



Deleuze's left-wing approach to metaphysics

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DELEUZE'S LEFT-WING APPROACH TO METAPHYSICS¹

In his 1973 “Letter to a Harsh Critic”, Gilles Deleuze labels his method of reading an “immaculate conception”.² Metaphorically speaking, this method is an action of “taking an author from behind and giving him a child”.³ The “child” stands for the resulted reading: one that deserves to be called the author’s “own offspring” insofar as it uses the author’s writings as evidence in supporting exegetical claims. Yet, the reading that results from an immaculate conception is also “monstrous”.⁴ This is because it interprets passages from the author’s texts in problematic ways: for instance, it translates the author’s terminology into a distinct terminology the author never adopted; it connects passages by the author that are not very obviously connected to one another; it spells out the author’s view on issues that the author never explicitly addressed; etc.

1. I would like to thank Amanda Moreira, Berit Brogaard, Irene Olivero, Mark Rowlands, Markus Gabriel, Michael Slote, Otávio Bueno, Todd May, and the two anonymous referees of the *Revue philosophique* for valuable comments on previous versions of this article, and/or on the larger research in which this article is inserted: that of my PhD dissertation, *Disputes: The Incommensurable Greatness of Micro-Wars*, which can be downloaded at https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_dissertations/2284/, and where I read in connection and promote a synthesis of Friedrich Nietzsche’s and Rudolf Carnap’s projects of overcoming metaphysics. I am also grateful to my recently deceased professor and friend, Fernando Ribeiro, for having guided my first readings of Deleuze more than thirteen years ago.

2. Gilles Deleuze, “Letter to a Harsh Critic”, in *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin, NY, Columbia University, 1995, p. 5 [« Lettre à un critique sévère », *Pourparlers, 1972-1990*, Minuit, 1990].

3. *Ibid.* ; in the French original, “concevoir l’histoire de la philosophie comme une sorte d’enculage ou, ce qui revient au même, d’immaculée conception. Je m’imaginai arriver dans le dos d’un auteur, et lui faire un enfant, qui serait le sien et qui serait monstrueux.” See Gilles Deleuze, “Lettre à un critique sévère”, art. cit., p. 15.

4. Gilles Deleuze, “Letter to a Harsh Critic”, p. 6.

Deleuze claims that his book on Henri Bergson illustrates this kind of “immaculate conception”.⁵ The same can be claimed about his readings of David Hume, Friedrich Nietzsche, Baruch Spinoza, Michel Foucault and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.⁶ Deleuze is not precise regarding the respective proportions of the “non-monstrous” and the “monstrous” aspects of his readings. This does not seem relevant to him. What he takes to be crucial is whether the reading that adopts the immaculate conception “relates [a text] directly to what’s Outside”⁷ by spelling out what in the text is duly relevant for the interpreter’s context.

Deleuze’s interpreters are, then, confronted with a dilemma. While reading his texts, they can either (a) embrace Deleuze’s immaculate conception as well, or (b) dismiss this method, while relying on more traditional methods that aim to accurately represent Deleuze’s writings. Option (a) was adopted by Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek.⁸ Option (b) was adopted by Todd May, Gary Gutting and Adrian W. Moore.⁹ None of these options reads Deleuze in his own terms. This is the case with those who endorse option (a) in that they take Deleuze “from behind and give him a child”. Those who embrace option (b) also do not read Deleuze in his own terms because they disregard the fact that he rejects any “lamentable faith in accuracy and truth”.¹⁰

Note that, given the style of Deleuze’s writings, it may be impossible for an interpreter to express this “faith” when interpreting his works.

5. *Ibid.* See Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism* [*Le Bergsonisme*, Puf, 1966], trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, NY, Zone Books, 1998.

6. See Gilles Deleuze *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume’s Theory of Human Nature* [*Empirisme et subjectivité. Essai sur la nature humaine selon Hume*, Puf, 1953], trans. Constantin V. Boundas, New York, Columbia University Press, 1991; *Nietzsche and Philosophy* [*Nietzsche et la philosophie*, Puf, 1962], trans. Hugh Tomlinson, London, Athlone Press, 1983; *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* [*Spinoza, et le problème de l’expression*, Minuit, 1968], trans. Martin Joughin, NY, Zone Books, 1990; *Foucault* [*Foucault*, Minuit, 1986], trans. Sean Hand, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998; and *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* [*Le Pli. Leibniz et le baroque*, Minuit, 1988], trans. Tom Conley, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1992.

7. Gilles Deleuze, “Letter to a Harsh Critic”, p. 8.

8. Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being* [*Deleuze. La clameur de l’être*, Hachette, 1997], trans. Louise Burchill, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1999; and Slavoj Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies: Deleuze and Consequences*, NY, Routledge, 2004.

