



Ethic authorial dialogism as a candidate for post-postmodernism

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Before burying philosophical postmodernism, let me briefly appreciate its important contributions: its emphasis on human voices and human subjectivities—however, disagreeable, incomprehensible, inconsistent and irrational they may be partially or fully—and its great efforts to make sense of the Other's consciousness by grounding it within the Other's ontology yet, without sliding into a deficit model. 'Consciousness of the Other is opaque and non-transparent,' says postmodernism. Amen. I appreciate postmodernism for its rejection of Grand Narratives with their objectifying bird's/God's eye's views. Bravo for your struggles against Old Premodernism, Modernism, and Neo-Premodernism (Matusov, 2015) of social engineering powerfully re-emerging in our time of fake news and 'managed democracies'.¹ Finally yet importantly, thank you, postmodernism, for your tireless deconstruction of any power, including your own.

Having said all that, I want to turn to three main mutually related challenges that for the last 60 years, postmodernism has not been able to address adequately. First, postmodernism is guilty of relativism: diverse voices are either disengaged ('let's agree to disagree') or eclectically and idiosyncratically described. Second, it cannot address satisfactorily the concept of truth, letting Neo-Premodernism exploit postmodernist critique of positivist truth by deconstructing any truths (e.g., global climate warming) that Neo-Premodernism may want to target and justify 'alternative facts' as legitimate voices of the Other. Third, by deconstructing any power, postmodernism leads to a paralysis of the will.

Whatever 'post-postmodernism' might offer, it should preserve the achievements of Postmodernism while addressing its challenges. A good candidate is 'ethic authorial dialogism,' stemming from the philosophy of Mikhail Bakhtin (1986, 1993, 1999). Bakhtinian philosophical dialogism is based on three pillars:

- (1) Dialogism is inescapable and ubiquitous in any human relations, even if in a distorted way.
- (2) Meaning is a dialogic relationship between genuinely interested questions and seriously provided answers.
- (3) Dialogism is based on 'a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, [that] combine but are not merged in the unity of the event' (Bakhtin, 1999, p. 6, the italics is original) when people take each other seriously. Consciousnesses themselves cannot be equal to each other – only their rights—because consciousnesses are unique, immeasurable, unfinalizable and opaque both oneself and to each other.

Voices and deeds are authored by people via creative transcendence of the culturally, socially and politically given, recognised by others and themselves in a dialogue. This recognition of authorship is always evaluative, involving the ethics of humanly 'good' or 'bad'. People accept voluntary and, at times, are forced to accept responsibility for their authorship by answering challenging questions raised about their authorship. Through this process, they gain and lose their alliances and reputations and receive rewards and punishments for their authorship.

Thus, I argue, Ethic Authorial Dialogism overcomes the relativism of postmodernism, the positivism of Modernism, the dogmatism of Old Premodernism and the irresponsible manipulation of Neo-Premodernism. The Dialogue itself grounds Truth and not opaque atomistic subjectivities (post-modernism), transparent universal objectivity (Modernism), divine authority (Old Premodernism) or the power of winners (Neo-Premodernism). Finally, power and will are rehabilitated in a dialogic process of taking responsibility for their authorial actions and ideas (Matusov & Marjanovic-Shane, 2015).

Note

1. Putin's advisor Vladislav Surkov coined this term in an article articulating Putin's political philosophy in the mid 2000s.

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