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Hermeneutics and Politics: Rereading the Political Unconscious

Hermenéutica y política: releyendo el inconsciente político

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Abstract

As Karl Marx (1978) famously put it in the eleventh of his "Theses on Feuerbach," "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it." (p. 145). The urgency, as well as the truth of this statement, is undoubtedly as powerful today as when Marx first wrote it, but as a popular slogan frequently cited by radical thinkers and activists, Thesis 11 unfortunately has been rendered into a relatively simplistic dismissal of theory in favor of a somewhat anti-intellectual vision of praxis. Such is the danger of wisdom so phrased that it can fit on a bumper-sticker, a fate Marx himself likely never imagined for this trenchant observation. Marxism, after all, involves the dialectical unity of theory and practice, and Marx himself, of course, spent his life engaged in the critical analysis or interpretation of modern capitalist societies while also remaining committed to the movement devoted to changing the world. The crux of Thesis 11, in fact, lies not so much in the opposition between theory and practice, as in the connection Marx makes between interpreting the world and changing it. Interpretation, while not an end in itself, is absolutely critical to any project for imagining alternatives to and transforming the *status quo*. In this situation, hermeneutics inevitably takes on political and critical import. Arguably, it always bore such weight, but it has become more pressing in our time, perhaps, that the very act of interpretation is itself also a political act, one that is intimately connected to the project of critique.

Key words: hermeneutics, politics, unconscious, interpretation, critical theory.

Resumen

Como dijo Karl Marx, en el undécimo de sus *Tesis sobre Feuerbach*, "Los filósofos solo han interpretado el mundo, de varias maneras; el punto, sin embargo, es cambiarlo" (p. 145). La urgencia, así como la verdad de esta declaración es, sin duda, tan poderosa hoy como cuando Marx la escribió por primera vez, pero como un eslogan popular frecuentemente citado por pensadores y activistas radicales, la *Tesis 11* desafortunadamente se ha convertido en un rechazo relativamente simplista de la teoría a favor de una visión algo antintelectual de la praxis. Tal es el peligro de la sabiduría así expresada que puede caber en una calcomanía de parachoques, un destino que el propio Marx probablemente nunca imaginó para esta mordaz observación. El marxismo, después de todo, implica la unidad dialéctica de la teoría y la práctica, y el propio Marx, por supuesto, pasó su vida comprometido con el análisis crítico o la interpretación de las sociedades capitalistas modernas, al tiempo que seguía comprometido con el movimiento dedicado a cambiar el mundo. El *quid* de la Tesis 11, de

hecho, reside no tanto en la oposición entre teoría y práctica, como en la conexión que hace Marx entre interpretar el mundo y cambiarlo. La interpretación, si bien no es un fin en sí mismo, es absolutamente fundamental para cualquier proyecto para imaginar alternativas y transformar el *statu quo*. En esta situación, la hermenéutica inevitablemente adquiere una importancia política y crítica. Podría decirse que siempre tuvo tal peso, pero se ha vuelto más apremiante en nuestro tiempo, tal vez, que el mismo acto de interpretación es en sí mismo también un acto político, que está íntimamente conectado con el proyecto de crítica.

Palabras clave: hermenéutica, política, inconsciente, interpretación, teoría crítica.

The idea of the *political unconscious* ties in closely with the spirit animating Marx's Thesis 11, for both interpreting the world and changing it are implied within the concept. Not surprisingly, in his coining of the term and his elaboration of the notion in *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Fredric Jameson (1981) begins with a lengthy chapter titled "On Interpretation," before delineating the ways in which a properly dialectical, Marxist hermeneutic is employed to understand social and literary texts, focusing on key genres of romance, realism, naturalism, and modernism to illustrate how it all operates. The political unconscious is very much about the question of interpretation.

