

To Have Done with the End of Philosophy

Alain Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, Translated, Edited and with an Introduction by Norman Madarasz (Albany, SUNY Press, 1999)

Alain Badiou, *Deleuze. The Clamor of Being*, Translated and with a Preface by Louise Burchill (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2000)

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The end of the end of philosophy?

The recent appearance of the two short texts under review by the French philosopher Alain Badiou should prove to be an extremely significant contribution to the ongoing transformation of this rather badly defined field we've come to know as Continental philosophy. More drastically, we might argue that Badiou's work, given a certain framework for its reception, will serve to extract said field from the self-imposed, one could even say theorised, stalemate it finds itself in today. To borrow one of the philosophemes which Badiou so readily coins in his polemical mode, this *oeuvre* could help to signal the beginning of the 'End of the End of philosophy'.¹

Or then again, it might not. Just as Badiou presents us with the traits of a Heideggerian and a Deleuzian *doxa*, a *doxa* which he occasionally succumbs to despite himself, so it would not be impossible to envisage the emergence of a Badioudian *doxa* ready to block a true confrontation with the radicality and rigor of his work. Lacking a translation of Badiou's

¹ 'The (Re)turn of Philosophy Itself' in *Manifesto for Philosophy* (MP), p.121. Two texts from *Conditions* (Seuil, 1991) are appended to the English translation of *Manifesto*, the other one being 'Definition of Philosophy'.

magnum opus, *L'Être et l'événement* (Seuil, 1988), a text whose mode of presentation could not be more foreign to the reigning philosophical *status quo*, we are fortunate to have available to us these two 'minor' texts in English. In conjunction they could serve both as antidotes against an assimilation of Badiou which would enucleate his properly 'subversive' potential, and as a means to channel his reception towards the contested ground of ontology, politics and eventality.

In *Manifesto for Philosophy*, a text which arose out of the debates which followed the appearance of *L'Être et l'événement* in France, we have an unequivocal, though inevitably (and unfortunately for the English reader) unsubstantiated, statement of the *decisions* upon which Badiou's *oeuvre* is based formulated in a frontal and highly dismissive polemic against the post-Heideggerian and/or postmodernist *consensus*, which in Badiou's view dominated the French scene circa 1989 (one should not forget that the positions attacked by Badiou have suffered a certain weakening since the date of its original publication, as they have, perhaps with some delay and different effects, in the Anglo-Saxon world). The *contra Heidegger* which dominates *Manifesto* is complemented, or rather, overtaken by, the *contra Deleuze* of *The Clamor of Being*. This change of adversaries is both a tactical/opportunistic move and the indication of a difference in kind in the style and object of the polemic.

There are certainly many elements in common, both explicit and implicit, in these two polemics: the re-invention of the categories of Truth and Subject over against a legacy of Nietzschean critique; the question of the Event; the link between politics and a rebirth of ontology; the articulation of (European) Nihilism and Capitalism; etc. What distinguishes them is that while the Heideggerian approach is considerably (though effectively) caricatured, presented in its role as an opinion-gathering *cliché* which supports the crypto-teleology and crypto-totalization of the 'end of philosophy', and dismissed pretty much in its totality, Deleuze is presented as an *intimate* adversary whose system is worthy of a *conceptual* confrontation. This is true insofar as Deleuze's system works under the same four philosophical injunctions as Badiou's: one, metaphysics cannot die a so-called natural death, inscribed in its very essence (for it is neither historical nor does it possess an essence), it can only be stifled by sophistry and opinion; two, the task of philosophy is an immanent thought of the multiple (or of multiplicity); three, disorientation, in other words the disharmony and 'rootlessness' of the present (European Nihilism), can be faithfully conceptualised without falling prey to either nostalgia or negative

theology; and four, as Badiou recently put it during a conference at the ICA, “the freedom of opinion is the enemy of philosophy”. In other words, the polemic *contra Deleuze* is one against a philosophical contemporary, the one *contra Heidegger* a preliminary destruction as a prelude to a reinvention of philosophy which would actually allow it to confront its contemporary tasks.

To set the stage for the *disputatio* with Deleuze, I shall approach the *Manifesto* in terms of four key traits: one, the way it polemically positions Badiou with regard to the various traditions which constitute the present philosophical landscape (as we shall see, they have quite a few foes in common); two, the manner in which it presents an incisive critique of the ‘end of philosophy’ dogma; three, the question of Capital and technology; four, a brief discussion of the concept of the generic in terms of the characteristics of the Badiouian event.