9. Todd May, *Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005; Gary Gutting, *Thinking the Impossible: French Philosophy since 1960*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011; and Adrian W. Moore, *The Evolution of Modern Metaphysics: Making Sense of Things*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

10. Gilles Deleuze, “Letter to a Harsh Critic”, p. 11.

Consider some claims from works by Deleuze, Deleuze and Félix Guattari, or Deleuze and his wife, Fanny Deleuze:

- (1) Politics precedes being.¹¹
- (2) [Someone who is right-wing] starts from the self, and to the extent that one is privileged, living in a rich country, one might ask, what can we do to make this situation last? One senses that dangers exist, that it might not last, it's all so crazy, so what might be done for it to last?¹²
- (3) In the West, the standard that every majority presupposes is: 1) male, 2) adult, 3) heterosexual, 4) city dweller... [...] A majority, at the limit, is never anyone, it's an empty standard.¹³
- (4) It's too easy to be antifascist on the molar level, and not even see the fascist inside you.¹⁴
- (5) Practice does not come after the emplacement of the terms and their relation, but actively participates in the drawing of the lines.¹⁵
- (6) To be on the left [is] a matter of perception [and] being by nature [...] or never ceasing to become minoritarian. [...] First, you see the horizon. And you know that it cannot last, that it's not possible; these millions of people are starving to death, it just can't last. [...] The left is never of the majority as left, and for a very simple reason: the majority is something that presupposes [...] a standard.¹⁶
- (7) How necessary caution is, the art of dosages, since overdose is a danger.¹⁷
- (8) What do my relations with gays, alcoholics, and drug-users matter, if I can obtain similar effects by different means?¹⁸
- (9) I feel like a pure metaphysician.¹⁹
- (10) In Christ's love, there was a [...] *an ardor to give without taking anything*. [...] There was something suicidal about him.²⁰

11. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [*Mille Plateaux. Capitalisme et schizophrénie*, Minuit, 1980], trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p. 203.

12. This passage is part of the eight-hour long series of interviews that Deleuze gave to Claire Parnet from 1988 to 1989, *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*, trans. Charles Stivale, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2011. The passages from the *Abécédaire* quoted here are from the section "G comme gauche", henceforth, (ABC-G).

13. (ABC-G).

14. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 215.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

16. (ABC-G).

17. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 160.

18. Gilles Deleuze, "Letter to a Harsh Critic", p. 11.

19. Gilles Deleuze, "Réponses à une Séries de Questions (novembre 1981)", in Arnaud Villani, *La Guêpe et l'orchidée : essai sur Gilles Deleuze*, Paris, Belin, 1999, p. 130 (our translation).

20. . Fanny and Gilles Deleuze, "Nietzsche and Saint Paul, Lawrence and John of Patmos" ["Nietzsche et Saint Paul, Lawrence et Jean de Patmos"] in *Essays Critical and Clinical* [*Critique et Clinique*, Minuit, 1993], trans., Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco, London, Verso, 1998, p. 50.

(11) Philosophy and schizophrenia have often been associated with each other. But 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.²¹

(12) [Philosophy] *turns its back against itself so as to summon forth a new earth, a new people.*²²

(13) The use of philosophy is to sadden. A philosophy that saddens no one, that annoys no one, is not philosophy. It is useful for harming stupidity [*bêtise*], for turning stupidity into something shameful.²³

Now it has to be underlined that this essay's aim is not to compare options (a) and (b) in detail. Instead, as Deleuze relied on the immaculate conception throughout his career, it is presupposed that the essay may endorse option (a) while, to put it metaphorically, painting a quasi-abstract portrait of Deleuze comparable to Francis Bacon's portraits.²⁴ It shall not be argued, then, that Deleuze is committed to the claims articulated in what follows, MCC 1 to MCC 13, where MCC stands for "monstrous child claim". Rather, what is defended is that such claims were inspired by and/or can be drawn out of Deleuze's claims (1) through (13) in a relevant way that connects his works to two external contexts.

The first context is that of Deleuze's interpreters. Among such interpreters, an exegetical tendency can be identified: that of focusing on Deleuze's views on metaphysical disputes (e.g., on whether being is univocal), instead of discussing his takes on metametaphysical disputes (e.g., on whether such dispute on being is relevant). Henceforth, for brevity's sake, metaphysical and metametaphysical disputes will both be called disputes.

The second context this essay aims to connect Deleuze's works to is that of analytic philosophers who often presuppose what may be called the analytic criteria to deal with disputes: agreement with intuition; respect for the rules of ordinary language; and maximization of theoretical virtues, such as "conservatism, generality, simplicity, refutability and

21. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* [*Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?*, Minuit, 1991], trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, NY, Columbia University Press, 1994: p. 70.

22. *Ibid.*, 99.

23. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 106.

24. Note that Deleuze wrote a book on Francis Bacon. See Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* [*Francis Bacon. Logique de la sensation*, La Différence, 1981], trans. Daniel W. Smith, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

modesty".²⁵ Note that several analytic philosophers are inclined to endorse the obscurity objection: that Deleuze has no criterion to approach disputes. Rather, he relies on an obscure use of language in performing authoritarian practices, such as that of more or less arbitrarily endorsing claims (e.g. (1) to (13)), while allowing oneself to have followers who uncritically repeat one's claims as if they were undeniable religious dogmas.²⁶

An aim is, then, motivated: that of shifting the exegetical focus from Deleuze's views on object-level metaphysics to the methodological issue concerning which criterion is to be adopted when dealing with disputes. This issue will be discussed in the first section, where an alternative criterion to deal with disputes (agreement with the left-wing practice of politicization) will be drawn from Deleuze's works and a reply to the obscurity objection on his behalf will be provided. In the second section, the modernist and the metamodernist way of pursuing the left-wing approach will be compared: the modernist way is to be avoided, whereas the metamodernist one is to be endorsed.