In *Fredric Jameson: The Project of Dialectical Criticism*, I have suggested that Jameson's entire career could be imagined as cultural cartography of the world system, an attempt to map figuratively the totality of social relations as they may be disclosed through a variety of forms of narrative. (Tally Jr., 2014). Jameson's work has involved "a continuous and lifelong meditation on narrative, on its basic structures, its relationship to the reality it expresses, and its epistemological value when compared with other, more abstract and philosophical modes of understanding," (Tally Jr. 2014, s.p.), which is actually how Jameson characterized the career of Georg Lukács in *Marxism and Form* (Jameson, 1971). Across more than twenty-five books and hundreds of articles, Jameson has been remarkably consistent, maintaining his particular project of dialectical, Marxist criticism while continually assessing ever new cultural, intellectual, and social phenomena. The result is a curious mixture of the absolutely *avant-garde* and the seemingly old-fashioned. Jameson has found himself near the center of the most current cultural and critical controversies of the day, moving with remarkable agility through the theoretical thickets of existentialism, structuralism, poststructuralism, postmodernism, and globalization. Yet, throughout all of these post-contemporary interventions, Jameson has been among the more resolutely traditional Marxist theorists and critics.

While engaging in inquiries ranging from narrative fiction and critical theory to film and television, architecture and art history, music, philosophy, and so on ("nothing cultural is alien to him," as Colin MacCabe, 1992, once put it), Jameson has maintained that Marxism is not just the most effective, but indeed the *only* theoretical and critical practice capable of adequately comprehending the narratives by which we make sense of, or give form to, the world. Jameson's dialectical criticism analyzes and evaluates the cultural landscape with an almost up-to-the-minute calibration, while always situating these interventions in a consistent yet flexible and complex system through which may be glimpsed that totality that ultimately gives meaning to each discrete element within it. In this way, Jameson seems to be a hip, ultra-contemporary postmodern theorist and a traditional, almost nineteenth-century thinker, all at the same time.

Additionally, Jameson has remained committed to a properly literary critical project, even when he ventures into other disciplinary fields. In a somewhat post-literary age,

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with media theory and cultural studies usurping the roles previously played by literary criticism and literary history, Jameson's criticism and theory, especially in its attention to narrative, form, genre, and tropes, appear to represent an almost perversely Luddite perspective. Even when he has ventured into architecture, film, visual arts, or media criticism, Jameson has always done so as a literary critic, paying closest attention to the forms and functions normally associated with narrative fiction. Despite his remarkable breadth of cultural inquiry, Jameson in some respects remains the student of Erich Auerbach, one of his teachers in graduate school at Yale University in the 1950s, and of the great philological tradition of the early twentieth century. From his earliest writings to his most recent, Jameson has been concerned above all with the ways in which individual expressions –sentences, in fact– relate to forms, which in turn derive their force and significance from the totality of social, political, and economic relations at work in a given mode of production. For Jameson, the critical perspective peculiar to literary criticism enables a properly Marxist critique of the world system.

In this, Jameson has at times been criticized, as some have justifiably wondered how an innovative analysis of a nineteenth-century French novel, or the articulation of a hermeneutic theory can possibly further a Marxist agenda. But this literariness, in fact, comports with Jameson's Marxism and his overall project of dialectical criticism. In Jameson's view, the existential condition of personal and social life in societies organized under the capitalist mode of production necessarily requires a form of interpretative or allegorical activity, which ultimately means that the task of making sense of one's world falls into the traditional bailiwick of literary criticism. Literary texts come to the reader as already constructed objects, situated in a complex literary and social history, and therefore cannot necessarily be read "literally" even if that is the preferred approach, since even a "literal" reading will involve some forms of interpretation. Just so, our interpretation of the social text -that is, the world in which we live- will also require a kind of metacommentary, to invoke another famous Jamesonian concept. As Jameson (1981) explains in *The Political Unconscious*,

> no society has ever been quite so mystified in quite so many ways as our own, saturated as it is with messages and information, the very vehicles of mystification (language, as Talleyrand put it, having been given us in order to conceal our thoughts). If everything were transparent, then no ideology would be possible, and no domination either: evidently that is not our case. But above and beyond the sheer fact of mystification, we must point to the supplementary problem involved in the study of cultural or literary texts, or on other words, essentially, of narratives: for even if discursive language were to be taken literally, there is always, and constitutively, a problem about the "meaning" of narratives as such; and the problem about the assessment and the subsequent formulation of the "meaning" of this or that narrative is the hermeneutic question. (p. 61)

Because narratives are form-giving forms by which individual and collective subjects make sense of the world, the project of the literary critic coincides with that of other sense-making systems, such as religion, philosophy, and science. Yet, as Jameson's own dialectical criticism makes clear, the literary critic is professionally attuned to the presumption of mystification or, to put it differently, to the need for interpretation, in advance. This is where the notion of the *political unconscious* becomes so critical as well.

