural sphere, in particular the development of *realismo mágico* in literature and the emergence of a socially conscious film industry.²⁷

²³These are a modified version of the socio-historical determinants elucidated by Eduardo Mendieta, who adapted his from Raúl Fomet-Betancourt. Eduardo Mendieta, "Editor's Introduction," in Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996) xiii–xxxii.

²⁴Jorge G. Castañeda, *Utopía desarmada: Intrigas, dilemas y promesa de la izquierda en América Latina* (México: Joaquín Mortiz / Planeta, 1993).

²⁵Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependencia y desarrollo en América Latina: ensayo de interpretación sociológica* (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno, 1969).

²⁶Cristián Parker, *Otra Lógica en América Latina: Religión Popular y Modernización Capitalista* (Santiago: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993); José Míguez Bonino, *Rostros del protestantismo Latinoamericano* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995); Christian Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), and Daniel Levine, *Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).

²⁷Alejo Carpentier, *Obras completas*, 13: ensayos (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1983) and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, *Dialéctica del espectador* (la Habana: Ediciones Unión, 1982).

- v. The polemic between Augusto Salazar Bondy and Leopoldo Zea about the possibility of an authentic Latin American philosophy.²⁸
- vi. The emergence of neo-liberalism and neo-capitalism under the rubric of globalization as the new hope for Latin American economic development.²⁹

Now here are the central philosophical foundations of the liberationist paradigm which should be understood as dialectically related to the socio-historical conditions just expounded, and should hermeneutically be grasped as an attempt to overcome the conditions of domination and underdevelopment that suffused the socio-historical elements just elucidated:

- i. Intellectual Genealogy: The philosophical foundations of the liberationist paradigm can be traced back to the critique of the Enlightenment notion of the positive relationship between, on the one hand, the autonomy of reason and moral-cognitive development, and, on the other, social integration and progress, political liberalism, democratic capitalism, and modernization.³⁰
- ii. Philosophy of History: The liberationist paradigm is ontologically grounded in a dialectical, structural, organic, materialist, dynamic, and historical understanding of reality. In Latin America, this ontology has been given systematic form through the philosophy of history.³¹

²⁸Leopoldo Zea, *El pensamiento Latinoamericano* (México: Ariel, 1976) and Augusto Salazar Bondy, *¿Existe una filosofía de nuestra América?* (México: Siglo XXI editores, 1988).

²⁹François Houtart and F. Polet, *L'Autre Davos—Mondialisation des Résistances et des luttes* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), and *Alternatives sud*, "Les organismes financiers internationaux, instruments de l'économie politique libérale," 6:2 (1999).

³⁰Enrique Dussel, *Método para una filosofía de la liberación: Superación analéctica de la dialéctica hegeliana* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1974).

³¹Ignacio Ellacuría, *Filosofía de la realidad histórica*. The construction of a Latin American philosophy of history can be understood as a repudiation of the positivistic and pragmatic frames of reference that are so central to the project of modernity and the process of modernization, frames of reference that repudiate the very idea of a philosophy of history, frames of reference which, for Latin American liberationists are socio-historically linked to U.S. hegemony. Pragmatism repudiates the very notion of a philosophy of history as metaphysical nonsense. This is clear from Peirce's repudiation of Kant and Hegel. Fearing the specter of dialectics (Marx), Popper vehemently and dogmatically rejected the idea that socio-historical conditions played a role in the development of science. See his response to Kuhn in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*. Mannheim critiqued U.S. social thought for its ahistoricism (*Ideology and Utopia* [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1936] 254).

- iii. Social Theoretical Assumptions: The liberationist paradigm takes as its central social theoretical assumption what Habermas has called the "theory of social conflict," which "seeks to understand [the social] system as an association of domination [*Herrschaftsverband*] kept open and in flux by internal opposition."³²
- iv. Conception of Justice: The Latin American critique of "justice as fairness," discourse ethics, and all talk of public spheres takes as its point of departure the historical underdevelopment, instability, and colonized status of the Latin American public sphere.³³ From here the contributions of John Rawls, Habermas, Charles Taylor and Karl-Otto Apel are historicized and critiqued for reifying forms of thought that are linked to specific socio-historical conditions. Specifically, Latin American philosophers of liberation have taken issue with the dominant social ethics of the center for dichotomizing the praxeological and poietic dimensions of the everyday (*cotidiano*), and for failing to address the question of the material and metabolic substratum of the lifeworld.³⁴
- v. Epistemology: The liberationist epistemology is grounded in what Habermas has called the "emancipatory cognitive interest" of the "critically oriented sciences."³⁵

In Latin America in the 1970s, the liberationist paradigm enabled the emergence of a Marxian inspired sociology of religion that aimed on the one hand to unmask the ideological functions of religion, and on the other, highlight its empowering dimensions. For example: François Houtart's and the Louvain School's Godelierian and Gramscian approaches to religion and society;³⁶ Otto Maduro's investigations into an authentic Latin American sociology of religion;³⁷ and Cristián Parker's

³²Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973) 210.

³³Jorge Castañeda, *La casa por la ventana: México y América Latina después de la Guerra Fría* (México: Cal y arena, 1993).

³⁴Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of "the Other" and the Myth of Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 1995).