Philosophical polemics

The list of Badiou’s *anti-s* is rather long, perhaps even longer than Deleuze’s, and the style of the *Manifesto* is more than effective in its irreverent and clinical character in rallying the sympathetic reader against the hordes of sophists and pious clerks which threaten the birth - the *invention* - of a contemporary philosophy worthy of its name. The unsympathetic reader will undoubtedly find Badiou arrogant, manipulative and peremptory, but then again it would be myopic not to see Badiou’s very originality as one of the very few deft philosophical polemicists around in a time when the democracy of thought serves mostly to hide the lack of rigor and conviction. For a particularly amusing and acerbic sample of Badiou’s invective I would point the reader to chapter 5, where he happily refers to all speculations on the link between technics and metaphysics as “uniformly ridiculous” “reactionary nostalgia” and concludes by singing a brief hymn to the unbridled creation of new, more effective machines, to the tune of “Gentlemen technicians, one more effort, if you are truly working towards the planetary reign of technology!”.²

Before we look at Badiou’s bold thesis, that for philosophy to be invented anew it must become a ‘Platonism of the multiple’, the thesis which in a sense both envelops all the arguments in *Manifesto* and organises the confrontation with Deleuze (for better or worse...) we should

² MP, p.54

note how the other foundational decisions of his system, here presented as theses or philosophemes, are all strictly coupled to a complementary dismissal of one philosophical line or other. Here is a brief list of the preliminary requirements of a Platonism of the multiple together with their *anti* -s:

A militant subject which is not a subject of <i>experience</i> .	Anti-Phenomenology
An <i>objectless</i> subject and an <i>objectless</i> truth.	Anti-Epistemology
A system constructed around its own crisis (its own <i>void</i>).	Anti-Spinozism
An event which is decoupled from <i>temporality</i> .	Anti-Bergsonism

Of course, the indispensable requirement for any philosophy to take place, be it Platonist or not, is to have done with the ‘end of philosophy’.

The concept of suture

Badiou presents us with what is perhaps the most effective critique of the very conditions for what has become the nostalgic, crepuscular, and ultimately reactionary tonality of much of European philosophy. The thesis, in brief, runs as follows: philosophy suffers its ‘supposed’ end due to *sutures* to its non-philosophical conditions. By suture (a concept borrowed from Lacan) Badiou refers to the practice whereby philosophy binds its fate and practice to that of one of its conditions. Given the four conditions of philosophy: politics, science, art, and love, a political suture, e.g. Marxism, destines philosophy to its incorporation and neutralisation by a particular political program; a scientific suture, e.g. Positivism, makes philosophical practice ancillary to the clarification of scientific problems; *Idem* for artistic sutures, e.g. Romanticism, and amorous ones. As we shall see, the efficacy of philosophy depends for Badiou on a very precise relationship between philosophy and its conditions. Philosophy relies upon these conditions for the generic procedures whose truth it captures, but remains independent of them in terms both of its modalities of conceptualisation and of its effects.

The dogma of the ‘end of philosophy’ depends on a double, or crossed, suture. On the one hand, we have the belief in a complicity between philosophy as a ‘metaphysics of subjectivity’ and the fate of technologically over-determined totalitarianism (the historico-political suture), on the other, the hoped-for indiscernibility of post-philosophical thought and poetics (the artistic suture). Not only do we witness how

philosophy abandons its self-consistency to mourn its self-imposed (insincere, pompous) guilt and thereby commits itself to the detour of poetic thought, but this very strategy (for that is, after all, what we have before us) puts philosophy's conditions into a position of dissimulated subordination, thus robbing them of their status as independent procedures. Why, after all, asks Badiou, would we ever think it evident that the fate of Nazism and that of metaphysics are linked, that the Shoah is a philosophical event?³ That Badiou's positions manage to foster a deep suspicion with regard to this philosophy of mourning, of guilt, is a testament to their vitality, and should be reason enough to generate interest in readers who find themselves at odds with the philosophical and political consequences of the current dogma.

Unfortunately, in a typically philosophical urge to align his several ongoing polemics with each other Badiou makes the mistake of partly blaming Nietzsche, the grand 'sophist' who dethroned the categories of truth and subject, for philosophy's poetic suture.⁴ Would it not be more correct (and certainly more interesting) to see Nietzsche's syncopated trajectory as a constant, often virulent, practice of *desuturation*? Isn't *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, as self-critique, the very exemplar of this practice? Much the same could be said of Nietzsche's relationship with science, as it oscillates between, on the one hand, moments of suture, and, on the other, moments of both lucid critique and engagement with science's most demanding propositions.

The militant and the philosopher

Ultimately, and Badiou is quite forthright about it in *The Clamor of Being*, the issue turns around the triad event-subject-truth. Both the polemical line undertaken in *Manifesto* and Badiou's more speculative endeavours depend on the urgency of a demand: that philosophy be able to think the

³ Cf. MP, p.29-30. Unfortunately, there are signs that Badiou succumbs to this typically philosophical *hubris* whilst formulating a philosophical ethics of the event in 'The (Re)turn of Philosophy Itself', when he writes: "These [Nazism, Stalinism, and 'Parliamentary Capitalism'] are the empirical, historic destinations of disastrous philosophemes handed over to execution." [MP 132] To reinstate this empirical/transcendental divide obfuscates the specifically political genesis of this century's disasters and effectively betrays one of the most appealing of Badiou's indications for a new philosophy, the project of *desuturation*.