In the famous opening words of its preface – "Always historicize!" – *The Political Unconscious* announces a crucial aspect of its project, but the thoroughgoing historicism of Jameson's dialectical criticism is not easily reducible to the interpretive methods sometimes associated with the term *historicism*. For one thing, Jameson seldom allows one to rest easy on the assumption that placing a given author or text in its historical context will, by itself, yield the desired results. He is also extremely wary of the various

historicist methods, including the so-called "New Historicism" then gaining currency in the United States, which he feels are insufficiently dialectical or Marxist. Above all, Jameson (1981) finds the historical investigation of a particular cultural artifact without regard to its inevitable situation within a supra-individual frame of reference, a larger social structure or system such as the mode of production, to be at best rather limited and incomplete, and at worst misleadingly false or ideologically suspect. So, while "always historicize" is the "one absolute and we may even say 'transhistorical' imperative of all dialectical thought," and while it "will unsurprisingly turn out to be the moral of *The Political Unconscious*" (p. 9), Jameson's more pressing argument in this study will involve the categories by which such a historicist project is possible or even conceivable.

Not unexpectedly, Marxism will offer the key to solving the theoretical and methodological problem facing the committed historicist.

> Only Marxism can give us an adequate account of the essential *mystery* of the cultural past, which, like Tiresias drinking the blood, is momentarily returned to life and warmth and allowed once more to speak, and to deliver its long-forgotten message in surroundings utterly alien to it. (Jameson, 1981, p. 9).

In this way, the Marxist hermeneutic outlined in *The Political Unconscious* will not only counter other interpretive models and oppose the putatively anti-interpretive theories associated with poststructuralism or deconstruction, but it will also propose a model by which texts can be read in their comprehensive historical and cultural contexts, as well as in our own. Thus, the very possibility of interpretation, as well as the interpretive act itself, is the real focus of *The Political Unconscious*.

Interpretation, therefore, cannot be understood as a process through which the meaning is simply read off the surface of, or even "found" deep within, the text in question, as if the phenomenological *Ding-an-sich* could be perceived by the astute observer. For texts are themselves historical and cultural objects that contain within them, as it were, the perceptions and interpretations of them throughout their history. Following his earlier argument first made in his 1971 article "Metacommentary," Jameson (1981) explains that

> we never fully confront a text immediately, in all its freshness as a thing-in-itself. Rather, texts come before us as the always-already-read; we apprehend them through sedimented layers of previous interpretations, or –if a text is brand-new– through the sedimented reading habits and categories developed by those inherited interpretive traditions." (p. 9)

Interpretation is thus never an isolated act performed by a reader upon a text, "but takes place on a Homeric battlefield, on which a host of interpretive options are either openly or implicitly in conflict." (p. 13). One does not so much interpret a text as translate it into an interpretive code, in order to reveal or construct a meaning that is itself situated within a semantic battleground of different, sometimes opposed, meanings.

Hence, in Jameson's view, interpretation is a fundamentally allegorical act, by which one must translate from one code into another, along different registers and according to a particular master code. Such "master codes" may ultimately refer to the various methods or "schools" of criticism. Marxist criticism, which for Jameson is marked by its dialectical and totalizing vision, can reveal the limitations of these partial or local methods, identifying the "strategies of containment" by which texts and interpretations foster the illusion of completeness while suppressing the historical (and, therefore, also social, and political) content. In this sense, Jameson's theory of interpretation may be viewed as a properly literary version of the older practice of ideology critique, in which the false consciousness of a given class is exposed and the "scientific" analysis of the total system discloses the social relations hidden beneath the visible surfaces of things, much like

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Marx's own revelatory investigation into alienated labor or the fetishism of the commodity in *Capital*. However, Jameson does not maintain that Marxist interpretation stands free of ideology since all thought is necessarily ideological. Rather, he views Marxism as the practice that can reflexively recognize its own ideological position and, in wrestling with itself in this way, open up the possibility of transcending ideology.

