

# Science and Struggle: On the Althusserianism of Mauricio Malamud

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**Abstract:** A certain tension cuts across Althusser's many theoretical experiments: a tension — perhaps even a “paradox”— between science and struggle. In a conjuncture in which a self-defeating skepticism short-circuits the conjunction between science and struggle, it seems vital to reformulate this problem anew. By turning to Althusser's formulation of the “revolutionary” materialist dialectic in the so-called “theoretician” texts this essay elaborates a re-formulation of the supposed aporias of this paradox and finds a possible way out of it. Science and struggle are disarticulated insofar as no other practice produces the effect of their conjunction. That is the task of the revolutionary materialist dialectic. Having defined “Althusserianism” as the philosophical practice which continuously produces combinations, conjunctions, or encounters between science and struggle, this essay then turns to the theoretical and political practice of Mauricio Malamud. The variations in the “Althusserianism” of this communist philosopher and militant further displace the apparent paradoxical character of the relation between science and struggle. In the political and theoretical practice of Malamud, this essay encounters both the necessity of theory as “a guide for action” and affirms neither “a scientism without politics” nor a “politicism without science.”

**Keywords:** Malamud, Althusser, scientific practice, political practice, guerilla warfare.

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## Introduction: philosophy, politics, science

One of the most persistent problems that cuts across Althusser's many theoretical experiments — and also perhaps across “Althusserianism” more broadly — can be traced to the embattled relation between science and struggle. For Althusser, this problem is defined within the philosophical field and therefore ultimately concerns

the relations between three distinct practices: philosophical, political and scientific. To put it very quickly, this problem traces a jagged line of continuity from the “theoreticism” of *For Marx* and *Reading Capital* to the “aleatory materialism” of the late Althusser, passing through the redefinition of philosophy as “class struggle in theory.” As William S. Lewis has argued, Althusser’s redefinitions of marxist philosophy as the “Theory of theoretical practice,” “class struggle in theory” and “aleatory materialism” are nonetheless consistent with a certain “scientism.” This means that despite the differences between these theoretical experiments Althusser still “consistently argued that science is the only human theoretical practice that allows us to reliably understand socio-political-economic structures such that we might intentionally assist in their transformation.”<sup>1</sup> But scientific practice cannot transform social relations on its own— it needs to ally itself with political practice. The theoretical formulation of this conjunction is taken up by the materialist dialectic (as defined by Althusser). Therefore, Althusserianism as a practice of philosophical intervention traces lines of demarcations while articulating— which is to say, while producing combinations, conjunctions, or encounters of—science and struggle.<sup>2</sup> This is the hypothesis that will be tested in what follows by reconstructing certain variations of Althusserianism in the writings of Argentine communist philosopher Mauricio Malamud.

To anglophone readers, the proper name Mauricio Malamud will most likely appear as a reference to the letters he exchanged with Althusser in the 1980’s and which have since been published in *Philosophy of the encounter: Later writings 1978-87*. There, the reader will find that Malamud was the proximate cause of the enduring encounter between Althusser and the Mexican philosopher Fernanda Navarro. She wrote the following dedicatory epigraph in the series of interviews which have since become a signature of aleatory materialism: “[f]or Mauricio Malamud, to whom I

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1 See Lewis, “Althusser’s Scientism and Aleatory Materialism,” 5-8.

2 Commenting on the (supposed) Althusserian “Kehre” (as Antonio Negri has christened it) of the “materialism of the encounter,” G.M. Goshgarian writes that “the founding concept of his late philosophy, the encounter, appears throughout his work, if under various aliases: ‘accident’, ‘accidental node’, ‘accumulation’, ‘combination’, ‘combination of circumstances’ [*concoirs*], ‘conjunction’, ‘conjuncture’, ‘entanglement’ [*enchevêtrement*], and even ‘encounter’.” See Althusser, *How to be a marxist in philosophy*, xii.

owe my ‘Epicurean’ encounter with Louis Althusser—the man, his life, and his work.”<sup>3</sup> But what of the “man,” “life” and “work” of Mauricio Malamud?

In a brief editorial footnote in the series of published letters that precede Navarro’s interview with Althusser in *Philosophy of the Encounter* one finds the following portrait of the communist philosopher:

A professor of philosophy from Argentina and a Communist militant, Mauricio Malamud was persecuted by the Argentinian military junta and, in 1975, sent to prison for eighteen months. He was subsequently forced into exile in Mexico, where he taught in the Philosophy Department of the University of Michoacán de San Nicolas de Hidalgo. After a long depression, he returned to Argentina in 1987. He died in Mexico in September 1989. Malamud was a friend of Althusser’s, and one of the earliest and most enthusiastic proponents of his work in Argentina. Apart from a handful of essays, he left no written work.<sup>4</sup>

Most (if not all) of these writings—dated between 1969 and 1987—have been recently edited and published in Spanish with a beautiful preface by Fernanda Navarro.<sup>5</sup> As Marcelo Starcenbaum’s introduction to Malamud’s *Escritos* makes clear, these writings trace the life and work of a man whose practice was both that of a communist and a philosopher and that he “paid the price” for such articulation. He paid the price of a conjunction of theoretical practice and political practice with imprisonment, exile and with the life of his two daughters, Marina and Liliana, —communist militants both killed in combat or “disappeared” by the Argentine civic-clerical-military dictatorship in the revolutionary conjuncture opened up in the wake of the Sino-Soviet split and the Cuban Revolution.<sup>6</sup>

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3 Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter*, p. 251.

4 Ibid, 247.

5 Malamud, *Escritos*.

6 Ibid, 17.

Malamud was a communist philosopher who produced effects both in political practice and scientific practice. This articulation is what constitutes his “Althusserianism.” He produced effects internal to the Argentine Communist Party (PCA), from which he was ousted, as well as within manifold revolutionary groups (such as the FAL-Che commando) that both defended and carried out a strategy of guerrilla warfare in Argentina.<sup>7</sup> Malamud also produced effects in scientific practice—especially in debates surrounding the role of revolutionary politics and scientific development in “underdeveloped” countries. I will return to both of these interventions shortly by reconstructing the relevant arguments in Malamud’s *Escritos*.

Details of Malamud’s life—accounts of his biography beyond the sketches just provided—are not to be found in what follows.<sup>8</sup> It is known that he got a wage by selling water heaters in Buenos Aires, was an avid reader of Althusser, and that he situated his political practice in several *Guevarist* formations that organized and waged guerrilla warfare with the objective of conquering state power and potentializing a socialist transformation of capitalist social relations.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps there is an immeasurable void between the times Malamud struggled in and those that the reader finds itself today. But as with any void, this distance might also be a space of encounter, compositions, and

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7 The members of the Che commando within the the FAL (*Fuerzas Argentinas de Liberación*)—which included Malamud and his daughters— would later become part of the PRT-ERP (*Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores- Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo*). See Malamud, *Escritos*, 21; Starcenbaum “Ciencia y violencia.”

