

From the Modernist to the Metamodernist Resistance

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Metaphysicians are persons who address disputes. That is: metaphysical disputes (e.g., on whether something exists) and/or metametaphysical disputes (e.g., on whether there is a non-controversial criterion to approach metaphysical disputes). Oppression, I assume, refers to practices, such as those of slaving people, not allowing or at least making it extremely hard for women to fulfill more than non-domestic tasks and isolating the so called mentally disordered in mental institutions. Resistance, I also assume, occurs whenever someone contributes to make practices such as these cease to exist. How are metaphysicians to resist oppression?

I am currently writing a philosophy PhD dissertation called *Disputes: The Incommensurable Greatness of Micro-Wars*. In my dissertation, I argue that metaphysicians are to resist oppression by embracing accordance with a left-wing political practice of politicization as a criterion to deal with disputes.¹ This is to state that claims about disputes are to be embraced insofar as they run in accordance with this practice and rejected insofar as they fail to do so.

By a political practice, I understand one that has two features. First, there is a normative dispute on whether the practice ought to be accepted in the first place. Second, those who champion a political practice resort to violence, even if such violence is a subtle violence as opposed to an explicit violence easily identifiable.² Two examples of explicit violence are: to fist fight someone in a bar and to bomb a country. Two examples of subtle violence are: to not acknowledge the personhood of one's opponents while embracing a narrow condition for personhood and to deal with disputes as if one's others did not exist.

By an other, I understand someone or something that one takes to be significantly different from oneself in resisting being understood by one's language, values, concepts, etc. Imagine someone who rejects your criterion to approach disputes. This is your other.

By a left-wing practice, I understand one that has two features.³ First, it is persuasive to attribute to those who champion the practice the passive empathy of feeling the suffering of one's others or at least the recognition that this suffering exists. Second, it is persuasive to attribute to the supporters of this practice the active empathy of acting under the influence of this suffering or at least the aim to revise one's own identity so that this suffering is reduced.⁴

Furthermore, a practice is one of politicization if it spells out that at least one practice that is believed to be politically neutral (e.g., that of addressing disputes) is actually a political one in that it has the two features required for a practice to be a political one.⁵ A practice of politicization then is illustrated by that of showing that metaphysicians' approaches to disputes are political practices. This is because of two reasons. To begin with, there is a normative dispute on which criteria metaphysicians ought to embrace while addressing disputes. Moreover, metaphysicians have constantly resorted to the aforementioned two kinds of subtle violence.

My reading is that Deleuze's view is also that metaphysicians are to resist oppression by embracing accordance with a left-wing political practice of politicization as a criterion to address disputes. Now note that Deleuze believes "in the power of falsity" and rejects any "lamentable faith in accuracy and truth" (Deleuze 1995, 11). Hence, which method of reading interpreters are to adopt while backing up exegetical claims about Deleuze's works is a complex dispute.

I cannot address this dispute here.⁶ Instead, what I would like to do is to presuppose that Deleuze agrees with me that metaphysicians are to resist oppression by embracing accordance with a left-wing political practice of politicization as a criterion to address disputes.⁷ What I also

would like to do is to presuppose that Deleuze and I disagree on how this criterion is to be satisfied. The reason is that Deleuze (throughout his career, but more explicitly in his works with Guattari) embraces a modernist resistance.⁸ I reject this resistance and endorse a distinct one. I call it metamodernist resistance. Accordingly, the main aim of my presentation is to briefly present some of my reasons for preferring the metamodernist resistance over the modernist one.

By a modernist resistance, I understand one that presupposes that in order to satisfy accordance with a left-wing political practice of politicization, metaphysicians ought to endorse a norm. The norm I have in mind is quite closely related to poetical ones endorsed by modernist poets, such as Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé.⁹ This is why I call it modernist norm. The modernist norm is that metaphysicians ought to create a new philosophy by relying on an alternative use of language and impersonating at least one of the others of the white man.

A new philosophy is one that subverts the standard of a certain context while pointing toward a distinct context in which the standard of the subverted context is no longer endorsed. My reading is that Deleuze (*Abécédaire, G comme gauche*) argues that in the West, the standard is a conjunction of the following claims: everybody ought to behave, think, use language and even feel, like a white, European, Christian, heterosexual, city dweller, from the high classes, rational adult male is supposed to.¹⁰ For short, I refer to this male as the white man. Moreover, I take that the others of the white man are the non-whites, non-Europeans, non-Christians, non-heterosexuals, non-city dwellers, etc. Deleuze's aim, I understand, is to articulate a new philosophy that in subverting what he takes to be standard in the West, points toward a new context in which the others of the white man would no longer be oppressed by this standard.¹¹