The Left-Wing Political Practice of Politicization

(1) inspired us to think that:

(MCC 1) Disputes are micro-political conflicts.

In what follows, (2) through (13) will receive similar translations into claims of this kind. A political conflict is one that, first, has a significant social importance insofar as it matters for more than one individual, family or group of acquaintances. Second, parties engaged in a political conflict pressure a significant group of people (beyond their families or group of acquaintances) to change their practices by sometimes even resorting to violence. Third, a political conflict involves normative issues, such as the one on which criterion is to be adopted to deal with the conflict. A macro-political conflict, such as the one on whether illegal immigrants in France are to be deported, is one in which these three features are explicitly present. A micro-political conflict, such as a dispute, is one in which these features are merely implicitly

25. Willard Van Orman Quine, *Pursuit of Truth*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 20.

26. Timothy Williamson points to the obscurity objection in stating that: "when law and order break down, the result is not freedom or anarchy but the capricious tyranny of petty feuding warlords. Similarly, the unclarity of constraints in philosophy leads to authoritarianism. (*The Philosophy of Philosophy*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2007, p. 290.)

present. The implicit political character of disputes will be spelled out as the paper proceeds.

For now, let us draw out of (2) the claim that

(MCC 2) A right-wing approach to a macro or micro-political conflict is a practice characterized by its champions' tendency to privilege their needs for self-defense over their powers to show empathy to their others. This is to state that right-wingers, passively, feel or act as if their others were a threat to their particular identities or even to their lives. Accordingly, they act under the influence of this feeling in seeking to protect their lives and/or conserve their particular identities.

A particular identity (e.g., to be male) is one shared by some, but not all beings. By "other", it is to be understood a relational notion according to which *y* is an other with regard to *x* if, and only if *x* and *y* are both persons who disagree regarding at least one macro or micro political conflict, and *y*'s sensibility regarding this conflict is radically distinct from *x*'s inasmuch as *y* challenges *x*'s *logos* in rejecting *x*'s presuppositions and/or ignoring, violating or interpreting *x*'s criterion to deal with the conflict at stake differently. Those who ignore or violate the analytic criteria are the others of those who presuppose such criteria. It may be taken for granted that Deleuze's works, as (1) to (13) indicate, indeed, ignore or violate the analytic criteria.

Now consider a right-wing approach to the immigration conflict championed by a right-winger who has particular identities, such as that of being male; cisgender; white-skinned; born and raised in Paris; etc. Imagine that this right-winger, passively, feels that his others are a threat to his life and/or to his particular identities. Actively, he acts under the influence of this feeling in opposing the presence of illegal immigrants in France. Thus, he supports politicians who promise to deport illegal immigrants. He seeks to intimidate illegal immigrants in public spaces, say, by screaming slurs or words of order, such as "go back to Africa". He joins anti-immigration protests and, perhaps, even gets involved in fist-fights with illegal immigrants. In proceeding in such a way, the right-winger aims to satisfy what Deleuze calls a "standard": a conjunction of norms (e.g., for moral behavior) that are (so to speak) in the "air" in that they are presupposed by most people in a context.

(3) inspired us to think that

(MCC 3) Throughout the history of the West, majorities have presupposed that persons who exist in time and space are to satisfy Western norms that only an abstract object that is supposed to exist over time and space could perfectly fulfill.

So, concrete white men who have particular identities similar to those of the right-winger have never perfectly satisfied such norms. Yet, they have fallen short of doing so much less explicitly than the concrete others of the white man who have suffered with practices of oppression, such as those of being enslaved, not having the right to vote and being unfairly diagnosed as mentally impaired. Deleuze, then, suggests that the abstract object mentioned in (MCC 3) deserves to be named the white-man-in-itself. The others of the white man are those who have existed in time and space and have particular identities, such as that of being black, female, homosexual, etc.

The right-winger is no libertarian Nietzschean. This is because he does not aim to act in accordance and contribute to affirm his own singularity or those of others. What he aims at, instead, is to attenuate such singularities, while contributing with the narrow community constituted by the majority that conserves and seeks to comply with Western norms that ultimately only the white-man-in-itself could perfectly fulfill. To put in metaphorical terms, the right-winger is the “slave” of this abstract object. The right-winger is also no egalitarian Carnapian because, instead of seeking to defend the interests of a really universal community, he only cares about the interests of an extremely narrow community that, ultimately, only includes those who share particular identities with him and seek to satisfy the norms or what they take to be the norms implied by such identities.²⁷ An example of such a norm is that if one has the identity of being a French citizen, one is to defend French citizens at the expense of non-French citizens. The right-winger, then, deserves to be called a close-minded conservative.