³⁵Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest*, 308–10.

³⁶François Houtart, *Sociología de la religión* (Managua: Centro de Estudios Sobre America, 1992) and *Religion, sociedad y mercado en el neoliberalismo* (México: Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades, Coordinación Humanidades, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1997).

³⁷Otto Maduro, *Religión y conflicto social* (México: Centro de Estudios Euménicos / Centro de Reflexión teológica, 1978).

reflections on popular religion as socio-cultural resistance vis-à-vis modernization and globalization.³⁸

Analogously, there emerged around the same time a theology that set out to critique its own eurocentric foundations, ground itself in the reality of structural oppression, and develop a method that gives pride of place to practice over theory. For example: Leonardo Boff's ecclesiology,³⁹ Clodovis Boff's epistemological and methodological reflections,⁴⁰ and Ignacio Ellacuría's writings on the prophetic and utopian functions of Latin American theology.⁴¹

THE LIBERAL PARADIGM:

The following six socio-historical factors enabled and shaped the development of the liberal paradigm, the dominant discourse in the U.S. academy:

- i. The crystallization of the bipolar system, the emergence of the regime of international organizations, and the polemic between *realpolitik* and human rights, or between hegemonic stability and neo-liberal institutionalism, especially as this polemic manifested itself in U.S. policy vis-à-vis Latin America.⁴²
- ii. McCarthyism and the specter of Marxism, especially vis-à-vis the U.S. academic field.⁴³
- iii. The civil rights movement, 1960s radicalism, and the counter-culture.⁴⁴

³⁸Cristián Parker, *Religión y clases subalternas urbanas en una sociedad dependiente: Religiosidad popular urbana en América Latina: un estudio de caso en Chile* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Centre de Recherches socio-religieuses, 1986), and *Otra Lógica en América Latina: Religión Popular y Modernización Capitalista*.

³⁹Leonardo Boff, *Iglesia: carisma y poder* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 1982).

⁴⁰Clodovis Boff, "Epistemología y método de la teología de la liberación," in *Mysterium Liberationis: Conceptos fundamentales de la teología de la liberación*, eds. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1993) 79–114.

⁴¹Ignacio Ellacuría, "Utopía y profetismo," in *Mysterium Liberationis*, 393–442.

⁴²John Foster Dulles, *A Dynamic Moral Force—America's Opportunity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1952); W. W. Rostow, *The Stage of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962); Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little Brown, 1979); Idem, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999); Jeanne J. Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason in Politics* (New York: American Enterprise Institute/Simon and Schuster, 1982).

⁴³Michael Paul Rogin, *The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1967).

⁴⁴Immanuel Wallerstein and Paul Starr, *The University Crisis Reader: The Liberal University Under Attack*. Volume I: *The Liberal University Under Attack* (New York: Random House, 1971); *The University Crisis Reader: The Liberal University Under*

- iv. The Chicago School of neoclassical economics, the rise of U.S. "individualistic" capitalism, and the move toward regional economic integration.⁴⁵
- v. The second wave of immigration, the rise of multiculturalism or identity politics, and the transformation of the field of U.S. religion from the logic of "denominationalism" to the logic of "congregationalism."⁴⁶
- vi. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the "triumph" of democratic-capitalism.⁴⁷

Against the backdrop of these socio-historical conditions, the philosophical foundations of the liberal paradigm are more fully understood. These are:

- i. Intellectual genealogy: The liberal paradigm can be traced back to the Enlightenment view that once freed from the yoke of tradition, an autonomous reason would shepherd individuals and societies toward progress and prosperity.⁴⁸

Attack. Volume II: Confrontation and Counterattack (New York: Random House, 1971); Robert Wuthnow, *The Consciousness Reformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); Michael Walzer, *Radical Principles: Reflections of an Unreconstructed Democrat* (New York: Basic Books, 1980); and Steven M. Tipton, *Getting Saved From the Sixties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

⁴⁵ Paul A. Samuelson, *The Collected Scientific Papers*, II (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966), Book Three, "Trade, Welfare, and Fiscal Policy," and Book Five, "Economics—Past and Present," Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), and Lester C. Thurow, *Head to Head: The Coming Economic Battle Among Japan, Europe, and America* (New York: Morrow, 1992).

⁴⁶ Allen Maldwyn Jones, *American Immigration*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), Marilyn Hoskin, *New Immigrants and Democratic Society* (New York: Praeger, 1991), Louise Lamphere, ed., *Structuring Diversity: Ethnographic Perspectives on the New Immigration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), and Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988).

⁴⁷ Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72:3 (Summer 1993) 22–49.

