

# Liberalism = B-Conservatism

## **Israel-Palestine Protests: A Concrete Liberal Event**

October 7, the Hamas-led attack on Southern Israel. And the worldwide protests that followed. To examine a concrete protest(s), the North American College ones. It is an appropriate representation of the popular Left; not the Left that is popular, rather the popular position in the Left. Despite the self-described Anti-Liberal attitude, one cannot help but notice a maximally efficient exhibit of liberal thought in their attitudes.

Protests, encampments, and definite demands - to financially divest from Israel, directly and indirectly. Every media interview answered by student delegates surrounds a major moral premise. "Look, we are against oppression of any kind. Take our encampment, we are accepting of everybody. There are prayer halls for Muslims, Christians, Jews, etc." An implicit moral value prescribed to the supposed-virtue of inclusivity. If anything, it is Mill's thesis in praxis.

The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it<sup>1a</sup>

Motivations for the political protests harbor a negative essence, a plea to stop Israel's violence on Palestinians. Even the support for Hamas, among leftists that is, exists insofar as Hamas is a contextually emergent force that can enact the negative.

The same point does not apply to today's anti-war protests. Far from a referendum on Palestinian, Israeli, or American power, they are driven primarily by a desperate plea simply to stop the killing of Palestinians in Gaza.<sup>2</sup> - (Protests of Despair, Slavoj Zizek)

That which is left unsaid can speak the loudest, hence a tangent must be addressed. A non-dogmatic analysis can only happen in an amoral sphere. In the case of Israel-Palestine, or more accurately, the Israel-Hamas conflict, both militant forces are unconsciously compelled to actions that necessitate the

existence of the other. Violent action, in a physical sense. Non-violent as the motivations still revolve around the protection of identity, the imaginary in Lacanian terms. Palestine, and its civilians, the consequential damage.

### **Structure of Liberalism: Inclusivity (Not-Absolute Permissiveness)**

Inclusivity colors the political climate of the now, pertaining to the liberals, maximally to the popular left. Liberals, as in comparable to the ethics of the Democratic Party, USA. It is a reference point heavily centered around America, but one simply cannot do away with biased references, there are no neutral centers, Thus, a start has to be at someplace.

Permissiveness with (minimal) constraint, the concept in addression. Now, the political spectrum moves on the variation of “minimality”. Least minimal constraints result in a liberal ideology, often viewed as conservative, i.e. libertarianism. Negative human rights operate as the constraint. Moving along, one finds the addition of positive human rights, in variation, producing the liberals and the popular leftists. We deal with variants of practical deontology here.

At times, the negative utilitarian residue of minimizing harm, ambiguous in conception, is subsumed by the constraint. Prevailing more on individual ethics than the political, a premise acknowledged by the symbolic of happiness (its pursuit). Hence, its appearance, as self-described motivation for leftist policies. Advocation for stronger positive human rights, social security, healthcare, etc. are grounded in this motivation.

Structure of the liberal ethic is negative. As Isiah Berlin notes -

The first of these political senses of freedom or liberty (I shall use both words to mean the same), which (following much precedent) I shall call the negative sense, is involved in the answer to the question 'What is the area within which the subject - a person or group of persons — is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons?'<sup>3</sup>

A problem appears when action must be taken. For liberalism asserts non-intervention - of various degrees, for example: some default intervention for

positive rights - in the act of the other, the positive aspect of action, the indispensable one, leaves untouched. Now, one has nothing on which to act, other than what was already there, the structurally conservative, essentialist values of the time.

Therefore, the Liberal doesn't exist. It's always Liberal, followed by the essentialist residue that allows for positive action. A Liberal Christian, a Liberal Hindu, a Liberal Muslim, a Liberal Capitalist, but never simply a Liberal.

## **B-Conservatism**

Liberalism can be conceptualized as B-Conservatism, Broad Conservatism. Back to the encampments, the protests, the prayer halls in them. When the war ends, divestments are completed, encampments stopped, what remains? To answer Zizek's joke, in this context-

I am prepared to sell my mother to slavery to see a sequel, V for Vendetta part 2, depicting the day after. Now that people took power, what will they do?