Thus, the essentially polemical argument in *The Political Unconscious* is directed against those who would segregate the "political" from other areas of human experience and, in so doing, deny or occlude the historical as well. Obviously, this includes non-Marxist approaches to literature, but Jameson's argument ultimately confronts something like false consciousness in societies organized under the capitalist mode of production as a whole. The theory of a "political unconscious," then, is formulated as a means of apprehending and making visible the repressed narrative of history, which, following Marx, Jameson understands as the history of class struggle and, therefore, as essentially political. Those critics or thinkers who would distinguish cultural texts that are social and political from those that are not are, in Jameson's view, not merely in error, but are (perhaps unintentionally) apologists for and reinforcers of "the reification and privatization of contemporary life." As Jameson (1981) continues,

> To imagine that, sheltered from the omnipresence of history and the implacable influence of the social, there already exists a realm of freedom —whether it be that of the microscopic experience of words in a text or the ecstasies and intensities of the various private religions— is only to strengthen the grip of Necessity over all such blind zones in which the individual subject seeks refuge, in pursuit of a purely individual, merely psychological, project of salvation. The only effective liberation from such constraint begins with the recognition that there is nothing that is not social and historical—indeed, that everything is "in the last analysis" political. (p. 20)

In this manner, we may see that Jameson is not advocating for a political interpretation, as distinct from psychoanalytic, religious, linguistic, or other hermeneutic methods, but rather is arguing for a Marxist and dialectical criticism capable of making visible the unseen but all-too-real social totality of which all texts are ultimately a part. (Eagleton, 1982, p. 195)

As far as methodology goes, Jameson insists that the insights of Marxist criticism offer "an ultimate *semantic* precondition for the intelligibility of literary and cultural texts," and that the "semantic enrichment and enlargement of the inert givens and materials of a particular text" takes place within three overlapping or "concentric" frames of reference. That is, the text would be situated first in its own time or political history (in a narrow sense of the event placed in its own chronological sequence), then in its society as a whole (a somewhat more synchronic system), and finally in history itself, "now conceived in its vastest sense of the sequence of modes of production and the succession or destiny of the various human social formations, from prehistoric life to whatever far future history has in store for us." (Jameson, 1981, p. 75)

It may be worth noting that Jameson's as yet unfinished six-volume project, *The Poetics of Social Forms*, for which *The Political Unconscious* can in retrospect be understood as the Introduction, seems to be an attempt to survey the temporal terrain outlined in this third phase of interpretation, History itself. The historical trajectory of cultural forms and poetic modes of production would proceed from the primitive myth-making of the ancients in a forthcoming volume –perhaps this is itself part of the convolutions of the dialectic, but the "last" volume to appear in print will actually be Volume 1 of *The Poetics of Social Forms*– and thence to the romantic allegories of a pre-modern and pre-capitalist epoch developing into new forms with the advent of modernity and postmodernity in *Allegory and Ideology*, and finally spanning the realist, modernist, and postmoder-

nist cultural modes, themselves associated with Ernest Mandel's stages of capital (i.e., market, monopoly, and late- or multinational capitalism) and addressed in Jameson's *Antinomies of Realism*, *A Singular Modernity* (supplemented by *The Modernist Papers*), and *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, respectively. Finally, these modes of cultural production invite us to consider a future scarcely imaginable outside of the realms of utopia and science fiction, as Jameson has explored in the sixth and final volume, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*.

In practice, to return to *The Political Unconscious*, these phases of reading will mainly move in an ever-widening gyre from the individual text itself to the social order of which it is a part, and thence to a broader view of the text in history. But Jameson makes clear that these are all understood in Marxist terms, so that even the first, more discretely textual analysis, which might appear similar to the traditional form of an *explication de texte*, will necessarily understand the work as a "socially symbolic act" (as Jameson's subtitle would have it). At the social level, Jameson's analysis would extend deeper into or beyond the text to examine the *ideologeme* or "the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes." And at the horizon of history, the text and its ideologemes may be seen in terms of what Jameson calls "the ideology of form," in which the mode of production may be somehow discerned in the organization of the forms themselves. (Jameson, 1981, p. 76). In *The Political Unconscious*, the central chapters, nominally on genre criticism, and then novels by Honoré de Balzac, George Gissing, and Joseph Conrad, respectively, explore these three horizons of interpretation.

