

**To cite text:**

Segura Herrera, Esaú (2023), "Gestures of Repetition: Commentary on *Infrapolítica, instrucciones de uso*", *Philosophy and Society* 34 (1): 145–149.

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## GESTURES OF REPETITION: COMMENTARY ON INFRAPOLÍTICA, INSTRUCCIONES DE USO

Summary: Commentary on Alberto Moreiras' book *Infrapolítica, instrucciones de uso* (2020), Madrid: La Oficina, 248 pp.

*In any case, there would be no future without repetition.  
And thus, as Freud might say (this would be his thesis),  
there is no future without the specter of the violence...*

– Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever:  
A Freudian Impression*

Formulating any idea or problem requires the right words for their enunciation, but the style of the presentation is equally, if not even more important. When it is necessary to recur to a certain form of writing, and also to certain tropes, then perhaps it is less about aesthetics, than the difficulty to account for certain impasses in thought. Therefore, instead of resorting to certain figures as ornaments to articulate such problems of thought, it is sometimes the case that these figures are inherently the operation of their very content.

In my view, Alberto Moreiras's most recent book, *Infrapolítica: instrucciones de uso* (La Oficina, 2020), should fall into this category of writing. This work proposes a unique shift in regard to the contemporary horizons of political action and thought. In fact – and very surreptitiously – it is possible to locate within it the constant stylistic endeavor, chapter by chapter, that is relatively marginal to the content revealed by the author in each one of them. In other words, while seemingly in the background, the stylistic aspect is actually one of the common denominators that inter-relate, but do not identify, the various chapters. What is this style, surely one of many found in the text? The book itself announces it from the first lines, but with particular forcefulness at the end of the second chapter, under the subtitle "Piel de lobo" (wolfskin).



I am particularly keen to grapple with two of the many aspects dealt with in that short chapter. And in order to extract these key points that guide a possible reading of the book as a whole, I would like to briefly summarize some excerpts from the section in question. The first of these aspects stands out for its focus on what it refers to as “the aporia of time” – the intersection of at least two discordant times. It does not require a huge leap to imagine this problem in concrete terms: for example, we can find it in one generation’s struggle with both its predecessor and successor. In fact, a discord usually exists between each of their languages, or between the attire of an earlier and new epoch, corresponding to reactionary and progressive political positions as described in the text. However, one can never truly identify either the merely new or the merely old in their supposed purity because, although we can “define” the old and the new in terms of age or the number of years, it also holds true they each inhabit a contemporaneity, which we could describe as differential. Aporia arises precisely here, in the never-quite-complete overlapping or resolution of an era with respect to itself. Hence, we can now isolate that first feature that says: there is aporia. That, in turn, can lead to an impasse.

The second aspect that interests me are the operations that each political position uses to try to resolve such an aporia. This task goes completely against the internal logic of the dualism of progressive and reactionary reason. On the one hand, in regard to progressive reason, the resource is the utopian narrativization, facing the pure positivity of the future and progress towards it, trying to detach it from all *previous* vestiges. On the other hand, in terms of reactionary reason, the resource is the denarrativization of the future, which also uses the appeal to pedagogy of an apparently absolute and inescapable past. However, Moreiras distinguishes these respective operations, based on the ideas of Benjamin, between the structures of the novel and of the story. In the case of the former, the narrative and conceptualization prevail, whereas in the case of the story, the importance lies in the repetition of structures of temporary affections and substances. So, if a utopia narrativizes and creates concepts, reaction repeats, or at least tries to repeat, structures. What is striking in this alternative, is that the text places infrapolitics on the side of those who are usually associated with the political reaction, from characters in some novels by Del Valle-Inclán, to authors such as Donoso and Schmitt. Does infrapolitics, according to Moreiras’ book, represent a reactionary political position?

Perhaps the question is based on false premises. Or false at least in relation to the text itself. Because if indeed there is a singular interest for the characters of reaction, this is less a result of what they have or have not done with respect to a political alternative, than the repetitive production of a remnant that destabilizes the organization itself whereby that alternative is possible. It strikes me that an element of subjective advantage of reaction with regards to progressivism is implicit in the text. Insofar as the latter is recognized for its absolute positivity, self-referentiality, and will to power, reaction inhabits the contradiction of longing for a past that it already knows beforehand has been irretrievably lost. If the progressivist does not stop advancing, or in any case

believes so, nor stop constructing the story of his legitimation, on the contrary, a reactionary not only cannot follow him, but also cannot go back, because in fact there is no way of doing so. His place is the place of incessant repetition of an aporetic impasse, one of recovering a time lost beforehand. So, any act carried out by a reactionary in favor of a cause, which is already lost beforehand, best case scenario places himself in a position from which he can manage neither to save the cause, nor to remove it, or at least not completely. For there is a remnant of that cause that escapes capture by both reaction and progressivism and that places the subject in a radically heterogeneous subjective position.