⁴ MP, p.66.

discontinuous production of *evental* subjects and their correlative truths as interruptions or ‘holes’ in the fabric of knowledge, or ‘normal’ being. To attest to the “opacity of intervention”, which for Badiou characterised events as diverse as the Chinese Revolution and the Second Vienna School, Badiou *must* undermine, as we saw above, almost the totality of living philosophical traditions and re-invent its two most contested terms: subject and truth. Both are thought under the aegis of the event as emergence of the singular inconsistency (the void) of any situation, in fact, of being as such.

Only if we grasp Badiou’s relentless focus upon these *rare* instances of immanent militancy (a true composer is also a militant in Badiou’s terms) will it be clear why he so trenchantly denies phenomenology (for its insistence on continuity and experience), Bergsonism (for its vision of a full being), or analytic philosophy (for its denial of radical novelty in the form of a linguistic transcendentalism).⁵ Philosophy is, after all, not ontology, and Badiou’s equation of ontology with mathematics (i.e. set theory) also depends on what we could call the system’s primitive ethical demand: that it attest to the rarity of militancy and events. This rarity, and the necessity to account for it drive Badiou’s critique against the ‘end of philosophy’, in the form of an attack against its radical inability to invent a thought which would be able to correspond to the events of our day. Badiou’s is ultimately an ethico-political indictment: in its systematic anti-systematicity, its speculative totalitarianism, (as in its concern with Absolute alterity) post-Heideggerian philosophy effectively stifles the recognition, or rather, in Badiou’s terms, the *naming* of events, and ends-up, in its pseudo-poetic fascination for the to-come, underwriting the return of the same.

Whilst concurring to a great degree with this diagnosis of the poverty of contemporary philosophy, I’d like to point out the adverse consequences of Badiou’s fidelity to the *event* as rare, to the *subject* as finite fragment of a post-event objectless truth, and to *truth* itself as the event of the inconsistency of a situation. As he recognises in *The Clamor of Being*, the only way to maintain and re-invent these terms, in other words, to account for the truth of militancy, is effectively to re-invent *meontology* (an

⁵ This *rarity* of the event makes the translation of *événemential* with ‘eventful’ (in both the texts under review) somewhat misleading to the reader not previously acquainted with Badiou’s theses.

ontology of the void),⁶ in terms of equating Being, through set-theory, to the “multiple-composition of the void”.⁷ While it would be rather daunting to discuss this thesis in its own right, and especially lacking the technical articulation provided it in *L'Être et l'événement*, let us briefly look at what results from this Platonism of the multiple. Having denied not only the phenomenological subject (no subject of experience, only a subject of the event), but the continuity of Being as well, Badiou is led to deny the philosophical significance of temporality. The only temporality given is the *futur antérieur*, the *après-coup* of the event's naming, a temporality which is clearly formal and owes nothing to duration, in other words, a temporality of signification. It is useful to compare Badiou and Deleuze on this question of experience, and to do so in terms of Deleuze's own distinction between the *ironist* and the *humorist*. Badiou, an example of the former, seeks to dethrone the very principle of experience, which he regards as rooted in the fullness of sense, in the continuity of a subject. Deleuze's anti-phenomenological stance is, on the contrary, deeply ‘humorous’: the idea is to take pure experience to its utmost consequences, dissolving its link to a subject/object distinction, making it radically *impersonal*.

Badiou's ‘meontology’ of the event also commits him to a strange position on the interaction of science, technology and Capitalism. Insofar as the event depends on Being's inconsistency and subtraction with regards to the law of the One, on a “subtractive ontology” which undoes philosophy's organicist tendencies, how are we to respond to the claims that Capitalism is this ontology's ‘historical medium’ and that “philosophy has not yet thought in level terms with capital”?⁸ Is Capitalism a sort of ‘event of eventality’, a radically novel rending of the ties that characterised a pre-capitalist *life-world* in which events had no place? This conclusion

⁶ It is worth quoting Badiou at length here to make evident the ethico-political dimension of his opposition to Deleuze with regard to the question of novelty and multiplicity: “As for myself, however, I cannot bring myself to think that the new is a fold of the past [...]. This is why I conceptualise absolute beginnings (which requires a theory of the void) [...]. Deleuze always maintained that, in doing this, I fall back into transcendence and into the equivocity of analogy. But, all in all, if the only way to think a political revolution, an amorous encounter, an invention of the sciences, or a creation of art as distinct infinities - having as their condition incommensurable separative events - is by sacrificing immanence (which I do not believe is the case, but that is not what matters here) and the univocity of Being, then I would sacrifice them.” *Deleuze. The Clamor of Being* (DCB), p.92. On the void, see MP, p.143, 153.

⁷ DCB, p.89.