By an alternative use of language, I understand one that has certain features that can be easily found in Deleuze's writings (especially in those that he co-authored with Guattari). Some

of these features are: the text does not follow a clear plan; no thesis is explicitly defended; no argument is explicitly articulated; technical terms (e.g., “body without organs,” “event,” “fascism,” etc) are not applied in a univocal way; like in poems, terms’ meanings shift with context, etc. These features, I underline, can also be found in the writings of Nietzsche, Bataille (2015), Klossowski (1997), Blanchot (1989), Foucault (2006), Derrida (1978), etc

By the impersonation of an other of the white man, I understand the action of speaking, writing and/or acting in a way that strongly resembles or at least aims to resemble that of an other of the white man. In Deleuze’s writings (again, especially in those that he co-authored with Guattari), it is quite explicit that he aims to impersonate one of such others: the schizophrenic.¹²

In aiming to create a new philosophy by relying on an alternative use of language and impersonating at least one of the others of the white man, Deleuze also pursues a goal quite similar to that of the Dadaists. The goal is that of shocking (especially those who take the aforementioned standard for granted). Shock, I assume, is the feeling of being offended or saddened by someone or something that disrespected something that one values deeply.¹³

Now note that though not as popular as the expressions “post-modernism” and “post-modern” that have been used in several senses and that I do not use, the term “metamodernism” has already been adopted. Zavarzadeh (1975) may have been the first to do so. I am not influenced by him or by any other author who has applied the term “metamodernism.” What I mean by a metamodernist resistance is one that takes that in order to satisfy accordance with a left-wing political practice of politicization, metaphysicians ought to endorse a distinct norm. I call it the metamodernist norm —that of problematizing but still paradoxically satisfying the modernism norm in showing that this norm became a new oppressive standard.

What I mean is that instead of taking the modernist norm for granted, metaphysicians ought to recognize that this norm itself throughout the 20th century and up to our times became part of a new Western standard. This new standard is championed by Deleuze, those influenced by him and arguably several other so called continental philosophers, such as Bataille (2015), Klossowski (1997), Blanchot (1989), Foucault (2006), Derrida (1978), etc.¹⁴

This is to state that it is no longer new to develop a philosophy constrained by the modernistic norm. The reason is that Deleuze already did so. This is also to state that uses of language similar to his are no longer alternative ones. Moreover, the impersonation of a schizophrenic no longer stands for an other with regards to the majority constituted by all of those who have taken Deleuze's works into account. This is also because Deleuze already did so.

Hence, the adoption of the modernistic norm can no longer shock. At least, it can no longer shock those who are acquainted with continental philosophy and the modernistic poetry that has influenced it. Analogously, Baudelaire also problematized the Western standard of his time. However, his poetry represents a new standard today. That is: poets are expected to create a new poetry by relying on an alternative use of language and impersonating at least one of the others of the white man. Thus, those who do so cannot shock. At least, they cannot shock readers who are acquainted with the modernist poetry of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, etc.

What I also mean is that metaphysicians ought to spell out that the modernist norm itself has oppressed those who fail to satisfy it. That is: throughout the 20th century and up to our times, metaphysicians who work in continental philosophy circles have been expected to act in accordance with the modernist norm. A more direct way to put this is by claiming that in these circles, metaphysicians compete with one another to determine who has the newest philosophy

that relies in the most alternative use of language and impersonates at least one of others of the white man in the most shocking way. More broadly, consider Western culture.

I am inclined to believe that throughout the second half of the 20th century up to our times this culture has significantly changed. This is so in that the aforementioned standard identified by Deleuze has been gradually replaced by a distinct standard that may have arisen out of a popularization and distortion of the modernism norm. I call this distinct standard that of political correctness. According to this standard, everybody ought to behave, think, use language and even feel in a way that does not shock anyone (especially the others of the white man).

Note that the ones oppressed by this new standard are those (e.g., whites or non-whites, Europeans or non-Europeans, Christians or non-Christians, heterosexuals or non-heterosexuals, etc.) who fail to satisfy the standard of political correctness in still behaving, thinking, using language and even feeling in a way that causes shock or at least embarrassment. Embarrassment, I assume, is an involuntary feeling of silliness that arises when one is confronted with someone or something that disrespected something that one values deeply, such as the modernist norm.

What I also mean is that metaphysicians still ought to paradoxically satisfy the modernist norm by problematizing it. This is what I have attempted to do by following some procedures that I now would like to make explicit. To begin with, I have aimed to indicate a new philosophy that subverts the standard of continental philosophy circles. This standard is characterized by the modernist norm so that in putting this norm into question, my goal was to point toward a new context in which this norm would no longer be taken for granted and in which the standard of political correctness is identified and problematized as opposed to uncritically embraced.