⁴⁸ This was the worldview presupposed by, for instance, the so-called contract theorists—e.g., John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant (especially when read as critics of the anthropological and political philosophical assumptions of e.g., Thomas Hobbes, David Hume, and Baruch Spinoza)—the classical political economists—e.g., Adam Smith and David Ricardo—and the utilitarians—e.g., Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. See also the historical studies of Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), Louis Dumont, *Essays on Individualism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986) and Jürgen Habermas,

- ii. Pragmatism: The liberal paradigm is ontologically grounded in either a positivistic, empiricist, analytical, or a cultural-symbolic, praxeological-communicative, and interpretative understanding of reality. Both worldviews were given systematic form through the school of thought known as pragmatism, the first and probably only autochthonous school of U.S. thought, which developed as a critique of the ontologizing philosophies of Continental Europe.⁴⁹
- iii. Social theoretical assumptions: The liberal paradigm takes as its social theoretical point of departure what Habermas has called the "theory of social integration" which "seeks to understand the social system as a structure of harmoniously equalized and enduring order . . ." ⁵⁰
- iv. Conception of Justice: Liberal notions of justice, rooted in the Enlightenment ideas of progress and stability and the pragmatic critique of metaphysics and the philosophy of history,⁵¹ are procedural, discursive, praxeological-communicative, and/or formal.⁵²
- v. Epistemology: There exist two liberal epistemologies: one is grounded in what Habermas has termed the "technical cognitive interest" of the "empirical-analytic sciences" and the other is grounded in what he has termed the "practical interest" of the "historical-hermeneutic sciences."⁵³

The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996).

⁴⁹ Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers*, Vol. 5, Pragmatism and Pragmatism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1934), William James, *Pragmatism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975); John Dewey, *Later Works*, Vol. 11, *Liberalism and Social Action* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991); Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Minnesota University Press, 1982) and Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

⁵⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, 210.

⁵¹ For example, Rawls's idea that a theory of justice cannot be grounded in a "comprehensive doctrine." See his "Introduction" to the paperback edition of *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). See also Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical thinking* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992).

⁵² John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, *Collected Papers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), Idem., *The Law of Peoples*, with "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited" (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998); Idem., *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998).

⁵³ Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, 308–10.

In the United States the liberal paradigm provided the horizon for an understanding of religion, as a carrier of certain political liberal values which functions as a vehicle for social integration and maintenance, and as a bulwark against the destructive forces of pernicious individualism. These are some of the more central contributions to this tradition: The social historical and theoretical reflections of Alexis de Tocqueville about the foundations of U.S. culture;⁵⁴ Talcott Parsons' notion of "denominational pluralism";⁵⁵ H. R. Niebuhr's sociology of religion;⁵⁶ Robert Bellah's notion of "civil religion" and his understanding of the relationship between individualism and religious values;⁵⁷ Peter Berger's sociological phenomenology of religion;⁵⁸ discursive theories of religion, i.e., religion, communication, and public sphere;⁵⁹ ethnographic approaches to religion;⁶⁰ and religion as a promoter of "good" globalization.⁶¹

The liberal paradigm also provided the horizon for a liberal theology of culture and dialogue that, for Protestant circles, emerged in the nineteenth century with work of Ernst Troeltsch and was reinterpreted by the Niebuhr brothers, Paul Tillich, and Gordon Kaufman,⁶² and for

⁵⁴ Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) 444.

⁵⁵ Talcott Parsons, "Christianity," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sills (New York: Macmillan, 1968) 2:425-47.

⁵⁶ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1987).

⁵⁷ Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," in *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) 168-89, "Unitarian Universalism in Societal Perspective," presented at the Unitarian Universalist Association, General Assembly, Rochester, N.Y., June 27, 1998; and Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, updated edition with a new introduction (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

⁵⁸ Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967).

⁵⁹ Steven M. Tipton, "Public Theology," *The Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion* (Congressional Quarterly Press, 1998); Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁶⁰ R. S. Warner, "Work in Progress Towards a New Paradigm in the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States," *American Journal of Sociology* 98:5 (March 1993) 1043-93; Nancy Ammerman, "Telling Congregational Stories," *Review of Religious Research* 35:4 (June 1994) 289-301; Penny Edgell Becker, *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models of Local Religious Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁶¹ Roland Robertson and William P. Garret, eds., *Religion and Global Order* (New York: Paragon House, 1991).

⁶² Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992); H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York:

Roman Catholic circles emerged with Karl Rahner's phenomenological critique of Transcendental Thomism and Bernard Lonergan's theological method, and was developed by David Tracy, Robert Schreiter, and others.⁶³

The Third Task:

Reconstruction of the Genesis and Transformation of the Study of U.S. Hispanic Religion

In the third task I am proposing for the critique of the study of U.S. Hispanic religion, we would deploy Bourdieu's ethnographically motivated sociology of knowledge from below in an attempt to reconstruct the genesis and transformation of the study of U.S. Hispanic religion. What appeared as paradigms, viewed from above, become, from below, stocks of knowledge that are ready to hand. In the same way that the liberal and liberationist paradigms were enabled and limited by the socio-historical conditions in which they emerged, the study of Latino religion was enabled and limited, on the one hand, by the group of scholars, set of intellectual practices, disciplines, stocks of knowledge, and institutions that constituted that region of the U.S. academic field dedicated to the production of discourses on U.S. religion, and on the other, by the socio-historical location of these elements. When applied to the study of Latino religion, this critical sociology of the academic field reveals that an intellectual tension between the liberationist and liberal stocks of knowledge has defined the history of the study of Hispanic religion. More significantly, this tension is a manifestation in the academic field of the marginalized status that characterizes Latinos in the U.S.. The study of Hispanic religion will be plagued with distortions so long as scholars of U.S. Latino religion fail to reflect on the socio-historical conditions of possibility for the invention and institutionalization of Hispanic religion as an object of analysis in the U.S. academic field.