8 Marcelo Starcenbaum provides some relevant biographical details of Malamud’s life in *Escritos*, “Estudio preliminar,” 17-30. See also an 1979 interview with Malamud on his life (Ibid, 206-215). It is worth noting that Malamud encountered the work of Althusser through Saúl Karsz — who ended up in Paris and worked with Althusser after swerving away from a prospective thesis on Hegel that was to be directed by Jean Hyppolite. Already in the early 1970’s, Karsz had written one of only a handful of books reconstructing Althusser’s philosophy (*Théorie et Politique: Louis Althusser*) and had also published the edited volume *Lectura de Althusser*, which collected several texts of the early reception of Althusser, including a Spanish translation Badiou’s essay “The recommencement of dialectical materialism” and Rancière’s first critical essay which would eventually become *Althusser’s Lesson* (see Rancière, “Appendix,” in *Althusser’s lesson*). For an overview of the reception of Althusser in Argentina (and in Latin America more broadly) see: Popovitch *In the shadow of Althusser*; Rodríguez Arriagada, M., and Marcelo Starcenbaum, eds. *Lecturas de Althusser en América Latina*; and Starcenbaum *Itinerarios de Althusser en Argentina: marxismo, comunismo, psicoanálisis (1965-1976)*.”

9 See Abraham, “Filósofos argentinos: acerca del profesor N.E. Perdomo.”

conjunctions. As both contemporary physical cosmology and a certain Epicurean-Lucretian sensible science demonstrate (in their irreducibly different ways): it is in the vacuum or in the void that a quantum fluctuation or a *clinamen* (swerve) necessarily gave rise to the universe.

Given this, it should be nonetheless clarified that what follows is not simply an exegetical exercise—a mere repetition of the words of a master—nor a nostalgic reconstruction of a forgotten past. Rather, in this disjointed conjuncture in which a global pandemic and the intensifying effects of global climate change are faced with a self-defeating skepticism towards scientific practices, it is vital to show points of articulation between science and struggle. What makes this variety of skepticism “self-defeating” is that it short-circuits the circulation between theoretical and political practice. So in what follows, in contrast to this position, the problem is undertaken in a certain “detour” through several “Althusserian experiments.” Perhaps through these experiments—both in their precise formulations as well as in their errors—we might find some elements that will help clarify the disarticulations and missed encounters between scientific, political, and philosophical practice in the present conjuncture. But before I get to Malamud’s writings, let me first briefly clarify what I mean by “Althusserianism.”

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It is perhaps Gregory Elliott who most clearly shows the *differentia specifica* of “Althusserianism” in relation to the rest of so called Western Marxism’s conception of the sciences. In *Althusser: The Detour of Theory*, Elliott argues that while Althusserianism “was not unique in campaigning against the misconception of science majoritarian in Western Marxism, it was distinguished by its particular anti-empiricist conception of the sciences.”<sup>10</sup> The “epistemological anti-empiricism” that defined the specificity of Althusser’s formulation of marxist philosophy inherits both the French tradition of rationalist epistemologists like Bachelard and Canguilhem and the rationalism of Bento Spinoza.<sup>11</sup>

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10 Elliott, *Althusser*, 36-7.

11 Ibid, 38.

Rationalism here entails a primacy of theory over experience. That is, the primacy of theory over the vague and random images of the imagination that constitute lived experience and which have historically functioned both as epistemological obstacles for the development of the sciences as well as a roadblock to the political struggles that transform social relations. The concept of *ideology*, in this sense, functions as the concept which names the constant obstacles faced both by emancipatory political struggles and scientific advancements. In this sense, science and class struggle both appear as practices that pierce through or rupture into the revolutionary or the new by ripping itself from the ideological. Science and struggle break through the obstacles posed by ideology, which necessarily functions to reproduce already existing social relations and forms of consciousness.<sup>12</sup>

But the formulation of this conjunction of science and struggle in the Althusserian concept of ideology is not without problems. In an excellent historical account of the spinozist inheritance of 20th century French philosophy — from Cavallès, Desanti, and Alquié to Deleuze and Althusser— Knox Peden argues that a certain tension or “paradox” haunts Althusser’s philosophical articulation of science and struggle. Peden formulates what he calls the “core paradox of Althusserianism”—which he argues is an effect of a certain spinozist-rationalist tendency—in the following manner: “the privileging of true knowledge above all...results in a corresponding diminution in the capacity to intervene in the world through the medium of confident political action.”<sup>13</sup>

But is this necessarily the case for “Althusserianism” as such? Is there, necessarily, an inversely proportional relation between the effectivity of true knowledge and the effectivity of political action? (That is, an inverse relation between the effectivity of science and struggle) This problem calls for a brief reconstruction of Althusser’s own definitions of the relation between politics, science and philosophy.

First, I will focus on briefly reconstructing Althusser’s definitions of these relations in the “theoreticist” texts of *For Marx* and *Reading Capital* to then move on to Malamud’s own transformation of these texts (sent to

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12 For a more extended account of this conception of “ideology” see Pfeifer, “On Althusser on Science, Ideology, and the New, or Why We Should Continue to Read Reading Capital.”

13 Peden, *Spinoza contra phenomenology*, 142.

him in their French editions by his friend and comrade Saúl Karsz<sup>14</sup>) in his own singular situation. From there, I will then provide a sketch of how he works through this apparent paradox.

### **A revolutionary materialist dialectic: Theoretical practice and political practice in *For Marx* and *Reading Capital***

In the 1965 introduction to *For Marx* Althusser highlights that the conjuncture in which these philosophical interventions take place involves taking a position on the (now still dominant) claim that philosophy faces its “end.” In this conjuncture, Althusser argues, there appears to be at least two possible positions to take. Either a philosopher accepts (1) scientific *positivism* which claims that there is no longer a role to be played by philosophy whatsoever and one must exclusively turn to science and “the study of reality itself” (i.e. from now on it is the study of “positive things” all the way down) or (2) the practical-*political* realization of philosophy which defends a “philosophy in action” that ends up “making philosophy the religion of their action.”<sup>15</sup> More importantly for the communist philosopher, these two positions —these two “ends of philosophy”— might be read in Marx’s very own corpus: in the positivism of *The German Ideology* and in the politicist reading of the 11th thesis on Feuerbach (“philosophers have only interpreted the world, the point is to change it.”) But neither of these two lines are the correct way “out” of philosophy. Althusser thus swerves from both a *positivist* and a *politicist* death of philosophy.