Lingering on this last "horizon" for a moment, Jameson (1981) indicates that at this point the form itself is recognized *as* content, thus marking a dialectical reversal in which a formal analysis can reveal the heterogeneous processes of a given cultural text and ascertain a social "content of the form." That is, it has become possible "to grasp such formal processes as sedimented content in their own right, distinct from the manifest content of the works." (p. 99). Jameson endeavors to demonstrate this by examining genre, a primarily formal category that he shows to contain sociopolitical content in its own right. His lengthy chapter on "the dialectical use of genre criticism," which engages productively with a compelling non-Marxist literary theory (i.e., that of Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*), draws out social implications of that theory while demonstrating Jameson's provocative notion of the ideology of form. Jameson's idea of "generic discontinuities" –that is, the presence of multiple genres within a given literary text (even, or especially, a text already placed in a recognizable genre, such as a romance)– stages at a level of literary history the sort of textual heteroglossia that Mikhail Bakhtin (1982) has considered so fundamental to the form of the novel. (pp. 259-442). Using "a kind of x-ray technique," the reader may reveal "the layered and marbled structure of the text," thereby showing that the novel is "not so much an organic unity as a symbolic act that must reunite or harmonize heterogeneous narrative paradigms which have their own specific and contradictory ideological meaning," such as the social versus the psychological, for example. (Jameson, 1981, p. 144). In this sense, even the seemingly apolitical and ahistorical characteristics of a given generic form are revealed to be imbued with social and political content.

The aim of this theory of a political unconscious is ultimately to disclose the unseen or repressed historical dimension of both lived experience and the representations of reality in literary and cultural texts. But, as Jameson makes clear, history cannot be experienced and understood in itself, as a thing or even as a story, but may only be uncovered through the processes of narrative, which, famously, Jameson (1981) takes to be "the central function

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or *instance* of the human mind." (p.13) Drawing upon Louis Althusser's conception, itself derived from Spinoza, of the "absent cause," Jameson proposes that

> history is *not* a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and that our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious. (p. 35)

Working through the aforementioned phases or horizons of textual interpretation, from the timely symbolic act to the broader social system and on to the vast spatiotemporal territory of human history, the hermeneutic process of *The Political Unconscious* arrives at "a space in which History itself becomes the ultimate ground as well as the untranscendable limit of our understanding in general and our textual interpretations in particular." (Jameson, 1981, p. 100)

Moreover, for a properly Marxist analytic, history in this sense must be understood as "the experience of Necessity," no longer in terms of its content (as in an older discourse of "needs," such as food and shelter) but as "the inexorable *form* of events." As Jameson notoriously puts it, "History is what hurts, it is what refuses desire and sets inexorable limits to individual as well as collective praxis, which its 'ruses' turn into grisly and ironic reversals of their overt intentions." (Jameson, 1981, p. 102). Understood in this way, then, the methodological and hermeneutic program of *The Political Unconscious* to uncover the historical dimension that had been obscured or repressed in cultural texts themselves, as in other interpretive practices, may be seen as a critique of ideology or false consciousness, however much Jameson, perhaps rightly, wishes to avoid the implications of these older slogans in other respects. In disclosing the narrative of history, as Jameson will make clear in the study's conclusion, the critic may also orient his or her vision toward a utopian alternative.

In that concluding chapter, revealingly titled "The Dialectic of Utopia and Ideology," Jameson (1981) discusses how this innovative conception of a political unconscious is also very much a part of the "classical" Marxian *Ideologiekritik* and points toward a more comprehensive sense of class consciousness than prior iterations of Marxist theory might have envisioned. Jameson's position expands and refines this project. He proposes that "*all* class consciousness," including that of the ruling class, is fundamentally utopian, insofar as it expresses "the unity of a collectivity" in an allegorical or figurative manner. (pp. 289, 291). It becomes clear that even the reactionary or conservative political positions of a class (and, of course, of the narratives produced by members of that class) maintain a utopian kernel that cannot be ignored by a properly dialectical criticism.