Out of (4) we can draw the claim that

(MCC 4) It has often happened that one opposes right-wing approaches to macro-political conflicts, but (perhaps unconsciously) endorses analogous right-wing approaches to micro-political conflicts.

Imagine a group of philosophers who oppose the right-wing approach to the immigration macro-political conflict, but champion a micro-right-wing approach to disputes. Passively, these philosophers feel that their others are threats to their particular identities, say, that of being members of a particular philosophical tradition. Actively, imagine that such right-wingers on micro-political conflicts seem to act under the influence of the feeling that this tradition of theirs is being

27. For a more detailed take on the conflict between Nietzsche's libertarianism and Carnap's egalitarianism, see my PhD dissertation, *Disputes, op. cit.*, and my paper “Overcoming Metametaphysics: Nietzsche and Carnap”, *Nietzsche-Studien*, Volume 47, Issue 1, Nov. 2018, p. 240-271.

threatened. So, they resort to “subtle” violence : a kind of violence that may be called “subtle” only ironically, and that is much more hardly identified and criticized than upfront kinds of violence, such as that of punching someone.

Two examples of “subtle” violence are : the properly dogmatic “subtle” violence of insinuating that others are not legitimate rational peers insofar as disputes are at stake, and/or that one’s works settle at least one dispute once and for all; and the pseudo-non-dogmatic “subtle” violence of suggesting that the existence of persons who are others and legitimate rational peers is irrelevant, and that the same can be argued about the claim that no person has settled a dispute once and for all, say, because all that matters is to dialogue with those who already presuppose one’s criteria, such as the analytic criteria.

This is to claim that right-wingers on micro-political conflicts also deserve to be called close-minded conservatives. They are not libertarians in that they do not seem to act in accordance with what is ultimately singular about themselves, say, in articulating an ultimately unique criterion of their own that resists association with any philosophical tradition. Right-wingers on micro-political conflicts are also not egalitarians because, instead of seeking to defend the interests of a really universal community, they privilege the interests of a narrow community, such as that of all philosophers who take the analytic criteria for granted.²⁸

(5) allows us to think that

(MCC 5) Philosophers have often championed micro-political practices of depoliticization in not acknowledging or not having been aware of themselves insofar as micro-political agents engaged in micro-political conflicts.

Such allegedly apolitical philosophers, then, act: first, *as if* disputes did not have a social significance; second, *as if* they were not pressuring their opponents to change their practices while, say, perhaps even resorting to “subtle” violence; and/or, third, *as if* they did not presuppose views on normative issues, such as the issue on why the analytic criteria are to be endorsed in the first place. We suggest, then, that Deleuze points to a practice of politicization that seeks to spell out that disputes are micro-political conflicts and that, so, the actions of those involved in such conflicts are micro-political ones, regardless of

28. In my PhD dissertation, *Disputes, op. cit.*, I argue that Willard Van Orman Quine, Saul Kripke, Kit Fine champion micro-right-wing approaches to the dispute on whether, independently of the way entities are described, they have essences. See Willard Van Orman Quine, *Word and Object*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1960; Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1980; and Kit Fine “Essence and Modality”, *Philosophical Perspectives*, Vol. 8, 1994, p. 1-16.

whether they are aware that this is so. In other words, disputes are micro-wars.

We also draw from (6) the claim that

(MCC 6) A left-wing approach to a macro or to a micro-political conflict is a practice characterized by its champions' tendency to privilege their powers to show empathy over their needs to self-defend themselves from their others. These champions passively, feel or at least recognize the existence of the suffering of other people. Actively, in order to contribute to making this suffering cease to exist, left-wingers act under the influence of this suffering in ceasing to give, or at least attenuating, the importance of their own particular identities.²⁹

Imagine a left-winger who shares several particular identities with the right-winger, that is, someone who is also male, white, French, etc. Imagine, nonetheless, that this person has a distinct "perception" of the immigration conflict. Passively, he feels, or at least recognizes, the existence of the suffering of his others, that is, illegal immigrants who have often run away from wars and/or poverty in their home-countries. Actively, the left-winger acts under the influence of the suffering of his others, or at least under the influence of the recognition of the existence of this suffering. This is why he stops giving, or at least attenuates, the importance of his own particular identities in aiming to change the norms that govern immigration in France.

So, the left-winger "is or becomes minoritarian" in voting for politicians who promise to guarantee the rights of illegal immigrants. He also utters words of order against the words of order of right-wingers. Moreover, the left-winger counter-protests demonstrations against illegal immigration. He joins marches that seek to insert illegal immigrants into France. He may also get involved in fist-fights with right-wingers. By proceeding in such a way, the left-winger aims to problematize the overidealized Western norms that can only be perfectly satisfied by the white-man-in-itself. What the left-winger seeks to be, then, is a libertarian Nietzschean; someone who aims to be one's own, to put it metaphorically again, "master" in being in agreement with what is singular about oneself over and above one's own particular identities and the implicit norms attached to them. Paradoxically, though, the left-winger is also an egalitarian Carnapian because he likewise seeks to attenuate his own singularities and those of others in striving toward the creation of a universal community that would really defend the interests of all as opposed to those of the narrow communities defended by right-wingers.