Marx, Althusser argues, does not actually defend a *non* philosophical death of philosophy. Rather, at stake is a third maneuver: a “*philosophical* death of philosophy.”<sup>16</sup> Taking a position at a distance from this specular game of doubles, Althusser pivots towards a reconstruction of Marx’s “theoretical revolution” — the continuing epistemological break inaugurated in the wake of these two aforementioned texts— which founds a new science of history (historical materialism) and a new philosophical support for and theory of that science (dialectical

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14 Malamud, *Escritos*, 210-1.

15 Althusser, *For Marx*, 28.

16 Althusser, *For Marx*, 28-29.

materialism). Here we find one way to formulate the problem of the definition of political, philosophical and scientific practice and their relations. These relations can be derived from the distinction Althusser establishes between dialectical materialism (DM) and historical materialism (HM) in both *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*.

The scientific study of the *effective* articulation of social practices in a social formation is the object of study of historical materialism. The “unity” of these practices is differentially articulated by what Althusser calls the complex social whole. It is in this sense that Marx breaks with the metaphysics of the essence of the Human, teleological conceptions of history and—as Badiou writes in one of the first essays that situate Althusser’s work—therefore “stands *elsewhere*” with respect to his ideological precursors (both in the history of philosophy and political economy).<sup>17</sup> He stands in the “continent of history.” Similarly to Galileo, who opened the field of astronomy, or Thales that of mathematics, Marx opened the field of history to scientific study.<sup>18</sup> The effective determinations of the social are to be understood through its *practices*: political, economic, ideological and scientific.<sup>19</sup>

But while the concept of practice can be traced in the pages of *Capital* it nonetheless remains undeveloped by the communist militant-philosopher-scientist. This concept in Marx’s works remains in a “practical state.” And there is not yet a theory of the method at work, that is, a theory of theoretical practice. It is in this sense that for Althusser DM works as a support for HM. Furthermore, this necessarily means that DM must *follow* HM insofar as it develops and clarifies concepts not developed nor clarified in *Capital*. That is, insofar as it develops a theory of theoretical practice of Marx’s scientific work. This thesis— which we can call Althusser’s *reprise thesis* — concerns not only the particular relation between HM and DM but entails a more general relation between science and philosophy as such. While I cannot follow this through here, it seems that the serial character of the reprise thesis puts a certain tension on the

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17 Badiou, “The (Re)commencement,” 139.

18 Where by “scientific” Althusser does not mean what is often meant by it in empiricist epistemologies (e.g. Hempel), namely: collecting a “relevant variety of evidence” and describing it “scientifically,” that is, by “extracting” from the data its essence, as if it was immediately given in the “data.”

19 Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 59-60.



conception that thinks of the uneven and plural temporalities of theoretical practices. For Althusser, in the singular histories of these practices, a transformation in scientific rationality is *followed* by a transformation in philosophical rationality.<sup>20</sup> In this way, as Althusser often argues, Plato follows Thales, Descartes follows Galileo, and Kant follows Newton. Philosophy plays the role as a *reprise* of an *event* in the scientific field.<sup>21</sup> It is in this sense that philosophy might function either as an ideological obstacle or as a catalyzer for and support of scientific practice.

Althusser will also extend the *reprise thesis* to political practice as well. To put it very briefly: tracing the singular histories of these practices, it is possible to schematize philosophical reprises both in relation to both scientific events as well as to political events.<sup>22</sup> But at this moment — deep in the “theoreticism” of *For Marx* and *Reading Capital* — Althusser appears to bracket the relation between philosophical practice and political practice and instead seems to place a stronger emphasis on the philosophical-scientific practice relation. But is this the case? How does he define the key concept of DM — that of *practice* — as well as the singularity of each of the distinct practices and their combinations or conjunctions?

In these texts, Althusser defines “*practice in general*” as “any process of *transformation* of a determinate given raw material into a determinate *product*, a transformation effected by a determinate human labor, using determinate means (of ‘production’).”<sup>23</sup> The primacy of practice and their

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20 On the concept of plural temporality in Louis Althusser see Morfino, “On non-contemporaneity: Marx, Bloch, Althusser” in *The Government of Time*, 138-147.

21 Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 340-1. This schematic account can be found throughout Althusser’s writings. For example, in the 1967 course for scientists (Althusser, *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of Scientists*, 10, 182), as well as in *How to be a marxist in philosophy*, 87. A detailed investigation of Althusser’s use of this schema is beyond the scope of this essay.

22 Althusser, *On the reproduction of capitalism*, 15. Althusser writes: “We observe, perhaps to our surprise, that all great transformations in philosophy intervene at moments in history *either* when noteworthy modifications occur in class relations and the state *or* when major events [événements] occur in the history of the sciences: with the additional stipulation that the noteworthy modifications in the class struggle and the major events [événements] in the history of the sciences appear, most of the time, to reinforce each other in their encounter in order to produce prominent effects in Philosophy.” Immediately after this quote Althusser provides a schematic table of the relation between “political” and “scientific” events followed by the names of philosophical “authors.”

23 Althusser, “On the materialist dialectic” in *For Marx*, 166.

singular forms of appropriation-transformation.<sup>24</sup> In this general definition, Althusser argues, practice is not determined neither by its beginning point nor by its end (that is, by the raw material it works on nor by the product it produces), rather, it is defined by “the movement of *the labour of transformation* itself.”<sup>25</sup> In general, therefore, all practice is transformative. But, as he will also argue in *Reading Capital*, there is no such thing as “general practice, rather, there are only distinct practices,” each of them singular in their transformative effects.<sup>26</sup>

These distinct practices, as just mentioned, nonetheless belong to a complex totality, and their singular character is articulated by a complex unity which Althusser terms “social practice.”<sup>27</sup> The invariant set of social practices are, in the last instance, determined by “determinate relations of production,” or the *economic practice*.<sup>28</sup> Althusser then goes on to define the other relevant levels of social practice: political practice, ideological practice, and theoretical practice. Each of these produce different transformative effects: *political practice* transforms social relations into new social relations, and *ideological practice* transforms forms of consciousness (e.g. religious, political, moral, legal,...) into new forms of consciousness. It is *theoretical practice* that takes the primary role in *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*.<sup>29</sup> What is the transformation that theoretical practices produce?

Following the general theory of practice, Althusser defines theoretical practice as that which “works on a raw material (representations, concepts, facts) which it is given by other practices, whether ‘empirical’, ‘technical’ or ‘ideological’.”<sup>30</sup> Both the specific practices of “science” and “philosophy” fall under this general definition of theoretical practice: “[i]n its most general form theoretical practices does not only include *scientific* theoretical practice, but also pre-scientific

24 Romé, “For Theoreticism: Theoretical Practice and Philosophical Unconscious,” 365-7.

25 Ibid, 166.

26 Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 59-60; *For Marx*, 167. For an excellent overview of Althusser’s concept of practice see Karsz, *Lectura de Althusser*, 35-46.