Harper, 1956); Reinhold Niebuhr, *Christian Realism and Political Problems* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953); Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959); Gordon Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

⁶³ Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World* (New York: Continuum, 1994); Idem, *Hearers of the Word: Laying the Foundation for a Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Continuum, 1994); Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press for Lonergan Research Institute of Regis College, 1971); Robert Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology Between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997); David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987).

As suggested, this reconstruction of the study of Latino religion will require a dialectical approach analogous to the one developed in the second task. First, we must elucidate the socio-historical determinants—both exogenous and endogenous to the U.S. academic field—that led to the emergence and development of the subfield of Hispanic religion, and to the structuring of the intellectual *habitus* of both Hispanic and non-Hispanic scholars that produced Hispanic religion. And second, we must analyze the development of the different arguments, concepts, theories, and the like that undergirded the production of scholarship on Latino religion. This is to say that we must deconstruct the way that Hispanic religion was constituted as an object of analysis over time, but always understanding that these constructions were enabled and shaped by the socio-historical factors elucidated. Given the scale of this proposal such an approach cannot be developed here in its full complexity and nuance. An outline of the central contours will have to suffice.

PRE-HISTORY

For decades, before the study of Hispanic religion became institutionalized as an object of analysis in the U.S. academy, there existed a history of social scientific and theological reflections on, for instance, the religion of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in California and Texas, Puerto Ricans in New York, Cubans and Cuban-Americans in Miami. The crystallization of the category “Hispanic religion” in the academy was correlated with the demographic shift that transpired in the country which led to the subsumption of particular and concrete nationalities under an abstract and universal identity—viz., “Hispanic/Latino.” This correlation is significant because it reveals the dialectical relationship that exists between the academic field and the social totality, and more specifically, between intellectual and existential violence. The existential violence suffered by the Venezuelan, the Salvadoran, the Dominican, who, identified and classified as Hispanic, is negated his or her cultural and historical particularities, is dialectically related to the epistemological and ontological violence that takes place in the academic sphere when a lecture or a study methodologically and/or theoretically suppresses the particularities of a Hispanic person or group. This slippage between particular and universal, concrete and abstract gets to the existential uncertainty that must be the point of departure for any study of U.S. Hispanic reality, of which religion is a central aspect. However, both ethnic particularities and existential angst are suppressed by scholars in the name of methodological and theoretical expediency. This is the problem with the ahistoricism, pragmatism, and positivism of the liberal paradigm that dominates the

U.S. academy. In the same way that political liberalism negates ethnic particularities in order to create and integrate the abstract individual citizen,⁶⁴ the categories and strategies used by the liberal academy negates, at the theoretical level, the particularity of life forms in the name of heuristic efficacy and effectiveness, and, at the methodological level, negates the hermeneutical self-understanding of specific ethnic/racial individual groups in the name of the scientific method,⁶⁵ and the “reflexive” (Bourdieu) or “self-reflective” (Habermas) empirical question of what social group controls the processes by which this or that method is “normalized,” that is, becomes part of the regime of “normal science.”

GENESIS

Several decades ago, when the religious beliefs and practices of Latinos were first “discovered” by intellectuals in the United States, two factors endogenous to this newly emerging field of study overdetermined its structure. First, a disproportionate amount of those scholars investigating Hispanic religiosity were themselves of Hispanic origin; and second, the liberationist paradigm, which had always existed at the periphery of the U.S. academy, held the most sway as the frame of reference for the analysis of Hispanic religion. In addition, two exogenous factors—a demographic and a geopolitical—had significant influence on the development of this emerging field: Latinos constituted a relatively small percentage of the U.S. population, and the Latin American left still posed a viable alternative to what years later would become known as neo-liberalism.

U.S. HISPANIC INTELLECTUALS AS THE “INVENTORS” OF THE OBJECT OF ANALYSIS

Hispanic religion as object of analysis emerged as the intellectual aspect of the Hispanic struggle for recognition. With Bourdieu we need to ask about the social location of the inventors as this empirical fact

⁶⁴ Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, nation, classe : les identités ambiguës* (Paris: La Découverte, 1988). This problem was also treated by the young Marx. See “On the Jewish Question” and “An Introduction to the Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978).

⁶⁵ One example of this violence can be found in the work being done in the sociology of religion under the rubric “new immigrants,” where the political liberal integrationist interest which lurks behind all talk of “multiculturalism” and “identity politics” is internalized in ethnographic studies through the methodological and theoretical assimilation of newly arrived immigrants. See, for example, Stephen Warner, “Work in Progress Towards a New Paradigm in the Sociological Study of

always plays a role in the construction of the object of analysis.⁶⁶ On the one hand, as intellectuals U.S. Hispanics are situated in a dominant position among a dominated people; but, on the other hand, as Hispanics they are situated in a marginalized position in an academic sphere dominated demographically by Euro-Americans and intellectually by the liberal paradigm. U.S. Hispanics invented Latino religion as an object of analysis, first in theological circles in response to pastoral needs, and later in social scientific circles as a critique of the ethnocentrism of the categories and theories used. The self-reflectively critical and "interested" nature of the first constructions of Hispanic religion were very different to the more interpretative and "neutral" constructions that would emerge years later when a greater number of non-Latino scholars became "interested" in the study of Latino religion.