29. Lee Michael Slotte, *From Enlightenment to Receptivity: Rethinking our Values*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013.

Accordingly, what we draw from Deleuze's works and what such works inspired us to articulate is a left-wing approach to disputes. This is to read Deleuze as someone who deals with disputes by, passively, feeling or at least recognizing the existence of the suffering of others. Such others are : those who do not agree with any criterion one may propose; those who do not share one's intuitions; do not speak what one assumes to be "ordinary language" or seek to maximize one's theoretical virtues; those who ignore or disrespect norms concerning how disputes are to be approached and/or how philosophy is to be done; etc.

We also read Deleuze as someone who addressed disputes by, actively, acting under the influence of the suffering of his others or at least under the influence of the recognition of the existence of this suffering. In doing so, he aimed to stop giving, or at least to attenuate, the importance of his own particular identities, like that of being part of a French philosophical tradition. Indeed, note that, from the left-wing perspective, criteria widely shared by philosophical traditions, such as the analytic criteria, are ultimately quite irrelevant. What is relevant, from the left-wing perspective, is to be open-minded in negotiating with others by attempting to understand, and even feel, what they take to be relevant criteria to deal with disputes.

Note that a left-wing approach to disputes avoids the properly dogmatic and the pseudo-non-dogmatic "subtle" violence by embracing and acknowledging the importance of two claims: that some others are legitimate rational peers and that, given that this is so, no person has settled a dispute once and for all. Hence, in carefully observing the history of metaphysics and all kinds of methodological issues, the micro-left-winger concludes that, regardless of whether philosophers have been aware, they have been micro-political agents.

This is to "immaculately conceive" a Deleuze who embraces a political practice of politicization: that of recognizing oneself as a micro-political agent engaged in disputes, while seeking to spell out the lack of political neutrality of allegedly apolitical philosophers. This agent seeks to articulate and endorse an ultimately unique criterion of his own to deal with disputes: agreement with the left-wing political practice of politicization. To adopt this criterion is to be a libertarian Nietzschean insofar as no philosopher has explicitly adopted this criterion and, consequently, this move is very likely to cause dissensus. To put it metaphorically, then, to endorse this criterion is to seek to be one's own "master" insofar as disputes are concerned. This is to state that the left-winger on micro-political conflicts aims to be in agreement with what is ultimately singular about oneself, over and above any philosophical tradition. Such an aim amounts to promoting the libertarian practice

of establishing one's own norms on how disputes are to be approached, on how philosophy is to be done whilst violating norms of the continental tradition and the analytic tradition, such as the norm that one is to rely on strategically narrow bibliographies that only mention one of these traditions.

Paradoxically, though, to agree with a left-wing practice of politicization as a criterion to deal with disputes is also to be an egalitarian Carnapian. This is the case because to propose this criterion is also, as indicated above, to seek to achieve consensus with others by seeking to negotiate with their criteria. Hence, the left-winger, metaphorically speaking, also aims to be a "slave", but not one of a majority, such as that of a particular philosophical tradition. The goal of the left-winger is to serve a really universal community. This is to argue that this philosopher also promotes an egalitarian practice: that of, whilst attenuating one's singularities, contributing to the creation of this really universal community that would defend the interests of all beings, or at least all persons, as opposed to those of a mere majority that, say, presupposes the analytic criteria. To pursue this egalitarian practice, then, is to seek to act in accordance with the much more cosmopolitan norm that one is supposed to have a bibliography as plural and extensive as possible.

The "immaculately conceived" reading of Deleuze endorsed here, then, is – fortunately enough – relevant to two contexts external to Deleuze's works: that of his interpreters who have focused on his views on object-level metaphysical disputes as well as that of analytic philosophers who have embraced the obscurity objection. The reason is that, in spelling out that our "monstrous" Deleuze endorses agreement with the left-wing political practice of politicization as a criterion to deal with disputes, this reading: first, shows a distinct aspect of Deleuze's works that his interpreters have not taken into account; and, second, provides a reply to the obscurity objection on Deleuze's behalf by indicating that he has an alternative criterion of his own to deal with disputes and does not champion the aforementioned authoritarian practices. This "monstrous" Deleuze, then, does not proceed, like a "warlord", without having any sort of "constraint in philosophy", to put it in Timothy Williamson's terms, but, rather, articulates an alternative constraint of his own in championing the left-wing practice of politicization.³⁰ Now, let us consider and compare two ways by means of which this practice can be pursued: the modernist way and the metamodernist way.

30. See Timothy Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy*, p. 290.

From the Modernist to the Metamodernist Way

An imprudent practice is one that puts something that the practitioner deeply cares for (e.g., a career), or even the practitioner's very life, at risk. A prudent practice is one that does not do so. Consider the practice of drinking alcohol. This practice can be an imprudent one, say, when one has "one *Caipirinha* too many". When one manages to drink without excessively doing so, one's practice is a prudent one. Accordingly, (7) inspires us to think that

(MCC 7) Prudent practices are to be preferred to imprudent ones³¹.