27 Althusser, “On the materialist dialectic” in *For Marx*, 167.

28 Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 60.

29 It is worth noting that while Althusser presents this set of practices as a set of invariants (in relation to which variations or differences can be made) it is nonetheless an open set, whereby other practices can be added or subtracted. Secondly, Althusser also displaces any facile opposition between “theory and practice.” Instead, he distinguishes the practices in their relative degree of independence and relative autonomy from economic practice.

30 Althusser, “On the materialist dialectic” in *For Marx*, 167.

theoretical practice, that is ‘ideological’ theoretical practice (the forms of ‘knowledge’ that make up the prehistory of a science, and their ‘philosophies’).”<sup>31</sup> In other words, there is a line of demarcation that is being traced here between an *ideological* and a *scientific* theoretical practice. A demarcation between the theoretical practice before and after, respectively, the Bachelardian “epistemological break.” This means that scientific theoretical practice is always haunted by ideological survivals. “[T]here is no *pure* theoretical practice;” theoretical practice can only continuously struggle against—and break with — the persistent presence of an ideological past insofar as “it continually frees itself from the ideology which occupies it, haunts it, or lies in wait for it.” It is in this sense, as mentioned earlier, that the epistemological break must be a continuous and constant struggle within ideology. Althusser will assign the specific role of intervention in this terrain — in the continuing struggle between ideology and science— *within* theoretical practice itself, or what he calls Theory, the “Theory of theoretical practice,” or dialectical materialism.<sup>32</sup>

Herein lies the hierarchical definition of marxist philosophy (dialectical materialism) that Althusser will later recall as a “theoreticist” error.<sup>33</sup> Theory seemingly stands above all other practices—including scientific practice— insofar as it awards itself the power to demarcate the scientific and the ideological. Theory stands above ‘theory’ (in inverted commas), or the *theoretical system* of a theoretical practice, which is to say, the real science (e.g. the concepts that make up physics: gravitational attraction, wave mechanics, etc.), insofar as it does not reflect upon “the complex unity of its concepts,” nor on its own theoretical practice. In other words, Theory will step in to aid scientific practice (here read as ‘theory’) to reflect on its own theoretical practice. Not just in the case of physics, etc., but, most importantly, in the case of HM (through DM). Theory provides a given ‘theory’ with a support for its system of concepts, helping it tease out the ideological survivals that continue to haunt and block the asymptotic approximation between its *object of study* and *the real object*.

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31 Ibid, 167.

32 Ibid, 170-1.

33 Althusser, *Essays in self-criticism*, 68.

And yet Althusser argues that it is *not* the case that Theory is *needed* to get science going, nor is it necessary to guarantee the knowledge of these scientific practices:

[A] real theoretical practice (one that produces knowledge) may be well able to do its duty as theory without necessarily feeling the need to make the Theory of its own practice, of its process. This is the case with the majority of sciences; they do have a 'theory' (their corpus of concepts), but it is not a Theory of their theoretical practice.<sup>34</sup>

In other words, science does not need epistemology to produce knowledge of its object. In this sense, Althusser is making a strictly spinozist point. Epistemology necessarily must come *after* science. It is impossible to know *before* knowing. And yet, Althusser seems to raise Theory, the materialist dialectic, to the level of a science given that it "itself is elaborated on the basis of the Theory of existing theoretical practices (of the sciences), which transforms into 'knowledges' (scientific truths) the ideological product of existing 'empirical' practices (the concrete activity of men)."<sup>35</sup> Dialectical materialism becomes *the science of science*. While Althusser places dialectical materialism above all practices, its power is simultaneously delimited. The elements of the subsequent self-criticism can already be found in these pages of "On the materialist dialectic."

It is also a certain Spinozism that comes to delimit Althusser's "scientific" dialectical materialism. For Spinoza, epistemology cannot be a part of science and science does not even need epistemology to get going.<sup>36</sup> In this essay, Althusser makes a similar point about Marx: this philosopher-scientist-militant did not need to write a "dialectics" *before* he could write *Capital*. This means that "the Theory of his own theoretical practice was not *essential* to the development of his theory."<sup>37</sup>

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34 Ibid, 174.

35 Ibid, 168.

36 For a more rigorous formulation of this problem in Spinoza see Matheron, "Idea, Idea of the Idea and Certainty in the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* and the *Ethics*," in *Politics, Ontology and Knowledge in Spinoza*, 5-6.

37 Althusser, "On the materialist dialectic" in *For Marx*, 174.

So why Theory? And, more importantly, how does it function in relation to other scientific practices? By providing the tools to tease out the ideological concepts that block the asymptotic approximation of the object of study to the real object.

Having clarified the relation between philosophical practice and scientific practice: how does Theory function in relation to political practice? Are any indications of a response to this question to be found in this so called “theoreticist” text? After the aforementioned account of “Marxist theoretical practice” (as Althusser names this section), he goes on to give an account of “Marxist political practice.”<sup>38</sup>

In this subsequent section, Althusser also argues that political practice does not necessarily need Theory to get moving: “political *practice*, which has its defined raw materials, its tools and its method, which, like any other practice, also produces transformations (which are not *knowledges*, but a revolution in *social relations*), this practice *also* may exist and develop, at least for a time, without feeling the need to make the theory of its own practice, the Theory of its ‘method.’”<sup>39</sup> As such, Althusser affirms once again, neither scientific nor political practice — nor any other practice for that matter — necessarily needs Theory to get moving. However, Althusser points out, there comes a moment when these practices— if they are to continue to produce knowledge (in the case of scientific practice) or new social relations (in the case of political practice in struggle)— are *forced* to elaborate a theory of their practice, are forced to produce something like a “method.” There comes a point where these practices need Theory in order to help them swerve from the ideological obstacles that perpetually haunt and block their development. The example of political practice that Althusser is thinking of here is that of Lenin and the 1917 Bolshevik revolution.

But neither Lenin nor Marx were able to “constitute the theory of its own method, in the general sense of Theory.” Neither of them developed the Theory, or materialist dialectic, which is nonetheless active in their works in a “practical state.” So the task of the materialist dialectic is first to distinguish between the different practices (as a theory of

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38 Ibid, 175.

39 Ibid, 176.

practice in general) and then to elaborate the theory of each of those singular practices in question.

So Althusser is already practicing Theory in these pages by elaborating the distinction between “Marxist theoretical practice” and “Marxist political practice” and defining their singularity. But there is also a third element of the materialist dialectic. If it is to become a *revolutionary* dialectic, DM must not just distinguish their practices and define their singularity, but it must also theorize their conjunction: it must theorize the articulation of science and struggle.