THE HISPANIC INTELLECTUAL HABITUS

From the outset, Latino intellectuals, like all intellectuals that exist at the limits of what is understood as "normal science," struggled with the construction of the object of analysis. A tension existed between the dominant liberal language that stressed the symbolic, praxeological, cultural and integrationist aspects of religion and the liberationist language that stressed the material, poetic, economic, and emancipatory aspects. This tension was internalized in the Hispanic intellectual habitus which was never able to synthesize with an academic field dominated by a liberal approach. Initially, Hispanic intellectuals had ready to hand stocks of knowledge unknown to the non-Hispanic intellectual. This produced a hermeneutical tension that realized itself through the marginalization of the first studies of Hispanic religion, and also through a destabilized habitus. The language of liberation existed at the margins. Not surprisingly, as elites Hispanic intellectuals were more susceptible to assimilation via academic careers.⁶⁷ This tension between liberation and liberalism is clearly present in the early works of the first studies of Latino religion.⁶⁸ These studies will need to be de-

Religion in the United States," and Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner, ed., *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

⁶⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo academicus*, 16–34.

⁶⁷ Frantz Fanon addresses an analogous issue in *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris: François Maspero, 1961). He critically analyzes the tendency of the African elite to be in cahoots with the colonial powers as they had the most to lose from the wars of liberation given their symbolic and material capital.

⁶⁸ I will mention two examples: first, the slippage that exists in Virgilio Elizondo's use of the term *mestizaje*: Sometimes Elizondo signs this nomenclature in such a way that gives it an integrationist-liberal meaning and other times in such a

constructed in order to tease out the tension between liberalism and liberation that defined the structure of the subfield of U.S. Hispanic religion.

TRANSFORMATION

Gradually, as Latino religion became institutionalized as an object of analysis in the U.S. academy, an increasing number of non-Hispanic scholars began to gain interest in this new phenomenon, and the liberal approach, which had historically been the dominant intellectual worldview among U.S. academics, began to exert more influence as the rubric of analysis in this particular field. Thus was intensified what Bourdieu has called the symbolic struggle over the monopoly of legitimate nomination.⁶⁹ As to the two exogenous factors, this transformation of the field of U.S. Hispanic religion was paralleled by a precipitous increase in the population of U.S. Latinos, and the demise of the Latin American left. Eventually, there came a point when both the liberationist and liberal paradigms came to marshal substantial epistemological, methodological, and theoretical leverage in the study of U.S. Hispanic religion. As these endogenous and exogenous factors unfolded and interacted, however, a moment arose when the liberal discourse began to exert greater influence, gradually eclipsing the liberationist perspective. I refer to this development—a development that continues today—as the *liberalization of the liberationist paradigm*. In U.S. Hispanic theology, the liberalization of the liberationist paradigm manifests itself as the "aesthetic turn." And in the social sciences this phenomenon manifests itself as the eclipse of the question of power in the sociological analysis of U.S. Latino popular religion.

THE AESTHETIC TURN

I argue that the aesthetic turn in U.S. Hispanic theology is an example of intellectual assimilation. This development needs to be analyzed from the perspective of a critical sociology of knowledge and revealed for what it is: the theological aspect of the liberalization of the liberationist paradigm. In a previous essay, I asked why it is

way that gives it a emancipatory-liberationist one. See, for example, his *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1983). Second, the tension that has existed between the terms *mujerista* and *feminista* which is no doubt a function of the dialectical relationship between, on the one hand, the way Latin American and Anglo American intellectual discourses on women are negotiated, and on the other hand, how the negotiators, viz., Hispanic women theologians, grapple with the existential crisis of living in the U.S.

⁶⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo academicus*, 41.

that U.S. Hispanic theology does not tarry with the negative, the monstrosity of marginalization and struggle? While it acknowledges the socio-economic struggle of U.S. Latinas/os, it *sublimates* this struggle into an aesthetic praxis which gives pride of place to the procession over the necessity of production, which accentuates the liturgy while eclipsing the reality of labor, which underscores the fiesta while ignoring the daily eight-to-five of the factory. But by doing this, theology remains an abstraction, an intellectual idea. Stated in another way, rather than formulating an aesthetics that is grounded and shaped by the totality of reality—which for the majority of Latinas/os includes the real, everyday struggle of “making” a living—U.S. Hispanic theology, either deduces an idea of struggle from an *a priori* aesthetics, or worse, it brackets the dimension of struggle all together. But if U.S. Hispanic theology aims to become more than an abstraction, and accepts to tarry with the totality of U.S. Hispanic reality—both positive and negative—then it must attempt to overcome the praxis-poiesis diremption which it itself posits; it needs to do this, for example—if we are talking “aesthetics”—through an aesthetics of struggle which only later can be *sublated* into an aesthetics of celebration. If, however, U.S. Hispanic theology opts not to accept this task of overcoming, then it must heed the lesson of Kant’s critical philosophy and stay within the epistemological limits of its narrowly defined program, i.e., put more concretely, U.S. Hispanic theology must refrain from aestheticizing the monstrosity of marginalization and struggle, it must refrain from reducing the totality of U.S. Hispanic reality to an *a priori* aesthetics of celebration. Will the coming-of-age of U.S. Hispanic theology necessarily result in the distancing of theological discourse from the everyday struggle of the Latina/o community? In other words, my thesis is that U.S. Hispanic theology is currently undergoing an “aesthetic turn” which is having the onerous effect of distancing theological discourse away from the everyday struggles of an economically, culturally, and politically dominated U.S. Latina/o community—an effect which could in the long-term alienate U.S. Hispanic theologians from their community. Two moments of this “aesthetic turn” need to be highlighted at the outset: The first moment is *epistemological*. The fact that an overwhelming amount of attention is being dedicated to aesthetic theory suggests that little attention is being given to other ways of knowing, such as, for instance, social scientific and critical theoretical approaches. The second moment is *ontological*. By biasing the aesthetic, Latina/o theologians are implying that the defining characteristic or element of U.S. Hispanic reality is the experience of the beautiful. For to deny this presupposition would be to admit that U.S. Latina/o theological discourse is an intellectualized abstraction which does not correspond with the everydayness of U.S. Hispanic reality. But how about the reality of domination? When these two moments are combined and the ‘aesthetic turn’ in U.S. Latina/o theology is considered comprehensively, the following concern arises: The coming-of-age of a theological discourse dominated by a theoretical and empirical concern for the aesthetic that