The distinction between prudent and imprudent practices is not very precise. Rather, it is one of degree and, ultimately, each person is to figure out what counts as a prudent or imprudent practice for oneself. The action of doing so is an "art" in the Greek sense of a conjunction of disciplined practices. The term "artist", then, will be used in the sense of someone who deeply masters a craft in prudently practicing it.

The "harsh critic" referred to in the text by Deleuze mentioned in the introduction is Michel Cressole.³² He claims that Deleuze is "someone who's always just tagged along behind, taking it easy, capitalizing upon other's people's experiments, on gays, drug-users, alcoholics", etc.³³ Deleuze's reply can be drawn from (8):

(MCC 8) Deleuze never purported to be an artist of sexual intercourse, drug-use or drinking. In fact, his sexual, drinking or drug-use practices are ultimately irrelevant.

What is relevant is Deleuze's practice of dealing with disputes. Indeed, (9) prompts us to think that

(MCC 9) Deleuze is (or at least wishes to be) the artist of disputes.

Now imagine that the left-winger on the immigration conflict fosters in his apartment in Paris an illegal immigrant. Let us assume that this immigrant is a male who has a right-wing attitude toward those who have the particular identities of being from the West, not following what the illegal immigrant interprets to be the behavioral norms of the *Qur'an*. This illegal immigrant,

31. In conversation, Irene Olivero has pointed out that this is not always the case, insofar as there may be macro-political-conflicts, for instance that of fighting against the Italian fascist regime of the 1930s and 1940s, regarding which it may be inevitable (insofar as resistance is at stake) for left-wingers to proceed imprudently in being willing to sacrifice their own lives. This is an interesting point that cannot be addressed in this paper, which remains neutral on whether there are counter examples to (MCC 7).

32. Michel Cressole, *Deleuze*, Paris, Éditions Universitaires, 1973.

33. Gilles Deleuze, "Letter to a Harsh Critic", p. 11.

passively, feels, that his others are a threat to his particular identities (especially, that of being a Muslim), and even to his life. Actively, he acts under the influence of this feeling, say, by planning and carrying out a terrorist attack in Paris that kills thousands of people, including people regarding which the left-winger cares deeply. This left-winger, then, is no artist of the immigration conflict. Moreover, his imprudent attitude is comparable to that of the historical.

(MCC 10) Jesus Christ who seems to have championed similar imprudent approaches toward some of the macro-political conflicts of his time, such as the one on how to resist the Roman oppression while revising the Jewish law.

(10) also indicates that Deleuze endorses prudent left-wing approaches to political-conflicts. To put it in Nietzsche's terms, these approaches are those of a "Roman Caesar with the soul of Christ".³⁴ Note that it may be possible to draw from Deleuze's works a "Caesar-yet-Christ" driven approach to the immigration-conflict. However, this is no easy task. As the European and the American immigration crisis indicate, it is hard to determine the requirements for an approach to the immigration-conflict that could be qualified as a prudent one. To do so is not an aim pursued here.

What is defended here is that, for Deleuze, an imprudent micro-left-wing approach to disputes is analogous to the Christ-driven approach of the macro-left-winger who fosters a terrorist in his house, that is, imprudent micro-left-wingers on disputes likewise risk, if not their lives, at least something that they deeply care for, such as a career in philosophy. This occurs when one disrespects the norms on how philosophy is to be done in a not very subtle way, say, by inviting to a philosophy conference people who psychiatry describes as schizophrenics, while urging them to throw objects at micro-right-wingers. This is not what this essay's Deleuze proposes, as it will be spelled out in what follows. First, though, let us consider that the actual Deleuze was inserted in a philosophical context distinct from ours: that of France, roughly, from the 1940s up to the early 1990s.

It seems that, in this context, a prudent left-wing approach to disputes could be pursued in a modernist way. Indeed, it is plausible to believe that this was done, not only by the actual Deleuze, but by several other 20th century French philosophers influenced by Nietzsche who cannot be dealt with here, such as Georges Bataille, Pierre Klossowski, Maurice Blanchot, Foucault, Jacques Derrida, etc.³⁵ The modernist way deserves this name because the three features that

34. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachlass*, in Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (ed.), *Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe*, 1967-1997, *Nachlass 1884*, 27 [60], our translation.

35. Georges Bataille, *On Nietzsche* [*Sur Nietzsche, Volonté de chance*, Gallimard, 1945], trans. Stuart Kendall, NY, Suny Press, 2015; Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* [*Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux*, Mercure de France,

characterize it resemble features found in the writings of late 19th century poets who have been described as modernistic ones, such as Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud and Stéphane Mallarmé. The first modernist feature is the adoption of a use of language that is alternative regarding those endorsed by one's tradition. For Deleuze, these alternative uses are related to those adopted by the others of the white man insofar as these others have often violated the rules of (what right-wingers describe as) "ordinary language". The language of (1) through (13) testifies to the presence of the first modernist feature in Deleuze's works.

The second modernist feature is the impersonation of an other by means of philosophical writings that, say, seek to emphasize that some others are persons who are legitimate rational peers. This can be done by, metaphorically speaking, painting a quasi-abstract portrait (comparable to Francis Bacon's) of them. This second modernist feature can also be found in Deleuze's writings, especially in those he co-authored with Guattari. Deleuze aimed to impersonate the "conceptual persona" of one other of the white man: the schizophrenic.