Opposing the insufferable, if often understandable, moralizing to be found in so many radical philosophies and methods, Jameson (1981) avers that "[s]uch a view dictates an enlarged perspective for any Marxist analysis of culture, which can no longer be content with its demystifying vocation to unmask and to demonstrate the ways in which a cultural artifact fulfills a specific ideological mission," but must seek "to project" a cultural object's "simultaneously Utopian power." (p. 291). Hence, he implies a "bad faith" on the part of Marxists or other critics who neglect that ultimate lesson of the dialectic, that is, the dialectical reversal, in which the negative and the positive may be combined in the unity of opposites. Arguably, Jameson's retreat here from the simplistic conception of "false consciousness" is itself an affirmation of a more complex, robust version of the same, since he is suggesting a kind of false consciousness on behalf of critics unable or unwilling to see the utopian elements of ideological forms. In apprehending the coexistence of both positive and negative, utopian and ideological, one also concedes that the work, as well as the interpreter, is situated within the nightmare of history. Jameson's

political unconscious may be seen as another means by which we orient ourselves within and attempt to map this totality.[9]

Marx's famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach – "the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it" – is a well-taken caveat to those who would rest easy in merely reading the present, without adequately striving to understand the past or to project alternative visions for the future. However, none knew better than Marx the value of critique, which necessarily involves analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. Indeed, even before his "Theses on Feuerbach" and decades before he refused to provide recipes for the cook-shops of the future, Marx explained to Arnold Ruge that

> "constructing the future and settling everything for all times are not our affair"; it is all the more clear what we have to accomplish at present: I am referring to *ruthless criticism* of all that exists, ruthless both in the sense of not being afraid of the results it arrives at and in the sense of being just as little afraid of conflict with the powers that be. (Tucker, 1978, p. 13)

Within the cultural sphere, broadly conceived, this "ruthless criticism" has been and is the ongoing project of Jameson's career.

Jameson's utopianism is directly tied to this literary critical project in what he referred to as the dialectic of utopia and ideology since any future-oriented utopian project must necessarily confront the mystified or reified social relations of the present. In the end, the old tension within Marxism between voluntarism and determinism, between the activity of the class struggle and the structural form of the mode of production, or perhaps more simply between politics and history, likely must remain in some sort of productive tension in the labors of the Marxist critic. Any attempt to formulate a radically different future must first and always come to terms with the scarcely representable system in which we find ourselves. Jameson summarizes the problem and its constantly evolving solution in *Valences of the Dialectic*, where he demonstrates the utopian impulse animating the critical endeavor itself:

> A Marxist politics is a Utopian project or program for transforming the world and replacing a capitalist mode of production with a radically different one. But it is also a conception of historical dynamics in which it is posited that the whole new world is also objectively in emergence all around us, without our necessarily at once perceiving it; so that alongside our conscious praxis and our strategies for producing change, we may also take a more receptive and interpretive stance in which, with the proper instruments and registering apparatus, we may detect the allegorical stirrings of a different state of things, the imperceptible and even immemorial ripenings of the seeds of time, the subliminal and subcutaneous eruptions of whole new forms of life and social relations. (Jameson, 2009, p. 416)

The project of dialectical criticism, therefore, involves the patient, meticulous, and attentive *reading* of the situation in which we find ourselves, but in this analytic and interpretive activity also lie the revolutionary forces of current and future struggles.

Cultural theory cannot replace revolutionary theorizing any more than cultural practices could replace revolutionary praxis. *The Political Unconscious* does not conflate interpreting the world with changing it. Just as theory cannot replace practice, reading cannot replace action. But it is also true that practice worthy of the effort cannot dispense with theory entirely, and direct action cannot happen outside of a context which itself must be understood in order for such action to be effective. Thus, bearing in mind the lessons of Marx and Marxism, and in keeping with the concept of the political unconscious, we may recast the emphasis of the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach thusly: The philosophers

9. See e.g., my "On Always Historicizing: The Dialect of Utopia and Ideology Today," *PMLA* 137.3 (May 2022), forthcoming.

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have heretofore *only* interpreted the world; the point, however, is to change it. That is, we must be able to interpret the world *in order to* change it. Hermeneutics thus always involves politics, and vice versa.

The political unconscious thus brings into view another thesis: If we have any hope of changing the world for the better, we must be able to finds new and better ways of interpreting it.

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