In his discussion of Lenin’s political practice, Althusser distinguishes the differing temporalities between his practice as a thinker of the conjuncture, of a “current situation,” and that of the practice of historians, or “scientists, who necessarily reflect on necessity’s *fait accompli*,” as if the theoretical practice of a classical historian who analyses the past could be confused with the practice of a revolutionary leader who reflects on the present in the present.”<sup>40</sup> Althusser points to the temporal dislocation between the political practice of *struggling* in the conjuncture and the scientific practice of *studying* a given social formation. Once again, the temporal dislocation is a crucial part of the problem of this conjunction (as we saw earlier on with Althusser’s *reprise thesis*).

Althusser writes: “[t]o distinguish between these two practices is the heart of the question.”<sup>41</sup> This is the *heart of the question* for marxist philosophy concerning the formulation of the specificity of the marxist dialectic. He takes another step which attempts to resolve this temporal dislocation between the scientific practice *fait accompli* and the political practice in the conjuncture.

If it is not to be merely an aid to the sciences, but also an aid to the class struggle, Althusser argues, the communist philosopher must “make the dialectic into a revolutionary method, rather than the theory of the *fait accompli*.”<sup>42</sup> The dialectic, therefore, cannot be one-sidedly supporting the theoretical practice which produces knowledge *fait accompli*, but it must also articulate this study with struggle in the conjuncture. That is the task

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40 Ibid 178-179. For a more focused study of Althusser’s reading of Lenin during this period see Montag, “Althusser’s Lenin,” 53.

41 Ibid, 179.

42 Ibid, 180.

of the *revolutionary* materialist dialectic that Althusser experiments with in these pages of “On the materialist dialectic.”

Dialectical materialism emerges here as a Theory or method that articulates science and struggle. So the third element of the Althusserian formulation of marxist philosophy: it is a Theory that theorizes the conflicted conjunction of the plural temporalities of the production of knowledge *post festum* (or *fait accompli*) and that of class struggle *in the conjuncture*. This is the task of marxist philosophy as a theory of the conjunction, or of the encounter, between science and struggle.

So despite claims to the contrary (perhaps even Althusser’s very own claims), the privilege given to theoretical practice in these texts is only a privilege that is afforded insofar as it is capable of providing a Theory of the singularity and the conjunction of practices in the conjecture. That is what defines the “revolutionary dialectic.” This much is clear from the definitions of these practices: while scientific practice can produce *knowledge* of social transformations, it is only political practice whose transformative effects struggle to actually produce new *social relations*. The tension between how to transform what is known and know what is transformed is resolved in the conjunction of scientific and political practice as articulated by Theory. The elements of Althusser’s self-criticism are already found in the texts he later would critique. The persistence of these elements means that they constitute the enduring contours of the Althusserian problematic.

As has been broadly argued, Althusser criticizes this “theoreticist” definition of philosophy and redefines marxist philosophy as “class struggle in theory.” That is, as a practice which states *theses* — states its *position*— by tracing lines of demarcation with respect to other positions in order to clarify the enemy, as well as to clarify where potential alliances might lie. These demarcations and theses produce effects in the field of science *and* in the field of politics. Marxist philosophy, therefore, is to function as a kind *relay* or *conveyor belt* between political practice and scientific practice (a relation that is today being short-circuited by a self-defeating skepticism). Furthermore, by stating philosophical theses, philosophical practice can either: (1) serve the political interests of the bourgeoisie, or (2) serve the political interests of the proletariat. Similarly, by stating philosophical theses, philosophical practice can either: (1)

“serve” or “help” the sciences (2) or it can “wipe out” its advances as well as “exploit” them.

To provide a concrete example: this philosophical practice can be situated within mass political organizations but also within educational institutions. Althusser’s philosophy course for scientists is an attempt of forging such an alliance between marxist philosophy and other theoretical practices. And as Althusser makes clear in another programmatic text of that same period, philosophy becomes ever more important with the development of the productive forces that muddle the relationship between scientific practice and technical practices, on the one hand, and political and economic practices on the other.<sup>43</sup> The continued relevance of marxist philosophy therefore continues to be its capacity to provide a theory of the singularity and articulation of these distinct practices in order to provide a space for encounters that can produce revolutionary effects in both knowledge and in social relations.

Althusser’s self-criticism of “theoreticism” in the *Essays in Self-criticism* and the re-definition of philosophy already at work in the 1967 “Philosophy course for scientists” or the 1965 programmatic text “Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation” still occupy the terrain of the embattled relation between science and struggle as we just read in *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*. What changes is the redefinition of philosophy in relation to political and scientific practice. Either way, both as the “Theory of theoretical practice” or “class struggle in theory” marxist philosophical practice produces effects both in the field of scientific practice and in the field of political practice and theorizes their conjunction.<sup>44</sup> Science *and* struggle.

To return to the so-called “paradox of Althusserianism”: it turns out that the effectivity of knowledge is inversely proportional to the effectivity of political action *only if* no other practice articulates these two

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43 Althusser, *El lugar de la filosofía en la enseñanza*, 19. This text was published in 1967 in a magazine of the Cuban Communist Party titled *Teoría y Práctica*. Althusser writes: “Ella [la filosofía] es indispensable, más y más indispensable, en un siglo en que las fuerzas productivas y las diferentes ciencias conocen un desarrollo gigantesco y conocerán en el futuro un desarrollo todavía más complejo, al conocimiento objetivo de la totalidad de ese gigantesco proceso de la especificidad de sus diferentes partes, de sus articulaciones propias, de la relación existente entre todas esas prácticas teóricas y técnicas de una parte y las prácticas políticas y económicas de la otra.”

44 Althusser, “Reply to John Lewis,” *On Ideology*, 95. See Macherey, “Althusser and the concept of the spontaneous philosophy of scientists,” 14-15.



distinct practices (or, if it this relay is being short-circuited). But this is precisely the task of marxist philosophy as formulated by Althusser, as just sketched out. But if Althusser provides a theoretical articulation of the solution to this supposed paradox, it is because it is a Theory of practices (theoretical, political,...) that is already effective, in “its practical state,” for example, in the philosopher-militant-scientists embodied in the proper names of Marx and Lenin.<sup>45</sup>

Having sketched out the contours of what I am calling “Althusserianism,” and the relation it establishes between political, scientific and philosophical practices, let me now turn to Malamud’s own practice as a communist philosopher and how his variations on “Althusserianism” grapple with the apparent “paradox” between science and struggle. In the two sections that follow, I will first focus on a 1969 essay titled “Ciencia y violencia” written by Malamud and his son-in-law Luis María Aguirre under the pseudonyms of Camilo y Gervasio Zárate. This essay aims to clarify, through Althusser’s formulation Theory, different positions concerning the strategy of guerrilla warfare in Latin America. Secondly, I will move on two other texts more directly concerned with intervening in scientific practice itself, and its relation with political practice.