(11), then, inspires us to think that

(MCC 11) It has to be underlined, though, that the conceptual persona of the schizophrenic impersonated in Deleuze's writings is distinct from someone psychiatrists would describe as a schizophrenic; the former is a way by means of which Deleuze seeks to prudently adopt a left-wing political practice of politicization, whereas the latter is someone who has been isolated and suffered in mental institutions.

The third modernist feature amounts to practicing a

(MCC 12) Philosophy that praises and points toward a utopian new context, such as one in which others would be recognized not as threats to a narrow majority, but as members of a really universal community.

What (13) prompts us to think is that, in championing the left-wing political practice in a prudent modernist way,

(MCC 13) Philosophers are to pursue a goal similar to that of modernist poets: to shock or embarrass their readers, especially right-wing ones, in pressuring them to change their practices.

Shock is to be understood as a feeling of being offended by someone or something that disrespected something that one values deeply, such as a criterion to deal with disputes. Embarrassment is to be understood

1969], trans. Daniel W. Smith, London, Athlone Press, 1997; Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* [*L'Espace littéraire*, Gallimard, 1955], trans. Ann Smock, Nebraska, University of Nebraska Press, 1989; Michel Foucault, *History of Madness* [*Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, Gallimard, 1972], trans Jonathan Murphy and

as an attenuated kind of shock: the feeling of being upset by someone or something that disrespected something one values deeply.

We do not aim to challenge the view that the actual Deleuze may have been an artist of disputes; the fact that he is one of the most read, translated and respected authors of the last century is ample evidence for this. What is disputable, though, is that contemporary philosophers are to follow Deleuze in pursuing the left-wing approach in a modernist way; it may no longer be prudent to do so because the philosophical field has changed since Deleuze's active years. What this essay does, then, is to draw from Deleuze's works a metamodernist way of prudently pursuing the left-wing practice of politicization.

The term "metamodernism" is not as popular as "post-modernism" and "post-modern". The latter two have been applied in all kinds of senses, including derogatory ones often spread by champions of the obscurity objection. This is not to state that the term "metamodernism" has never been used; Mas'ud Zavarzadeh may have been the first to do so.³⁶ We, though, are not influenced by him or by any other author who has used the term "metamodernism". By a metamodernist way, it is to be understood one whose three features arise out, are foreclosed and turn the modernistic way against itself.

The first metamodernist feature is : instead of presupposing the modernist features, to become historically aware that they have become widely shared, and that the claim that one is to adopt them became an implicit norm among French philosophers influenced by Nietzsche. Indeed, it may not be an exaggeration to claim that this norm is "oppressive". Accordingly, contemporary philosophers whose uses of language are similar to those adopted by the members of the French Nietzschean tradition do not exactly rely on alternative uses of language. Rather, their uses are standard ones regarding this tradition. Hence, to impersonate in one's writings a schizophrenic or any other of the white man is no longer to impersonate others regarding this tradition. It is also no longer new to praise and point toward a context in which these others would be inserted because French philosophers influenced by Nietzsche have also done so. It follows that though those who adopt a modernist way of pursuing the left-wing approach to disputes might still be able to shock or embarrass the ones who are not

Jean Khalifa, Oxford, Routledge, 2006; and Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* [*Éperons. Les Styles de Nietzsche*, Flammarion, 1978], trans. Barbara Harlow, Chicago, Chicago, University Press, 1979.

36. Mas'ud Zavarzadeh, "The Apocalyptic Fact and the Eclipse of Fiction in Recent American Prose Narratives", *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Apr., 1975, p. 69-83.

familiar with the French Nietzschean tradition, they are not likely to do so with those who are familiar with it.

The second metamodernist feature is to indicate that, given that the modernist assumptions are widely shared within the continental tradition (especially, the French Nietzschean one), those who currently presuppose them face the risk of proceeding as inverted right-wingers. Inverted right-wingers are the ones who, passively, feel that those who ignore or disrespect the modernist norm that one is to do a philosophy that displays modernist features are a threat, if not to their lives, at least to their particular identity of being champions of the modernist way of pursuing the left-wing approach. In order to protect this particular identity or even their lives, inverted right-wingers, actively, act under the influence of this feeling, say, by endorsing and not showing much empathy toward those who disrespect the stated modernist norm and/or the norms of political correctness. The latter are gradually becoming dominant all over the world. According to such norms, one is to be as tolerant as possible in not shocking or embarrassing anyone, especially the others of the white man.