A milder conservatism, where conservatives maintain a respectful difference from other conservatives.

An inverse interplay of the horizontal and the vertical. The old order, the colonial one, perhaps the inadvertently tainted liberal order, according to critics, is maximally vertical. It imposes conservatism on the other, in depth.

Liberalism, of a maximal kind, the essence of modernity, transfigures depth into breadth. A horizontal collection of multiple muted conservatism(s), a lack of intensity, of aggression.

A common thread, the attempt to ensure safety, through structure. The colonial order advances that through imposition. Any rebellion against its constitution is subdued. Liberalism (B-Conservatism) warrants safety through morality, the emphasis on mutual respect, a task far easier due to the lack of intensity, the muted.

A Lack of Chaos. Radical Newness. Creativity.

Note on “conservatism”. On the one hand, it includes the concrete particulars of the now, religion, and its values. On the other, structural conservatism, especially ones that are non-religious. Valuations of the essential dogmatic norm, non-religiously espoused by Capitalism and Science (the dominant Kuhnian paradigm).

## **Democracy and Capitalism: Forms of Coagulated Fluctual B-Conservatism**

These are short comments.

Democracy as flux, limited by the context of the now. It can take the form of any-conservatism, an uncreative malleability that only deals with what is, what has been.

Democracy as coagulation, for in praxis one uniform group doesn't necessarily dominate the flux. At least, not completely. Coagulation is a feature that allows a uniformity to be formed, out of the n-conservatism significant enough to cause an impact.

Capitalism as flux, limited by the context of the market, another form of the now. Valuations in capitalism favours whatever succeeds in the market, i.e. the normative, the mediocre, the uncreative.

Capitalism as coagulation, for it's not only the most popular that succeeds in the market. Even the semi-popular, the niches, can survive. It's a core of a successful minor center of popular companies, followed by peripherals of niche.

## **Decolonization and B-Conservatism: Dussel (and Zizek)**

As an implication, decolonization becomes a variant of b-conservatism. Upon the realization that values, fields of study, dominant practices are implicitly tainted by eurocentric values, the colonist launches a prescriptive. To advance a conscious effort for the awareness of non-eurocentric ideas, and their practice. This is a conservative exercise. While the descriptive validity of the premise is accepted, European Conservatism to be countered with Indian or African Conservatism? Ressentiment.

Consider a prominent philosopher of decolonization, Enrique Dussel. The essay, *Are Many Modernities Possible?*, captures his idea of pluriversality best, an opposition to eurocentric univocal universality.

In the philosophy of liberation, we consider modernity as a real, concrete, singular, unique event (2) about which we have to discover its fundamental ontological structure, which pretends to impose itself as universal. This is the claim of domination itself. The universality of modernity, I assert, is an illusory claim that in the real historical process defined things in such a way that the supposed application to other cultures would be a falsification because of imitation.<sup>4</sup>

A recognition of the impossible, the application of modernity to non-European cultures. For the event is concrete and modernity is not a universal abstract, colored by the concrete values, cultural apparatus, and circumstances. What is the solution?

It is overcoming that threshold in order to situate the question beyond the horizon of modernity but subsuming valuable aspects that should not be undervalued but inserted within a different structure that then changes their nature.<sup>4</sup>

Ricoeur's conception of a "noyau éthico-mythique" is mentioned, the core that gives essence to the particular culture, its "fundamental ethos". Dussel's solution is the application of the essence of modernity, to the various "noyau éthico-mythique" cores, producing multiple modernities, universal modernity → transmodern pluriversality.

Is this not b-conservatism in action? Essentialist ideas form grounds, modernity is applied, to create a non-aggressive form of co-existence. In praxis, this offers no difference from, say, Zizek, a leftist philosopher often accused of "Eurocentrism".

Zizek's thesis: A critique of modernity, that is the particular eurocentric capitalist modernity, is only possible through Descartes' cogito. Without passing this "universal zero point", the current strain of decolonization can't exist.