Up to this point, hopefully these fragmentary observations at least contribute to raise interest in reading this book. For my part, I refrain from commenting further at the point when it is finally possible to isolate the two aspects to which I referred above. The figure of reaction has been the place in which these two aspects have been revealed, notably: the facts of aporia and repetition. And, the form of presenting these features is through inhabiting an incessant and violent aporetic repetition. I can now say that this formulation shows the style, or at least one of the styles, with which the book functions, because it is less an exposition of content, than the operation, the exercise of that which it in and of itself pretends to enunciate. In other words, each of its nine chapters repeats each time an aporetic gesture. Even more specifically, each chapter repeats having to deal with the variations of the form of these mis-encounters. Using this style, then, instead of conceptualizing or narrating, Alberto Moreiras tells a story. But one which is never the same, similarly to someone counting the beads on a necklace.

Now, what is being told (or counted)? The story tells the remnant that exists in the always-unsolvable and irreducible distance between at least two terms: to be and to think, life and politics, history and events. And what is noticeable from these pairs is mainly each one's attempt to capture the other. If in the identification of being and thinking, for example, one can place the ontotheological fate of the West, in the same way it is true that the only sign of this identification is generally only its representation. This is why taking a step back may be taking us by its insistent destabilizing mobilization. Hence, the recurrent act in the variations that the book offers is precisely the destitution of an organization, stemming from the same principle which enables it. Therefore, the apparent submission to divine law above human law allows Antigone to subtract an act which is always insistently *outside* of politics. It is the law, even recovered as a partial object, which destabilizes the law in general. Or also, challenging the ideas of Heidegger, for Maria Zambrano it is nothing but the lack of an inheritance what allows the production of a certain fate *outside* of the ontotheological fate. But perhaps more clearly in relation to Reiner Schürmann, the principle of anarchy which asks for the destabilization of all organizations, continues to be in itself an organizational principle to destabilize, *ad infinitum*?

These are just three variations offered by the book, where that which is altered, destabilized, removed, is the binary logic characteristic of Western

thought and action. For Antigone, it is not about choosing between submitting to the law or not; for Zambrano, it is neither about reifying the necessity or otherwise of an inheritance, as for the Carlist reactionary portrayed in the book, even unintentionally, the choice ceases to be one between reaction and progressivism. In all of these cases, what is at stake is the production of a gesture irreducible to the organization of each of those alternatives; a production which, even apparently later in time, is in the same way prior to the alternative itself: hence the introduction of another aporia. In all these variations, it is less about making the choice for the alternative than the passage *between* them. It is not so much about the alternative that goes from *fort* to *da*, with its subsequent reifying risk, as it is about a game of its repetition, the passage *between* absence and presence, previous to the organization of this binarism, but for which each term cannot be without its “opposite”; who could say which came first, presence or absence? This question engulfs the philosophical destiny of the West. Repetition is that of an aporetic impasse. But to inhabit this aporia is at the same time to cancel the possibility of capture by any of its sides. Neither simply being nor simply thinking, neither simply life nor simply politics, neither simply history nor simply events. Would we need to point at this *in-between*, as the place for infrapolitics?

What does this, which can only be superficially described as apolitical, imply for the most classical political decision and militancy? People die every day, they are incarcerated, murdered, and marginalized due to political and hegemonic decisions; even if its ontotheological character is specified, what kind of positioning does the infrapolitical position represent in relation to them? In as much as the repetition of this *in-between* is also the violent insistence on destabilizing the terms of any archontic organization – including leftist militant activists, it would be a false problem to suppose that this book forces us to choose between action and inaction. Since the retreat it announces does not cease to suppose a certain activity, that is, the stepping backwards with respect to identifying life and politics, but also any other captivating and substantivizing identification of a headless real. What is this about if an activity is no longer subject to the limitations of any representative binarism? Although, to be honest, there is not any representative and ontotheological logic which does not already contain the *in-between* of its destabilization. For this reason, perhaps the book is in itself the result of its epochal aporia. In fact, is it a post-universitarian discursive bet on infrapolitics, or is it in itself an infrapolitical gesture? The latter would reveal the singular statute of the author’s role. But perhaps not only one or the other, but between them, from which another remnant is produced by its own paradox; knowingly: that the only instructions are that there are no instructions.

On the other hand, the destabilizing stepping-back of the instructions that says there are no instructions, the stepping-back of the principle without principles, cannot go on without its instituting correlate. This raises a question that I find is missing from the book: in that incessant repetition, always backwards, in retreat, what about its *end*? Is it even thinkable? Without sidestepping the

ambiguity that comes from speaking of *ends*, is this an interminable repetition? Or is it again another false dilemma? It seems to me that there exists a pending discussion in relation to the concrete struggles of subalternity, with which the book itself states that it engages. On the contrary, it asks “what should we do” in the middle of the paradox? This is a question always lying ahead of us.