These norms of political correctness may be used against Deleuze's way of describing his "immaculate conception" as an action of "taking an author from behind and giving him a child".³⁷ Inverted right-wingers may be inclined to claim that this passage offends those who have actually been raped, albeit this passage allows a distinct reading: that the passage is a metaphor for an act of love that a lover (that is, the reader) takes regarding an object of love (that is, the author's works). Such lover deeply cares for this object in seeking to procreate with it so that the reader's own DNA and that of the author are conjoined into a new being. It is to be emphasized that Deleuze only applies his immaculate conception method to authors who deeply influenced him; not to his opponents.³⁸

It is also to be emphasized that, in the West, it seems that a transition is taking place. Some signs of this transition are: the end of institutionalized Black slavery and of the Jim Crow laws in the USA; the fact that women have the right to vote in most countries and that homosexuality is no longer usually described as a mental disorder and/or a crime; the fact that husbands who beat their wives are today more often

37. Gilles Deleuze, "Letter to a Harsh Critic", p. 6.

38. As Deleuze states, his "book on Kant's different" in that he "did it as a book about an enemy that tries to show how his system works". Gilles Deleuze, "Letter to a Harsh Critic", p. 6. Also see Gilles Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy [La Philosophie critique de Kant]*, Puf, 1963], trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, London, Athlone Press, 1984.

denounced than in the past and that a lot of women in the West are financially independent from their fathers or husbands; the election of Barack Obama; the #MeToo movement; all kinds of affirmative actions; etc.

Hence, the abstract object mentioned in (MCC 3) is gradually starting to no longer deserve to be called the white-man-in-itself. The reason is that concrete white men are starting to no longer be the ones who less explicitly fail to satisfy Western norms presupposed by all kinds of majorities. Perhaps, then, the abstract object mentioned in (MCC 3) will soon need to be renamed, say, the lamb-in-itself : an entity that, like the white-man-in-itself, behaves, uses language and even feels how each and every person is supposed to behave, use language and feel in accordance with all kinds of Western majorities. Distinct from the white-man-in-itself, the lamb-in-itself does so by being as tolerant as possible in not shocking or embarrassing anyone, especially the others of the white man. Those who more explicitly disrespect such norms of political correctness, then, may be called the others of the lamb-in-itself. Note that these others may be either males or females; white-skinned or black-skinned; heterosexuals or non-heterosexuals; etc

It is crucial to underline that this essay does not seek (in a right-wing way) to criticize or contribute to delay or impede the transition from the standard of the white-man-in-itself to that of the lamb-in-itself. The aim here is to indicate that new oppressions seem to be brought about by the latter standard, such as that of censoring art under the basis that it violates the new rules of political correctness in being too offensive.³⁹ What may be suggested, then, is that inverted right-wingers are, to put it metaphorically, the “slaves” of the lamb-in-itself. Accordingly, they do not seem to be libertarians who seek to be in agreement with what is singular about themselves. They also do not seem to be egalitarians to the extent that they do not seem to seek to defend the interests of a really universal community, but those of a gradually increasing majority that respects the new rules of political correctness. More directly, inverted right-wingers are merely very close-minded with respect to others who violate these rules.

The third metamodernist feature is that of paradoxically still satisfying, or at least aiming to satisfy the modernist norm according to which one's philosophizing must exhibit the three modernist features mentioned earlier. This is what we intended to do. To begin with, we have

39. Under the basis that Balthus's 1938 painting, “Therese Dreaming”, promotes pedophilia, thousands of people signed, in 2017, a petition for the removal of this painting from New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

pursued a prudent left-wing approach to disputes in a metamodernist way insofar as we have relied on a use of language that is, or at least intends to be, an alternative both to that of the analytic and the continental traditions. The use of language adopted here differs from that of analytic philosophers because no formal language was used, and we do not speak in the name of an alleged “ordinary language”. Indeed, the assumption that agreement with such a language is to be used as a criterion to deal with disputes was questioned throughout this paper. The use of language adopted here also differs from that of the continental tradition (especially, the Nietzschean French tradition) because the technical terms adopted here were explicitly defined in a prudent attempt to avoid the obscurity objection. Indeed, it is granted analytic philosophers that (1) through (13) make it easy for this objection to arise. The same, however, cannot be stated about (MCC 1) to (MCC 13).

Furthermore, an impersonation of an other regarding both the analytic and the continental traditions has also been pursued throughout this article. This other is someone whose aim is to articulate a philosophy that resists being qualified either as analytic or continental. A metaphor that illustrates the character played here is that of someone whose face is a deformed superposition of Carnap’s and Nietzsche’s. This character is also a prudent impersonation of one other of the lamb-in-itself, and its name may be “Friedrich Carnap”, “Rudolf Nietzsche”, “Gilles A. G. Moreira”, “Felipe G. A. Deleuze” or “F.G.A.M.”, to borrow from several poems of mine.⁴⁰

We have also praised and pointed toward a new context in which it would no longer be “shocking” or “embarrassing” to mention Deleuze in analytic circles or analytic philosophers in continental ones. This is a context in which the analytic-continental gap would no longer matter. Moreover, the very others of the lamb-in-itself would be taken to be part of a really universal community, as opposed to threats to narrow majorities. In proceeding in such a metamodernist way, our goal is also that of shocking or at least embarrassing those who overly self-defend themselves from the others of the lamb-in-itself, and/or from those who aim to close the analytic-continental gap. In other words, this paper is also a micro-political attempt to pressure right-wingers and inverted right-wingers to change their practices.

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40. Felipe G. A. Moreira, *Por uma estética do constrangimento*, Rio de Janeiro, ed. Oito e Meio, 2013.