Furthermore, I have tried to rely on a use of language that is alternative regarding those of Deleuze and all other continental philosophers mentioned above. This, I hope, will render an

objection less likely to be raised against me. The objection I have in mind is widely shared in analytic philosophy contexts. It is that in relying in obscure uses of language characterized by the aforementioned features, continental philosophers perform authoritarian practices, such as that of allowing themselves to have followers who ultimately uncritically repeat their statements.¹⁵

This is not to state that my use of language is alternative regarding all others adopted in philosophy. In fact, I take that my style is not very dissimilar from those of analytic philosophers (e.g., Moore (2012)) who aim to avoid obscurity without articulating uses of language that are so technical that fail to do so. This is to not state that I have no reservation regarding analytic philosophers. The opposite is the case, but I cannot spell out these reservations here.

Finally, I hope that I have indicated that my philosophical works aim to impersonate someone who is an other regarding both the analytic and the continental philosophy community. This other is someone whose aim is to articulate a philosophy that resists being qualified either as analytic (in embracing the left-wing political practice of politicization) or as continental (in problematizing the modernistic norm). A metaphor that illustrates this other is that of someone whose face is a deformed superposition of Carnap's and Nietzsche's; a monstrous Deleuze.

This is someone who believes that metaphysicians ought to resist oppression by adopting a left-wing political practice of politicization characterized by the metamodernist resistance as opposed to Deleuze's modernist one. This is what I have tried to show here and defend in much more detail in my PhD dissertation. I underline that in doing so, I aim to cause embarrassment in those who have uncritically aligned themselves with either the continental or the analytic tradition and/or those who champion political correctness. I also underline that just like Deleuze's modernist norm is quite closely related to poetical ones endorsed by modernist poets, my metamodernist ones are analogous to poetic norms that I endorse in poetic works of my own.

Endnotes:

¹ For indications that Deleuze is also committed to this thesis, see especially the section “*G comme gauche*” of the eight-hour long series of interviews that he gave to Claire Parnet —*L’Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*. This work has not been published in literary form, but it is available in DVD under the title, *Gilles Deleuze: from A to Z*.

² For indications that Deleuze also understands that political practices have these two features and that metaphysicians’ practices of dealing with disputes are political ones, see Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 203).

³ For indications that Deleuze also understands that left-wing practices have these two features, also see the section “*G comme gauche*” of *L’Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*.

⁴ Bennett (2005) has already associated empathy with Deleuze. Note, however, that there certainly are differences between the way I use this notion and that of others. See Slote (2014) as well as the essays gathered in Coplan and Goldie (2014) for takes on empathy much more detailed than the ones that I can provide here.

⁵ For indications that this is also how Deleuze understands a practice of politicization, see Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 203).

⁶ In discussing the bibliography that can be found in the end of this text, I did so in a paper that is currently under review in the *Continental Philosophy Review*. This paper can be download in my [personal website](#).

⁷ Consider, though, endnotes 1 through 6 as indications for why this presupposition is to be endorsed.

⁸ I will also indicate in endnotes passages by Deleuze and Guattari that back up this claim.

⁹ This is not the place where I can discuss Deleuze’s relation with literary modernism in detail. Holland (1993), the essays gathered by Buchanan *et al.* (2015) and Ardoin *et al.* (2014) have done so.

¹⁰ In Deleuze’s words, “in the West, the standard that every majority presupposes is: 1) male, 2) adult, 3) heterosexual, 4) city dweller...” (*Abécédaire, G comme gauche*).

¹¹ In Deleuze’s and Guattari’s words, “philosophy turns its back against itself so as to summon forth a new earth, a new people” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 99).

¹² Consider that Deleuze and Guattari state that “philosophy and schizophrenia have often been associated with each other” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 70). “But,” they emphasize “in one case the schizophrenic is a *conceptual persona* who lives intensely within the thinker and forces him to think, whereas in the other the schizophrenic is a *psychosocial type* who represses the living being and robs him of his thought” (*ibid.*, my emphasis).

¹³ Deleuze indicates his aim of causing this feeling in stating that “philosophy does not serve the State or the Church” (Deleuze 1983: 106). In other words, philosophy is not supposed to satisfy the standard of any majority in serving “no established power” (*ibid.*). “The use of philosophy,” Deleuze states, “is to sadden. A philosophy that saddens no one, that annoys no one, is not philosophy” (*ibid.*).

¹⁴ See Protevi (2000) for a comparison between Deleuze’s and Derrida’s projects.

¹⁵ Searle (1983) claims that this is the case with Derrida. Sokal and Bricmont (1998) suggest that the same applies to Deleuze and Guattari and to other French thinkers, like Lacan.

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