⁸ MP, p.58.

would appear repugnant to Badiou, who, whilst attacking the Deleuzian *doxa* for its fascination with Capitalism, seems nevertheless plagued by a typically philosophical ambivalence towards it. A transcendental merit (to have done with the pious rootedness of rural modes of life, with the cyclical nature of the Asiatic mode of production, thus opening the way for a thought and a practice of the event) is combined with a recognition of the empirical barbarity of capitalism (lower case). If we combine the two statements above we can see that ultimately for Badiou there is nothing to think *in* Capitalism itself, which as a medium only reveals the ahistorical ontology of the multiple, neither for philosophy (for which it cannot play the role of an event) nor for politics (which like all generic procedures is without an object). We might also wonder whether the opposition between the absolute a-temporal novelty of the event and capitalism's "mediocre prescription (the general computation of time)"⁹ does not provide an obstacle rather than an impulse to the effort of thinking through forms of resistance to the present.

The same emerges from his treatment of technology and from the (inevitable) reinstatement of its *de jure* separation from science. Rightly attacking the dogma that "science does not think" Badiou falls into the opposite trap, which he seems to gladly welcome, of Platonizing science into a radically useless, 'immaterial' pursuit.¹⁰ This criterion of objectless which defines both the subject and the truth of the event seems quite alien to the natural sciences and the subtle negotiations they exhibit between 'experimenter' and 'experimented'. It is hardly incidental that there is what I'd be tempted to call a second-order *suture* of science and mathematics.

The generic and the indiscernible

Since these might be what Badiou calls, by no means dismissively, "matters of taste", or rather of fidelity, I'd like to turn to the ontological core of Badiou's argument, the category of the *generic*. Badiou's turn to set theory is in great part based on a radical denial both of the philosophical dignity of the concept of *experience* and of the primacy of

⁹ MP, p.57. Since Badiou denies the value of any account, however impersonal, of the *experience* of time (duration), it is difficult to see how his notion of the event presents us with a relationship to time which would oppose that of 'computation'.

¹⁰ MP, p.55.

language. Insofar as truth must be re-invented as objectless – and here Badiou concurs with Deleuze and Guattari in seeing truth-as-correspondence as the apex of philosophical inanity – but not given over to the pre-ontological muteness of pure sense nor to the mysticism of the extra-linguistic, Badiou must deal with the problem of the *indiscernible*. The latter is defined as that which cannot be named but which nevertheless can be conceptualised. The set-theoretical concept of a generic multiplicity serves for Badiou to desuture both being and language *and* being and experience, opening the way for a new configuration of the aforementioned triad of subject-truth-event.

I'd like to retain only the essentials from this question of truth and the generic. Under the epochal constraint of a thought which does not support itself on any conception of the One, Badiou defines truth as the singular, *extra-linguistic*, production of a multiplicity within one of its four regimes of production, the four 'conditions' of philosophy. To maintain the category of truth (the Platonism) without recourse to transcendence, Badiou must envisage truth as a supplement, neither a nameable part nor a transcendent object. Ignoring for the time being the precise set-theoretical articulation of the generic multiplicity and the situation it supplements, let us examine Badiou's key argument, that truth *will have been* that which brings to light the groundless ground [*le fond sans fond*], the inconsistency, of a situation. Given that this inconsistency is the *void* of foundation in the form of the indiscernible, uncounted, unnamed multiplicity, are we not dealing rather than with the truth of *this* situation, with the truth of situations *as such*? What is singular about *this* inconsistency? For it is not enough to re-state the set-theoretical solution that every multiple is a multiple of a multiple to escape not the indiscernibility, but the *indifference* of the void. Are truths differentiated only by their naming, by the decisive intervention of naming? It seems that the twin requirements of immanence and multiplicity, as formulated in Badiou's mathematical meontology, may fail to maintain, to *defend*, the singularity of an event without paradoxically stripping it of the very traits which differentiate it, save for the opaqueness of an irreflexive militancy and the void of a name. Though a thorough inquiry into *L'Être et l'événement*¹¹ might prove me hopelessly wrong on this count, I have brought it up insofar as it mirrors the crucial issue in Badiou's own attack on Deleuze.

¹¹Especially Meditations 33 through 37.

Badiou *contra* Deleuze

What drives Badiou throughout *The Clamor of Being* is the conviction that Deleuze's philosophy, with which he admittedly shares the same general objective (an immanent thought of the multiple) and some of the same enemies (phenomenology and analytic philosophy), fails to attest to the singularity of events and ends up denying their novelty in favour of the metamorphic persistence of a One-All. The ontological articulation and the political stakes are indissociable. By extracting from Deleuze's work a core "metaphysics of the One" Badiou effectively enucleates its political significance, turning constructivism into contemplation.

This is not to say that Badiou's endeavour is either unsubstantiated or self-serving. It should not, I think, be criticised for ignoring the work with Guattari, nor for disregarding, as Badiou himself puts it, Deleuze's specific indications. Rather one should welcome it as a rare confrontation with the 'classical' core of Deleuze's philosophy, and confront Badiou's assessment, including his political one, on that level. After all, any reader of Deleuze thrown into "apoplexy" (as Wlad Godzich claims they will be on the dust jacket for the book) by Badiou's indictment of a Deleuzian *doxa* as well as by his articulation of Deleuze's most abstract theses, could only be a bad reader of Deleuze, one unwilling to take him seriously as a metaphysician. Good riddance to these "little Deleuzians"¹². There is, of course, a palpable scorn in Badiou's pages on the desiring *barbus*, redolent of old internecine battles amongst the French left, but with the advantage of temporal and geographical distance, we can look on these as rather inessential, not to say somewhat depressing, and move on ...