consequently has a tendency of reducing the complexity of U.S. Hispanic reality to the beautiful.⁷⁰

THE ECLIPSE OF THE QUESTION OF POWER

The eclipse of the question of the relationship between power and popular religion is an example of the liberalization of the liberationist paradigm in the sociology of U.S. Hispanic religion. Any use of the concept “popular religion,” if it is to be consistent with the genealogy of the nomenclature, necessarily needs to address the issue of religious power, and specifically engage the relationship between popular religion and domination. But, as I have suggested elsewhere

[T]his already poses a problem for U.S. sociology of religion, for as I have suggested, do to socio-historical distortions which are revealed to us by Bourdieu’s critical sociology of knowledge, the majority of U.S. sociologies of religion have failed to substantially address this issue of religious interest and power. For example, I recently reviewed over three decades of articles published in the journals *Sociology of Religion*, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, and *Social Compass* and I found that the European and Latin American journals had substantially more articles that were directly dealing with issues of religious interest and power. Why is it, moreover, that among the many studies of Hispanic popular religion that have recently emerged in the U.S., none has attempted to engage the relationship that exists between the fact that in the U.S. a disproportionate amount of religious symbols and expressions that are termed “popular” are of Hispanic origin, and this group’s marginalized place in U.S. society? This hiatus, I argue, is a symptom of the biases present in U.S. sociology of religion. Structurally does a homology exist between the instrumentalization of Mexican culture by the fast-food aphorism—*Yo quiero Taco Bell*—or the commodification and consumption of the Hispanic culture as the “exotic” and “erotic” as illustrated by the recent popularity of Latinos such as Jennifer Lopez, Enrique Iglesias, and Ricky Martin, and the categorization of Hispanic beliefs and practices as “popular”? In other words, does a structural homology exist between the position of Hispanics in the U.S. cultural field and their position in the U.S. religious field? In order to engage this question and do justice to it U.S. sociology of religion needs to push beyond the “integrationist” presuppositions that have historically kept it from developing a critical theory of U.S. religious interests and power. This bias manifests itself today through the phenomenological analysis of popular religion that has recently come to dominate under the new rubric of ethnographic sociology. If the concept of popular religion is to be used

⁷⁰Manuel J. Mejido, “A Critique of the ‘Aesthetic Turn’ in U.S. Hispanic Theology: A Conversation with Roberto Goizueta and the Positing of a New Paradigm,” *Journal of Hispanic Theology* 8:3 (February 2001) 18–23.

in a way that is free from the biases of U.S. sociology of religion, then critical-historical and structural approaches need to be marshaled. Only this way will the power dynamic that is played out in the religious field, and, which, through structural homologies, extends to other social fields, can be uncovered.⁷¹

Only on extremely rare occasions have scholars of U.S. Hispanic religion recognized this transformation I am calling here the liberalization of the liberationist paradigm in its full complexity, either as a positive or negative phenomenon. More often, only its surface manifestations have been acknowledged either through a critique of the liberal paradigm for occluding the structural asymmetries which adversely affect U.S. Hispanics, or through a repudiation of the liberationist paradigm for being displaced and anachronistic, that is, for being ill-suited to address the socio-religious dynamics that exist in modern industrialized societies, the U.S. in particular. For the most part, however, what I am calling the liberalization of the liberationist paradigm has transpired silently, without much recognition, and can be detected only by tracing the genealogy of the study of U.S. Hispanic religion, and more specifically, the deconstruction of assumptions, text milieus, methods, theories, and concepts that together constitute the history of this area of study. The critical reflection on the socio-historical determinants that mediated and shaped the study of Latino religion, however, suggests that the tension that has existed between the liberal and liberationist approaches to Hispanic religion is the academic or intellectual manifestation of the general social process of Latino assimilation into the U.S. mainstream.