### **“A guide for action”: Theory and guerrilla revolutionary war**

January 1, 1959. The Cuban revolution and the Sino-Soviet split multiplied the emancipatory tendencies in Latin America beyond the bureaucratic politics of the rapidly de-Stalinizing Communist Party. On the lips of the socialists and communists in Argentina is also the name “Perón.” The debate on the character of the populist developmental nation-state cuts across all tendencies. As the theory of relativity cements itself as one of the pillars of modern physics, the late 60’s and early 1970’s become tendentially dominated more by cybernetics and biology than by

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<sup>45</sup> Althusser often comments on this tripartite articulation of the philosopher-scientist-militant in both Marx and Lenin. For examples, see “Reply to John Lewis,” “Lenin and philosophy” and “The historical task of marxist philosophy.” Perhaps a similar argument could be made of Althusser’s reading of Machiavelli.

the physics of Einstein, Schrödinger, Heisenberg or Bohr. The ruins left by the atomic bombs, the “military-industrial complex” of Cold War physics, and the technocratic capture of “science” by the welfare state, the socialist state, and the developmental state of the post-war boom (the so called “Golden age of capitalism”) seem to diminish the potential for science as a creative — or even “revolutionary”— force. “Science” no longer expresses the effervescent revolutionary potential of the early 20th century in which the mathematization of physics and the “new scientific spirit” (as Bachelard would call it) punctured through the old absolutes that still stabilized lived experience.<sup>46</sup>

In 1969, in the wake of '68 and months after the *Cordobazo*, Oscar Varsavsky, an argentine chemist and mathematician, publishes a popular pamphlet titled *Ciencia, Política y Cientificismo* (*Science, politics and scientism*). He characterizes the situation in the following way,

“in the past 35 years — a generation — we have not seen the appearance of any idea at the level of those given to us by Darwin, Einstein, Pasteur, Marx, Weber, Mendel, Pavlov, Lebesgue, Gödel, Freud, or the pleiad of quantum mechanics. Science in consumer society has produced many applications of great importance, such as computers and artificial organs, but not any of those moving ideas of yore....”<sup>47</sup>

Beyond the nostalgic tone, Varsavsky nonetheless correctly describes the scene: science appears far from its creative capacity and far from its revolutionary potential. “Science,” then, is confused with technology and governance (science as technocracy); science as a conservative force keeping everything in place. In other words, an ideological conception of science that confuses scientific practice with ideological practice. But it can be said that “Historical materialism” had also seemingly become ossified in Party manuals and subsumed by the administrative technicalities of the socialist state and its bureaucratic organs.

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46 Bachelard, *La formación del espíritu científico*, 9-10.

47 Varsavsky, *Ciencia*, 17.

It is in this situation that Malamud — following Althusser— reactivates the revolutionary potential of theory (read as science and philosophy) to clarify the strategy of guerrilla warfare in the singular Argentine situation. At stake is how to establish the scientificity of armed struggle in order to not merely “transplant” a Guevarist strategy to the south. At stake is a “return” to theory, and in particular, to the Althusserian formulation of the revolutionary materialist dialectic.<sup>48</sup>

Malamud established *zaratismo* as a tendency within the dissenting factions of the Argentine Communist Party (*Partido Comunista Argentino* or PCA) in the mid 1960s. Within this formation, Malamud and his son-in-law, Luis María Aguirre— writing under the pseudonyms of Camilo and Gervasio Zárate— published in 1969 an intervention in a Party publication titled “Ciencia y violencia” (“Science and violence”). They aim to recover Marx’s “scientific doctrine” against both pacifist opportunism and idealist universalism,

[I]t is precisely due to this theoretical gap that has contributed to a situation in which honest revolutionaries have fallen into voluntaristic approaches to armed struggle, that is, into dogmatic approaches that did not coincide with the determinations of reality. By replacing the scientific marxist analysis of every local situation by the copy or transfer of an adequate solution from some other country, from a given reality in another moment, each of these elaborations, though correct in their own cases, are converted a-scientifically into some kind of universally valid “model” (from another angle, we take Debray’s theoretical efforts to fall into a kind of idealist universalism)...Without the aid of Marx’s science, there is no guarantee of

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48 At the end of the essays the authors write: “En cuanto a los conceptos teóricos que instrumenta este análisis, están tomados de la obra del intelectual marxista Louis Althusser: *Lire Le Capital*, Ed. Maspero, París. *La filosofía como arma de la revolución*; Ed. Pasado y Presente, Cuaderno No 4, Bs. As.87. *La Revolución Teórica de Marx*; Ed. Siglo XXI, México.” See Malamud, *Escritos*, 87.

revolutionary war; the objective of these notes is to attempt to clarify the implications of this.<sup>49</sup>

*Zaratismo* therefore posits that the lacunae or gap left by a retreat of “theory” has left revolutionaries — such as Althusser’s student and theorist of *foquismo* Régis Debray<sup>50</sup> — to merely apply a general-universal model to singular situations. Instead, Aguirre and Malamud posit the need for a return to Marx’s science in order to understand the singular situations revolutionaries face. What is universally valid is the method or the Theory, not a ready-made *model* that can be applied everywhere independently of the situation. Therefore, *zaratismo* explicitly inherits the Althusserian problematic just sketched out above in search for a “guarantee” of the revolutionary character of armed struggle in Argentina.

But what is meant by “guarantee”? Is this not but another turn of the screw of the old bourgeois philosophy’s claim to know before it can know? A return to the old “question of right” of bourgeois philosophy?<sup>51</sup> There can be no such guarantees in a Spinozist formulation of the dialectic. At least not in the sense posited by idealist philosophy conditioned by the externality of bourgeois juridical ideology concerned with the “question of right.” Because, as argued before, there is no way to know *before* you know. Knowing cannot be guaranteed beforehand, before the theoretical practice that produces knowledge-effects. So what *zaratismo* means by “guarantee” is rather a rigorous accounting of the theoretical presuppositions that are functioning as a “guide to action” within socialist circles. For example: are militants using “borrowed concepts” that end up being too general-universal for the singular situations they face and are thus falling into the error of “universalist idealism”? If so, it is through the revolutionary materialist dialectic, or Theory, that revolutionaries can differentiate, and clarify these concepts and theories that are being

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49 Malamud, *Escritos*, p. 41.

50 Debray wrote from his prison cell in Bolivia that Althusser’s philosophy could be exploited to mean that “all we had to do to become good theoreticians was to be lazy bastards.” See Elliott, *Althusser*, 189-190. Could the aforementioned supposed “paradox” of Althusserianism not also be read in this manner?

51 On the question of the relation between the epistemological “guarantee” and bourgeois juridical ideology in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (e.g. the transcendental deduction of the categories) see Althusser, *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists*, 127-132.

deployed to justify guerrilla warfare as part of a broader communist strategy.