Unfortunately, Badiou himself is too eager to undo the reign of the joyous schizo and often engages in a rather excessive swing in the opposite direction which subtracts from the considerable interest of his confrontation with the most daunting aspects of Deleuze's thought. The two-fold aim of this brief but dense book is that of presenting Deleuze in his guise of pure metaphysician *and* of critiquing the ultimate untenability of his ontology, in terms of what Badiou regards as its ultimate core, the equation BEING = UNIVOCITY. That this is envisaged by Badiou as a polemical task is clear from the tactics of reading and exposition involved.

¹²As Badiou has recently referred to them in an unpublished text circulated in Parisian universities ('Onze notes sur le petit deleuzien') written in response to certain attacks which followed the French publication of *The Clamor of Being*.

In certain passages, a deficit of argument is supplemented by the efficacy of an indictment or by the introduction of a 'foreign' term or concept. A case in point is the ascription of 'asceticism' to Deleuze's work.

Tactics

The argument that Deleuze's ethics of thought is exacting in its rigor and literally inhuman in its discipline, is certainly solid, but the use of the term ascetic effectively blocks an effort to understand the articulation of this aspect of the work with that of ethology (a dimension entirely forsaken in Badiou's analysis). One should be open to the possibility that a philosophy like Deleuze's whose ethical core lies in the dissolution of personality, the opening of the individual to the flows and forces of the Outside, is incompatible with a political ethology, but this is precisely what Badiou fails to demonstrate. A name is only a shortcut, and it would have certainly been more precise to refer to Deleuze's philosophy as a *fanaticism* (in light of the Kantian concept) than an asceticism (whilst disregarding the Nietzschean usage). The same occurs when Badiou quietly imports Heideggerian terms to characterise certain key moments in Deleuze's work. Thus we have the question of the event-status of death linked to a concept of 'authenticity' and the rather baffling expression referring to Deleuze's "ontological pre-understanding of Being as One".¹³

This is the rhetorical side of Badiou's strategy, a Brechtian alienation-effect to render Deleuze unrecognisable to those who immerse themselves in the work's images and affects and thus overlook the coldness and uncompromising intensity of its systemic, ontological core. Though this alienation is certainly necessary if Badiou is going to present a resolutely 'classical' Deleuze, the interjection of terms which cannot achieve the level of concepts, which malignantly float about the Deleuzian surface as pure indictments, cannot serve Badiou's argument except as a conjuring trick.

Of another kind, though not entirely, are the tactics employed to demonstrate that the very destination of Deleuze's thought is the One; that the profusion of *cases* does not attest to their irreducible singularity, but

¹³Badiou must be saying this in full awareness of Deleuze's explicit condemnation of the concept of pre-ontological understanding as subjective presupposition in 'The Image of Thought'. *Difference and Repetition* (Athlone, 1994), p.129. French Edition (PUF, 1968), p.169.

rather to Deleuze's veritable monomania; that in this alleged philosophy of the event "everything is already there".¹⁴ Badiou's assessment of Deleuze's thought here, insofar as it contravenes not only certain very explicit indications, but a plethora of conceptual articulations on Deleuze's part, must have as its task to undermine the conceptual consistency of Deleuze's philosophy. Before we get to the merits and demerits of this operation itself, I'd like to point out a defining ambivalence in Badiou's *Deleuze*. This ambivalence takes place at the level of Badiou's analysis of Deleuze's ontology.

The question which guides Badiou's inquiry is: 'What are the repercussions of the thesis of univocity on the event, singularity, the case?'. The thesis that answers it is that ultimately Deleuze's variant of univocity will prove, like its precursors, unable to capture the singularity of the event and will issue into an ascetic philosophy which glorifies 'what is' and is truly unable to think multiplicity itself. This thesis is expressed by two approaches which, though almost indiscernible within *The Clamor of Being*, I'd like to keep separate in order to point out where Badiou can serve as a unique counterpart in the conflictual formulation of a new ontology of the multiple and a new philosophy of the event¹⁵, and where he instead succumbs to the polemical temptation and ends up painting a poor and deflated portrait of Deleuzian ontology.

The polemical mode can be recognised by the reappearance of more or less the same tactics we encountered above. The patience and labour of the concept which Badiou shows in the most engaging parts of the book (the chapters on the virtual and the eternal return) is supplanted in these polemical instances by the illegitimate introduction of a foreign term or the practice of forcing a concept out of its particular constellation. Badiou's aim in these pages is essentially 'to indiscern' univocity and emanation¹⁶,

¹⁴ DCB, p.12.

¹⁵Badiou's other two published pieces on Deleuze are arguably stronger works than *The Clamor of Being* insofar as they remain at the level of a rigorous and intimate speculative encounter and forsake the temptations of polemic. A. Badiou, 'Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*' in C.V. Boundas and D. Olkowski (eds.), *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy* (Routledge, 1994) and A. Badiou, 'Sur la Vie comme Nom de l'Être' in E. Alliez et al. (eds.), *Rue Descartes 20: Gilles Deleuze. Immanence et Vie* (PUF, 1998).