The Fourth Task:

Reconstruction of the Genesis and Transformation of the Study of U.S. Hispanic Religion

In the fourth and final task involved in the critique of the study of U.S. Hispanic religion as I envision it, we should aim to construct a new ground for the study of Latina/o religion; this ground should draw on the critical philosophical and theoretical tradition which have been historically absent from our intellectual genealogies. Thus, the reconstruction of the emergence and development of U.S. Hispanic religion, carried out in the third task, now becomes a prolegomenon for

⁷¹Manuel J. Mejido, "The Illusion of Neutrality: Reflections on the Term 'Popular Religion'," *Social Compass*. (Forthcoming; Winter, 2002). See also my "Theoretical Prolegomenon to the Sociology of U.S. Hispanic Popular Religion" *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 7:1 (August 1999) 27-54.

the ground laying, as it unmasks the socio-historical struggles that suffuse the intellectual discourses on Hispanic religion, revealing the intellectual aspect of the general struggle against assimilation. Hence, our new approach to Latino religion will consist of two tasks: first, the task of critiquing the U.S. academic field via the destabilization of dominant interpretations; second, the task of constructing a new ground for the study of U.S. Hispanic religion that aims to push beyond the liberation-liberalism dichotomy that holds sway in the U.S. academy. This new ground should consist of two moments: the phenomenology of struggle as the point of departure for the elucidation of U.S. Hispanic reality; and the dialectic of ideology and emancipation as the proper movement of U.S. Hispanic religion.

DESTABILIZATION OF THE U.S. ACADEMY VIA THE CONSCIOUS REPUDIATION OF INTELLECTUAL ASSIMILATION

U.S. Hispanic theologians and scholars of religion should not be afraid to turn our weapons of analysis on ourselves, to perform the quixotic gesture of reflexivity. In the business of interpreting the world, intellectuals tend to fall captive to what Pierre Bourdieu calls "scholastic epistemocentrism."⁷² That is, failing to understand themselves as "empirical subjects," intellectuals often do not reflect on the fact that their scholarly activities are practices that are socio-historically situated, structured, on the one hand, by the position they occupy in an academic field, and, on the other, by the positions they occupy in other social fields—e.g., the economic and political fields, the field of power, and the like.⁷³ Intellectuals in democratic-capitalist societies like the United States have a proclivity for performing this *epoché*? on the socio-historical determinants of academic discourses because of the dominance—both in terms of forms of thought and forms of life—of a praxeological-interpretative and symbolic-cultural bias that views the academic field as the epitome of undistorted reasonable and rational communication. The project critical theorists from Georg Lukács to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have called the critique of political liberalism and capitalism—which is always an intellectual project, i.e., it is always an intellectual's project—must, therefore, begin with the critique of the internalization by the academic field of those modes of thought that emerged together with democratic-capitalism, which, in praxeological terms, becomes the practice of destabilizing an academic field via the repudiation of its dominant worldviews. The critique of the tyranny of capital must begin with the critique of the tyranny of

⁷²Pierre Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes* (Paris: Seuil, 1997) 64-74.

⁷³Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo academicus*, 34-52.

"normal science" which is always the science practiced by those a society regards as "normal," that is, it is the science practiced by those that speak the customary language, possess the average physiology and physiognomy, are immersed in the typical text milieu, and deploy the dominant problem solving tactics and strategies.

Moreover, scholastic epistemocentrism does particular violence to those discourses on the social reality of minority groups as it suppresses the distortions produced by the internalization of the contradictions and tensions that suffuse a society, thus re-enforcing the oppression of that group, now in the academic realm. The critique of the idea that order and progress can be achieved via praxis alone (an idea that reaches its zenith with "multiculturalism" and "identity politics") must begin with the critique of the "consensus theory of truth" and the idea of the possibility of an integrated "community of scientists." The critique of the tyranny of the majority must begin with the critique of the tyranny of dominant interpretations, which are always the interpretations of the dominant. From this perspective, the task of U.S. Hispanic intellectuals that claim to expound a liberationist approach must begin with the unmasking of intellectual assimilation.⁷⁴

The political liberal belief in the possibility of a harmonious multiculturalism equilibrated and adjusted via discourse, participation, and correct procedures, exemplified in the idea of the public sphere,⁷⁵ appears in the academic realm as the belief in the possibility of an inte-

⁷⁴"Scholastic epistemocentrism" has prevented even the most critical of scholars from reflecting on the fact that scholarship is a specific type of social practices located in a specific social space, viz., the academic field, and as such it manifests the contradictions and tensions of a society. Intellectual production and the academic realm are not immune to the distortions and interests of social asymmetries and struggles, but rather they have to be understood as loci of this struggle, i.e., they have to be understood as the intellectual components of this struggle. It would be naïve to think that intellectual activity can be divorced from an intellectual's life-world and position in the system; which is to say that it would be naïve to think that intellectual activity can be divorced from a social totality. *Homo academicus* is also *Homo politicus, economicus*, and the like. And this holds, *a fortiori*, for discourses on the social world as intellectuals cannot escape the investments they have in the world they aim to analyze, and for liberal-democratic societies as they internalize in the academic field the worldview that intersubjectivity—i.e., communication free of distortion—is a given as opposed to something that is achieved through the dialectic of recognition which always implies negation and violence. This is why it is not surprising that political liberalism—especially U.S. style liberalism—is more indebted to the positive philosophy of identity than it is to the philosophy of negation. In the case of the U.S., this can be traced back to the pragmatic critique of dialectics, and socio-historically to the Cold War, McCarthyism, and the like.