The only true universal is that which can be understood or be grasped in the singular situation. What is needed, the only way to find a “guarantee,” is to both articulate the relevant theories as well as to undertake “a concrete analysis of a concrete situation.” What is needed is marxist theory (understood by the authors to be the conjunction of HM and DM). This is the task that Malamud and Aguirre set out to do. In this intervention, the importance of the Althusserian account of Marx’s epistemological break and his “theoretical revolution” is clear. The *experience* of the Cuban revolution must be accounted for in its own singular development. A certain formulation of *foco* theory, as the theoretical articulation object of knowledge of such experience (or real object), therefore, corresponds to a singular situation which cannot simply be “applied” to the singular “Argentine situation” (nor to any other situation in Latin America for that matter).

But this is no mere affirmation of empiricism. Recuperating Althusser’s anti-empiricist reformulation of dialectical materialism, Malamud and Aguirre write:

The knowledge of the real does not therefore consist of (in marxist “epistemology”) neither an immediate fact, nor of something extracted-abstracted from the things themselves; it is also not an “application” of general concepts to particular cases. Synthesis in the materialist “dialectic” is achieved through the conjunction of two types of “elements”: the concepts provided by Theory and the information provided by the investigation of real existence, a kind of investigation that is itself directed by Theory which analyzes according to what it “sees,” and in its “seeing” conceptualizes “empirical” facts: concepts are the raw material that the theoretical instrument works on.<sup>52</sup>

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52 Malamud, “Ciencia y violencia” in *Escritos*, 52-3.

Theory as a “guide” in the investigation of singular situations with the concepts of singular theories (of war, of politics, etc). Therefore, Malamud and Aguirre argue, it is only through a return to the science of historical materialism and to Theory that revolutionaries can produce the conceptual tools needed to correctly assess the global, continental, and national conjunctures, as well as the respective positions of the imperialist bloc and the socialist bloc (on the one hand Soviet Russia, and on the other hand, China, Vietnam, Yugoslavia, and Algeria).

Note that *zaratismo*'s search for a scientific “guarantee” comes in the wake of the capture and murder of Che Guevara in the Bolivian chaco. For them, then, it seems that *El hombre nuevo* (the “New Man”) would be “scientific” or it would not be at all. The search for a “guarantee”, therefore, is that of a *guarantee without guarantee*, in other words, it is an *experiment* which is — as in any experiment — “guided” by conceptual tools but which cannot be determined beforehand. The clarification of these conceptual tools is one part of the functioning of the materialist dialectic in its support of political practice, and vice versa, in the transformation of the materialist dialectic into a *revolutionary* dialectic (and not merely a Theory of a science which works through the *fait accompli*). So it is not enough to merely clarify concepts. Wielding these concepts without using them by working to understand concrete situations is to fall into dogmatism. They write:

[T]he knowledge of theory does not produce knowledge of any given concrete reality, but only through its knowledge can we be sure of the method, or of the conceptual instrument that intervenes to elaborate the concrete knowledge of this or that social formation or historical situation....What is at work therefore as a “guide for action” in our polemics on revolutionary war?<sup>53</sup>

It is in the precise sense sketched out above that Malamud inherits “Althusserianism” as the conjunction of science and struggle: as the encounter between, on the one hand, the theoretical practice that always

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53 Ibid, 53.

comes *post festum* and produces its theory apparently *fait accompli* (in this case, of the Cuban revolution and the transformation of social relations produced in that case, as well as the theory of the transformative political practice, *foquismo*) and, on the other hand, of the political practice that intervenes in the conjuncture, in a singular situation (in “Argentina” or in “Cuba,” etc.). As such, Theory emerges here as a need to take stock of, to clarify, the theoretical concepts that are being used as raw materials or as instruments to understand the situation and to intervene politically. As Malamud and Aguirre write, there are general-universal-idealist concepts that are blocking an asymptotic approximation of the object of study to the real object. So in their turn to Theory, they swerve from these obstacles first by taking stock of the theoretical conceptualizations of war: from Clausewitz’ “general theory” of war, to Lenin’s and Mao’s theory of revolutionary war, Mao’s theory of protracted war, passing through Giap’s distinction of revolutionary war in the city and countryside, as well as Fidel’s *foco* theory of guerrilla warfare. But, once again, this a necessary but not sufficient condition for the materialist dialectic to become revolutionary. It is not enough to just take stock of these previous theoretical efforts.

It is also not enough to “copy” Lenin in 1917, Mao in 1930, or Fidel in 1958. It is not enough to know these revolutionary experiences and “copy” their theoretical products *post festum* to then apply them as “models” in another situation. What is valid about the marxist “method” is its capacity to confront and transform its raw materials (concepts and social relations in this case) and to produce new knowledge *and* new social relations.<sup>54</sup> It is this constant transformative *relaying* between these practices that constitutes the movement of the revolutionary materialist dialectic.

Theory therefore works as a “guide for action” not by turning marxist philosophy into a voluntarist “philosophy in action” but rather by articulating this constant transit between the object of knowledge and the real object, on the one hand, and between the production of knowledge and of new social relations on the other hand. This connective conveyor

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54 Ibid, 49-50.

belt — in which Theory works as a small engine— demonstrates that scientific practice is needed to know the transformations of social relations, but that political practice is needed to produce new social relations. Due to the uneven and asynchronous temporalities between science and struggle, it is not possible to find a beginning nor an end of this process. It is, in a strict sense, a process without telos. Yes, knowledge is needed in struggle, but struggle can take place without having a Theory of its concepts.

It is this formulation of marxist philosophy that clarifies Althusser's famous cited phrase of Lenin: "without revolutionary theory, no revolutionary practice." But, as both Althusser and Malamud make explicit, science and struggle get going without first developing a Theory. It is Theory that clarifies this conjunction which is already taking place in "a practical state" in both scientific and political revolutions alike. Malamud and Aguirre cite a passage by Che Guevara on the Cuban Revolution that illustrates this point precisely. Che writes,

This is a unique revolution [*revolución singular*], which for some does not fit in with one of the most orthodox premises of the revolutionary movement, expressed by Lenin: "Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement." It should be said that revolutionary theory, as the expression of a social truth, stands above any particular presentation of it. In other words, one can make a revolution if historical reality is interpreted correctly and if the forces involved are utilized correctly, even without knowing theory....

It is clear that if the leaders have adequate theoretical knowledge prior to taking action, many errors can be avoided, as long as the adopted theory corresponds to reality....

The principal actors of this revolution were not quite theoreticians.. But it cannot be said that they were ignorant of the various concepts of history, society, economics and



revolution being discussed in the world today. A profound knowledge of reality, a close relationship with the people, the firmness of the objective being sought, and the experience of revolutionary practice gave those leaders the opportunity to produce a revolutionary theory....