¹⁶One of the key aims of Deleuze in his work on Spinoza is precisely to separate the logic of expression which subtends the thesis of univocity from the logic of emanation. As he writes, "For the themes of emanation or creation cannot do without a minimal transcendence, which bars "expressionism" from proceeding all the way to the immanence it implies. Immanence is the very vertigo of philosophy, and is inseparable

plane of immanence and plane of organisation, thus opening the way for his image of a Neoplatonist Deleuze, a Deleuze who presents us with a 'Platonism of the virtual'.

However, Badiou assumes, both in the vocabulary he adopts and the concepts he deploys, what should be the *result* of his enquiry, and this is simply question-begging. To do this is not to unravel the consistency of the Deleuzian system from the inside (which is where the book's merits lie) but to propose a peremptory attack which can only serve to depreciate the value of an ontological confrontation. Again, it's hard not to witness here the adverse effects of the merely polemical (as opposed to the conceptual) aim of the book, to send the "little Deleuzians" into apoplexy by making their 'benevolent' master into an unrecognisable Neoplatonist or even Neoparmenidean bogeyman. This unfortunate aim accounts for Badiou's wavering between, on the one hand, a close reading which points to the most forbidding and problematic areas of Deleuze's philosophy and, on the other hand, a rather heavy-handed and easily dismissed misrepresentation of Deleuze's objectives.

The One and the simulacrum

The particular use of the concept simulacrum is arguably the both the key sleight of hand and the weakest link in the chain of argument. Badiou speaks of simulacra *of* Being. This is perhaps an initially imperceptible shift, but it is around this *of* that the entire argument in a sense revolves. As Badiou certainly knows and in fact implicitly recognises this is evidently *not* the sense given to the term simulacrum neither in *The Logic of Sense* nor in *Difference and Repetition*, where its role is precisely that of dissolving the *of* as a bond of belonging or analogy, of a part to a whole, of a copy to its model.¹⁷ To strain univocity into emanation, in other words,

from the concept of expression (from the double immanence of expression in what expresses itself, and of what is expressed in its expression)." G. Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (Zone, 1990), p.180. In his attempt to extract what he sees as Deleuze's Neoplatonist core, Badiou must undermine both the "double immanence" and the denial of "minimal transcendence", which are obviously for Deleuze indispensable traits of univocity. Badiou's reinscription of the concept of simulacrum depends on this move. On the transformation of Neoplatonism into a theory of expression, its 'immanentization', see *Ibid.*, p.19.

¹⁷ Deleuze must have recognised the potential equivocations which his deeply ironic use of the term entailed. In 1990, writing to Jean-Clet Martin, he remarked that he had

to argue that what is essential to Deleuze is *not* the ‘formal’ multiplicity of cases, but the ‘real’ intuition of the One, Badiou must reinscribe hierarchy into the horizontality of being.

Emblematic in this regard is Badiou’s confident declaration that Deleuze attacks Heidegger on the point that he does not hold sufficiently to the thesis of Being as One. If by this Badiou means that Heidegger does not remain true to what Badiou sees as the core of Deleuze’s univocity, i.e. that the “equivocity of beings has no real status” that the One is “real” while the multiple only “fictive”, then he is glaringly on the wrong track. Deleuze cannot be more explicit on this account when he expresses the doubt that Heidegger comes up short of univocity in the following question:

...does he effectuate the conversion after which univocal Being belongs only to difference and in this sense *revolves around being* [l’étant]?¹⁸

Moreover, this doubt repeats itself even with regard to the Christ of Philosophers, Spinoza. Isn’t it a measure of the radicality of Deleuze’s fidelity to the obliteration of the ontological difference that this Christ himself must undergo the ‘conversion’ and “substance itself must be said of the modes and only of the modes”¹⁹? Badiou’s deliberate denial of what

abandoned it, insofar as it was not “worth much”. G. Deleuze, ‘Lettre-Préface’ in Jean-Clet Martin, *Variations* (Payot, 1993). p.8. For a brief but very useful account of the concept of simulacrum which counters Badiou’s theses see A. Villani, ‘Deleuze et l’anomalie métaphysique’ in E. Alliez (ed.), *Gilles Deleuze. Une vie philosophique* (Synthelabo, 1998), p.45.