⁷⁵Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).

grated community of diverse scholars which can, through reasoned communication and correct procedures, achieve a consensus on this or that interpretation, or, at the very least, agree to disagree. However in the same way that in democratic-capitalist societies the silent domination of minority groups holds sway beneath the ideologies of political correctness, identity politics, talk of reform without structural change,⁷⁶ in the liberal academic field, that is, the academic fields of liberal societies, the silent domination of minority intellectuals holds sway beneath the ideology of a participatory culture where everyone is encouraged to speak from his or her point of view. Agreeing to disagree is the diplomacy of the intellectual elite, who, like the political elite, score a victory if pacification is achieved. In the academic field this victory is realized via the normalization of the dominant paradigms. The dominant interpretations will always be the interpretation of the dominant, and "normal science" will always be the science of the "normal." Those minority intellectuals who through a critical consciousness have resisted the internalization of the dominant worldviews, will always remain at the margins of the academy just like their people remain at the margins of society. Why should it be any different? The only thing that could blur this reality is the assimilationist tendencies of the minority intellectual who, as an elite among his or her people, is more susceptible to selling out. That such a propensity exists is clear from the reconstruction of the genesis and transformation of the study U.S. Hispanic religion, and specifically from the process we have called the liberalization of the liberationist paradigm.

Thus, those minority intellectuals that claim to struggle for the betterment of their people must not forget about the important task of transforming the dominant interpretations of the world. Here the critical race theorists serve as an example who for sometime now have been taking as their point of departure the critique of U.S. law schools, in particular their liberal structures and pedagogical practices.⁷⁷ With Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, therefore, the task of the critical intellectual qua intellectual is the critique of the U.S. academy as a central component of the democratic-capitalist "machine."⁷⁸ As for the intellectual qua activist, this is another story.

⁷⁶David Schwelckart, *Against Capitalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁷⁷See, for instance, the introduction to Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* (New York: The New Press, 1995).

⁷⁸Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie* (Paris: Minuit, 1975–1980).

Why are we afraid to be polemical? One thing should be said to all those academic elites in the United States that, because of a lack of a critical consciousness, discriminate against the intellectual traditions of *nuestra América*: beware of the demographic transition, it comes "like a thief in the night."

A NEW GROUND

In the space opened up by the destabilization of dominant interpretations, we need to construct a new ground for the study of U.S. Hispanic religion that is, on the one hand, free from the distortions of intellectual assimilation, and, on the other, critical vis-à-vis the function of the religion of minorities in liberal-democratic societies. As suggested above, this ground laying should consist of two moments: First, the delineation of the *phenomenology of struggle* as the primordial element of U.S. Hispanic reality. In a past essay, through a retrieval of Xavier Zubiri's critique of the pernicious idealism of Western philosophy and the materialist and liberationist re-interpretation of the Zubirian system by Ignacio Ellacuría, I attempted to establish the philosophical horizon for this phenomenology.⁷⁹ The next step should be the empirico-existential elucidation of this nomenclature. Second, in light of this phenomenology of struggle empirico-existentially understood, the dialectical relationship between the ideological and emancipatory elements of U.S. Hispanic religion needs to be developed as our primary heuristic device. Let us make manifest, for instance, *both* the ideological and emancipatory aspects of *mestizaje*, popular religion, *teología de conjunto*, praxis, and the like. Once we are able to reflectively engage our own contradictions, and once we immerse ourselves in these contradiction and work in and through them, then we will be getting somewhere.

Conclusion

How can we engage in the struggle for the liberation of our people if we ourselves are in chains—the chains of intellectual assimilation—and yet believe to be free? Reflexivity in the form of the critique of the study of U.S. Hispanic religion is the power to break free of these chains. Consider Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's *Hasta Cierta Punto* (1983) as an illustration of the emancipatory function of the reflexive gesture. This film about making a film undergirds the dialectical process by which an intellectual comes to terms with his own repressed sexism. Oscar, a

well-respected dramaturge, accepts to write a screenplay for a film about the problems of *machismo* among the waterfront workers in la Habana. In the process of conducting the research, he falls in love with Lina, a dock worker he decides to use as the model for the protagonist of the film because of her critical feminist consciousness. As their love affair deepens and intensifies, Oscar's *machista* tendencies slowly become manifest; and, through this therapeutic gaining of consciousness, he finds himself compelled to change the entire premise of his screenplay. Is Oscar not the quintessential intellectual who, deluded by the chimera of a superior consciousness, is forced to come to terms with the fact that he is dialectically related to his subject matter, to his object of analysis?

I pose to my colleagues a challenge analogous to the one Oscar had to face, and it is the *critique of the study of Hispanic religion*. Is the dialectic of reflexivity not a way of recasting one of the central insights of liberation theology, namely, that all theology and intellectual production that fails to reflect on its own socio-historical conditions of possibility is potentially oppressive, part of the problem?

⁷⁹Mejido, "A Critique of the 'Aesthetic Turn' in U.S. Hispanic Theology," 18–48.