That is to say, and it is well to emphasize this once again: The laws of Marxism are present in the events of the Cuban Revolution, independently of whether its leaders profess or fully know those laws from a theoretical point of view.<sup>55</sup>

Science and struggle can both get going without first elaborating a Theory. But at some point a certain method is needed to help scientific and political practice swerve from ideological obstacles. If the *foco* — taken here to mean both theoretical and political practice— was able to develop and transform social relations in the island, or so claims Malamud, it is because it was able to understand and move the masses during its movement and not *post festum* (or *post mortem* we might say). And it was able to do so because of the revolutionary theory it developed in its on-going experiment, that is, due to the “profound knowledge acquired in relation to the idiosyncrasies of the population it ‘inserted’ itself within and the terrain in which it acted, as well as in relation to the characteristics of the imperialist enemy it faced at the time.”<sup>56</sup> Theory, then, figures here as a guarantee without guarantees, as a “guide for action” during an on-going process of experimentation. Theory, then, as an encounter of science and struggle that theorizes the swerve from the ideological obstacles that reproduce the same and block the new. It is in this sense, in the theoretical and political practice of *zaratismo*, that the supposed “paradox of Althusserianism” is displaced. It is a “paradox” in the sense that the “Twin Paradox” in the theory of relativity is paradoxical. That is, insofar as it is a misunderstanding of the postulates of relativity, or in this case, of the postulates of the revolutionary materialist dialectic.

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55 Ibid, 82-3. The title of the text is translated into English as “Notes for the Study of the Ideology of the Cuban Revolution.” See *Che Guevara Reader*, 121-123.

56 Ibid, 82.

By 1969, Malamud and his circle — composed not only of close family members but also other militants within the PCA — were expelled from the Party. The group recomposed itself with other formations inclined towards armed struggle. Soon after, an alliance with *Fuerzas Argentinas de Liberación* (FAL) forms the commando FAL-Che which undertakes several armed actions against military bases across Argentina in the early 70's. Science continues to be a battlefield for Malamud even in the midst of the intensification of military operations against the Onganía dictatorship.

### **Neither “a scientism without politics” nor a “politicism without science”**

In two essays published in 1970— titled “Ciencia y política” (“Science and politics”) <sup>57</sup> and “Ciencia, ideología y política” (“Science, ideology and politics”)— Malamud deploys the conceptual weapons of the Althusserian-Bachelardian problematic — now in the scientific field — to defend a certain tendency of “scientism.” The confrontation here is not with other fellow militants, but rather, with Oscar Varsavsky's aforementioned popular book titled *Ciencia, Política y Cientificismo*.<sup>58</sup>

For Varsavsky, the key problem that is opened by the Cuban revolution concerns the role played by scientists in “underdeveloped” and “colonized” Latin America. At stake is the relationship between science and politics. Although the pamphlet's particular focus is on characterizing Argentina's “scientific golden era” — periodized by the chemist to be between 1955 and 1966— he argues that this situation is generalizable throughout the continent. These two years mark a periodization that goes from the end of Perón's second term and the brutal events of the “La Noche de los Bastones Largos” (“The Night of the Long Batons”) in which Onganía's dictatorship sovereignly suspended the autonomous

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57 For an English translation of Malamud's 1970 essay “Science and politics” see this dossier of *Décalages*.

58 On Varsavsky's influence see Schoijet, “Ultra-left science policy and anti-modernization in Argentina: Oscar Varsavsky.”

space of the University of Buenos Aires and repressed leftist militants therein — in particular scientists working at the college of exact and natural sciences. In other words, the college of natural sciences was the center of gravity of the encounter between science and politics.

In this conjuncture, Varsavsky's polemic schematizes four different "attitudes towards science" prevalent in university circles: (1) fossil, (2) totalitarian, (3) reformist, and (4) rebellious (or revolutionary). The "fossil" position represents a kind of archaic and reactionary position and the "totalitarian" position Varsavsky identifies with Stalinism and Lysenkoism. While the fourth is the left position that Varsavsky develops and defends, and the first two constitute an "opposition from the right," it is the reformist position which is the real enemy he attempts to disarm. For him, the reformist position is entangled with the developmentalist state and ultimately aims for a mere modernization of the current system. Its echoes could perhaps be heard today in the liberal-humanist attempt to find a technocratic solution to climate change. The solution, the argument goes, lies solely in putting scientists in charge. Its slogan can be found in yard signs across the United States which read "In this house we believe...SCIENCE IS REAL, LOVE IS LOVE, KINDNESS IS EVERYTHING." It is as if there were no spontaneous philosophies of scientists. As if the transformation of social relations is solely the effect of the spontaneous political action of scientists.

In contrast to this reformist position, "the mission of the rebel scientists is to study in all seriousness, by using all the weapons provided by science, the problems concerning systemic social change, in all of its stages and all of its aspects, both theoretical and practical. This is what it means to do 'politicized science'."<sup>59</sup> With the exception of this last one—"rebel science"—all other positions are characterized as "scientific" by Varsavsky insofar as they are disarticulated from political problems. That is, insofar as they are unconcerned by the role played by science in society, and are oriented by the research programs imposed by the "Soviet Union"

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59 Varsavsky, *Ciencia*, pg. 6.

or the “North” and their “markets.”<sup>60</sup> What lines of demarcation does Malamud trace with respect to this “rebel science”?

Malamud adds a fifth position to Varsavsky’s four positions. This fifth position entails “the attempt to redefine the sciences and determine whether or not there exists a science established that is concerned with social change.”<sup>61</sup> Following Althusser, at stake is the concept of science as such. Failing to define the sciences adequately, the Argentine chemist errs in establishing the science-politics relationship. Varsavsky ends up opposing a “scientism without politics” only to end up defending a “politicism without science.”<sup>62</sup> In contrast, Malamud’s reactivation of HM/DM, as elaborated in the previous section, allows him to account for another history of the sciences that does not merely subsume them to their social function under the developmentalist state. This constitutes Malamud’s “scientism.” Science and struggle, then, in the precise sense formulated above. Neither “a scientism without politics” nor a “politicism without science.”

By 1972 most members of FAL-Che commando were arrested. Many were released in 1973 and joined the PRT-ERP (*Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores - Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo*). Malamud’s daughter Liliana Malamud was murdered in 1976. His other daughter, Marina, disappeared and was detained in *Campo de Mayo*. His son-in-law disappeared in 1977 with other members of PRT-ERP. Malamud himself was arrested and released in 1977 on the condition that he leave the country. The correlation of forces in the singular Argentine situation ultimately determined that the strategy defended by Malamud and his comrades would not be victorious. And yet, if there is something to inherit from Malamud and the Althusserian problematic today — what it might mean to “read Althusser politically” today — is the necessity to reactivate Theory: to study and understand the singular situation and to struggle to transform it.

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 21.

<sup>61</sup> Malamud, “Science and politics.”

<sup>62</sup> *e id.*

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