¹⁸*Difference and Repetition*, p.66. French Edition, p.91. Italics mine.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p.40. French Edition, p.59. Deleuze begins his treatment of the question with this remark: “Nevertheless there still exists a difference between substance and the modes...”. The new formulation of univocity depends, for its originality and force, on the undoing of this and every other form of the ontological difference. Badiou’s argument that the One or Virtual is the only Real and that the multiplicity of actual beings can be reduced to the status of fictive simulacra [DCB, p.26] is based on an illegitimate extrapolation from Deleuze’s thesis that beings are subject to formal but not real distinction. What in Deleuze plays the role of a preliminary to the ‘conversion’ to univocity is read as a reinscription of the categories of truth and reality into the Deleuzian framework. The deliberate displacement of the concept of simulacrum seems once again to be doing most of the work here. Against Badiou we must hold that the formal distinction of beings is not opposed to a real distinction at the level of the One (which on the contrary is radically ‘indistinct’), just as the simulacra’s *puissance du faux* is not opposed to a “supereminent” truth and does not “refer” to anything [contra

is not a mere indication but a relentless driving force behind Deleuze's work depends in part on his necessity to import into Deleuze's position the opposition of truth and falsity, of the real One and fictive multiplicity respectively. This necessity partly arises out of the need for a term by term opposition to his own work, and partly out of the polemical aim to present Deleuze's philosophy not as a "theory of multiplicities"²⁰, but as a "metaphysics of the One". I would grant that Deleuze's philosophy might in the end find itself in the latter predicament, but if it does, and Badiou's arguments in this book are certainly the best ammunition available for anyone forwarding this claim, it would do so *despite itself*.

Though Badiou is quite clear that the One he speaks of with regards to Deleuze is neither numerical nor tautologous. However, his use of the term cannot but lead one to think that he regards it as ultimately leading to the same depreciation of real multiplicity and real eventality that the traditional image of the One entails. If not, why refer to a "sovereignty of the One"? It is worthy of note that Badiou often shortens the formulation "the unlimited One-All" to simply "the One".²¹ For an unlimited One-All, a univocal Being 'flattened' upon its modes, could never allow for any sovereignty whatsoever, nor, *a fortiori*, for a "terrible law of the One". Here is where the real question with regard to Deleuze's fidelity to the One lies.

DCB. p.26]. Badiou's wonderful re-invention of the classical concept of truth as "*the undoing, or defection, of the object of which it is the truth*" [DCB, p.63] might function to insert the concept within a Deleuzian framework without undoing the latter's consistency, if it weren't for the fatal interjection of a quasi-concept of reference. The dissolution of beings does not *arrive* at the truth of the One, it does not find in it ascetic repose, for the simple reason that the One is not an object of contemplation, but rather *is nothing other than (its) movement of expression*. When Badiou recognises this at the end of chapter 5 (when he speaks of an "injunction to recommence perpetually" [DCB, p.65]) it only serves to prove the earlier misuse both of the category of simulacrum and of the term ascetic with regard to Deleuze's philosophy.

²⁰'L'Actuel et le Virtuel' in G. Deleuze and C. Parnet, *Dialogues* (Flammarion, 1996)

²¹ See Louise Burchill's preface to DCB, p.xviii-xix. Burchill's preface is of great value in pointing out the pivotal points in Badiou's *contra Deleuze*, as well as in clearing up some key issues in the translation of both Badiou's and Deleuze's terminology. The notes added by Burchill to Badiou's text are also an impressive exercise in scholarship, presenting the reader with an exhaustive set of references and clarifications which go a long way towards contextualising the debate.

As is evident from that key essay which is ‘Spinoza and Us’²², the thesis of univocity is wholly directed towards the preparation of the philosophical conditions for an *ethological* philosophy, a philosophy which is concerned with the immanent composition of divergent, heterogeneous multiplicities: Deleuze’s *machinism*. It is not accidental in this respect that both the transcendence of sovereignty and the formality of law are denied by Deleuze in favour of what he refers to as *jurisprudence*.²³ To deny this would entail aligning Deleuze with the politically irrelevant and philosophically inane approach which he refers to as *contemplation*. It is undeniable that Deleuze is also deeply concerned with the Spinozist question of beatitude. However, instead of opting for either the ethological or the ‘ascetic’ side, and Badiou evidently chooses the latter, one should recognise Deleuze’s strictly Spinozistic attempt to articulate these two dimensions. To disregard this would mean to turn Deleuze into a philosopher of what Schelling called the “infinite boredom of the Absolute”. In other words, the arduous equation is precisely that between *fanaticism* (or the ethics of thought) and *constructivism* (or the composition of multiplicities).

Towards a critique of Deleuze’s ‘dualism’

It might seem from the above that Badiou is a careless reader of Deleuze. Not at all. The tactics of misrepresentation referred to above lie chiefly in the *polemical* presentation of Deleuze’s *aims*, not in the inquiry into the exposition of where the work’s inconsistencies or *failures* may lie. What is particularly confusing is that were we to concur with Badiou on the aims of Deleuze’s work, i.e. the formulation of a metaphysics of the One, we would most probably be unable to notice its alleged failures. After all, if the essential in Deleuze’s philosophy is the approximation towards an “immutable One (immutable qua perpetual mutation)”²⁴, towards the truth of Being over against the fictive character of beings, the Deleuze which emerges at the end of Badiou’s book, an ascetic apologist for One-Being, would be an eminently successful philosopher.

²²In G. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (City Lights, 1988)

²³“What interests me isn’t the law or laws (the former being an empty notion, the latter uncritical notions), nor even law or rights, but jurisprudence.” ‘Control and Becoming’ in G. Deleuze, *Negotiations* (Columbia, 1995), p.171.