What I'm saying is that the great thing about Europe, it's true Europeans did many horrible things, from colonization to Gulag, Holocaust, whatever - but at the same time, the only conceptual apparatus that I see to overcome Europe is again the progressive European legacy. This egalitarian European legacy, I claim, is something absolutely unique.<sup>5</sup>

His point is valid, given the context of theoretical modernity. A reading of Descartes' cogito, an emergence of a universal event, developed on the grounds of historical contingency. It's this "essence of modernity" that Dussel aims to utilize in creating the multiple transmodernities.

### **Residue: More on Zizek and Dussell**

Despite an analogous comparison of praxis, Zizek can't be considered a liberal, even in the maximal sense as Dussell. I have no plans to leave nothing unsaid, so an illumination of their difference calls out.

On historical ideals. Dussell, like other moralist philosophers, seeks a true world variant.

In this way, we would advance in the following centuries toward a situation not of a universal culture (where one would refuse the right of others and impose its singularity as universality, which was modernity's claim) but instead of being respectful of the alterity of other positions.<sup>4</sup>

Zizek refrains from any anticipations, prescriptives, for the future. Even citing that to be the reason for his preference for Hegel over Marx. Future as one of radical openness, one that we realize precisely when it has already arrived, the owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the coming of the dusk.

On the issue of morality. Dussel is a traditional moralist, while Zizek isn't. While he isn't an amoralist, he is explicitly against amorality, comments on deconstructionist relativism, "I would like to live in a society where individuals who tolerate rape are disqualified immediately..."; nonetheless, not a moralist. Rather the emphasis is on ethics, in a Lacanian fashion.

In speaking of the ethics of psychoanalysis, I chose a word which to my mind was no accident. I might have said "morality" instead. If I say

"ethics," you will soon see why. It is not because I take pleasure in using a term that is less common.<sup>6</sup>

The importance is for “radical ethical acts”, one that produces the radically open, unpredictable, future.

Dussell, however, dogmatically asserts moral realism, eluding the is-ought problem explicitly, constructing his thesis on said assumption.

At this juncture, I offer an overview, not an exhaustive analysis, of the “transition” from descriptive statements to normative ones. The entire problematic of a possible dialectical- material grounding—not of an abstract and formal “deduction”—of “normative judgments” starting with “judgments of fact” about life constitutes just this. Once again, I point out that the “naturalist fallacy” that Hume indicated in his *Treatise of Human Nature*, is situated at an abstract, logical- formal level. My account, instead, situates itself at a material level (of practical- material reason), which requires new logical developments. Is it possible, materially and concretely, to make explicit normative statements from descriptive statements?<sup>7</sup>

No concrete critiques are to be offered. Rather dense jolts on the abstract method. First, the emphasis on practical-material reason. While it may not be in favor of the dominant norm, through the contextual virtue of practicality, it still appeals to a normative ideal: that (supposedly) better explains the actual circumstances.

Next, a Deleuzian critique. Dussell’s arguments are contaminated by the Dogmatic Image of Thought.


My argument, meanwhile, runs along another level (the concrete, or material), which sees every major descriptive premise as having an ethical aspect, because it is human life, free and responsible, to which I always refer); and for that reason, my argument has another point of departure and of arrival. **No one can deny that** every statement that refers to the facts of the living human being, inasmuch as “living” and inasmuch as “human,” ought to be considered as merely descriptive;  
[...]

On the other hand, **no one can deny that** the human being as subject, in the first place, has his or her life, although this might be lived most of the time under the auspices of self-organized institutions, under a certain self-conscious control (as higher neural- cerebral function).<sup>7</sup>

We would do better to ask what is a subjective or implicit presupposition: it has the form of ‘Everybody knows. . .’. Everybody knows, in a pre-philosophical and pre-conceptual manner . . . everybody knows what it means to think and to be . . . As a result, when the philosopher says ‘I think therefore I am’, he can assume that the universality of his premisses – namely, what it means to be and to think . . . – will be implicitly understood, and that no one can deny that to doubt is to think, and to think is to be . . . **Everybody knows, no one can deny, is the form of representation and the discourse of the representative.**<sup>8</sup>  
- (Difference and Repetition, Gilles Deleuze)

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