²⁴ DCB, p.91.

When Badiou is at his best, showing a capacity for great interpretative rigor, he effectively undermines the more tendentious claims he himself is bound to make when the task at hand is to ‘alienate’ Deleuze from his disciples. In this regard, it is certainly worthwhile to note that Badiou’s ultimately critical/destructive endeavour is peerless in presenting certain aspects of Deleuze’s work which have often been overlooked due to their prohibitively ‘abstract’ character. His account of Deleuze’s method of intuition, albeit littered with the misleading introduction of the concept of simulacrum, is unique in showing Deleuze’s profound debt and highly original re-invention of Bergsonism. Badiou’s account of this method lends credence to the idea that the singularity of Deleuze’s philosophy lies in indicating the point of indifference to, or of escape from, both a set of classical categorial oppositions *and* Deleuze’s own, often criticised, ‘dualisms’.

The question of dualism returns with regard to the critical distinction between actual and virtual, or, in terms of the intuitive method, the analytic and the productive moments. In this instance Badiou rightly points towards what is perhaps the most contentious and daunting articulation in Deleuze’s thought, the one between univocity or immanence on the one hand and the duality (of virtual and actual) which subtends Deleuze’s accounts of production and individuation on the other. The issue is clearly stated: “What emerges over the course of these experiments is that a single name is never sufficient, but that two are required. Why?”²⁵. Deleuze’s most complex formulations, from the question of double articulation in *A Thousand Plateaus* to *The Actual and the Virtual*, are in a sense concerned with this very question. Anyone interested in disproving that this is ultimately a “very precarious theory of the Double”²⁶ *must* face Badiou’s attack on Deleuze’s theory of the two sides or images, actual and virtual, which comprise any object, together with the drastic claim that ultimately the virtual is yet another *asylum ignorantiae*. For Badiou this depends on Deleuze’s inability to hold onto the crucial difference between the virtual and a mere reservoir for indetermination. To counter this claim would involve a close treatment of Deleuze’s theory of ideas (after all the only aspect which would justify calling Deleuze’s philosophy a “re-accentuated Platonism”). This theory of ideas is not quite adequately dealt

²⁵ DCB, p.28. For an insightful investigation into the question of the name in the confrontation between Badiou and Deleuze, see M. Laerke, ‘The Voice and the Name’ in *Philosophies of Nature*, Pli 8 (1999).

²⁶ DCB, p.52.

with in Badiou when the concatenation of ‘problems’ is once again linked to a mystifying *sovereignty* of the One.

Also worthy of note for their rare conceptual insight are Badiou’s treatments of the eternal return, the opposition *Nietzsche contra Mallarmé* with regard to the question of chance, and the account of the topology of the fold. Badiou’s key intuition with regard to Deleuze’s concept of the eternal return is its trenchant opposition to any concept of probabilism which would allow the aleatory character of events to be tendentially captured by the entropy of the Same. Univocity must affirm the divergence, the heterogeneity of chance. Unfortunately, Badiou does not deal here with the articulation of this anti-probabilism with the necessity of a distinction between the actual and the virtual in terms of a refashioning of Bergsonian duration. As Deleuze makes it clear with regard to the question of entropy in *Difference and Repetition* the demand is to think both the *efficacy* of the statistical reduction of events to identity *and* the inability of this position to account both for its own genesis and for genesis *itself*. Whether this results in a transformation of entropy into a mere *simulacrum* is open to question, but I think it would be misleading to think this is the object of an unproblematic opposition between a scientific ‘plane of reference’ and a philosophical ‘plane of immanence’.

The demands of confrontation

Alain Badiou’s book is certainly unique in addressing what he refers to as the ‘classical’ Deleuze, a philosopher with whom he shares an utter disdain for the endless threnody of the ‘end of philosophy’ and a deep scorn for the spreading empire of opinion, not to mention a few enemies (chiefly Kant and phenomenology). For anyone interested in seeing why Deleuze thought of himself a “pure metaphysician” *The Clamor of Being* is an indispensable text. Hopefully, the rigor and insight of Badiou’s book will not be overshadowed by its tendency to put the polemical cart before the critical horse. After all, this aspect of the book is tied to an ancillary and superficial task, to have done with the conceptual imprecision and pseudo-political ravings of many of Deleuze’s disciples. Rather, one should see Badiou’s as a *conceptual* provocation, a demand that any serious reader of Deleuze face up to the tensions running within the ontological core of Deleuze’s work. Pending the appearance of Badiou’s systematic works, which we’ll have to wait for before an actual

confrontation can take place within the English-speaking philosophical scene, hopefully leading to a new, non-Heideggerian, ontological debate, the 'Deleuzian' (hopefully showing herself to be not so little...) will have to endure the demands of a 'response' to this challenging encounter. In my eyes this response can be, somewhat arbitrarily, divided into four tasks: One, to grasp Deleuzian affirmation *as* a resistance to the present, transforming Badiou's ascetic image of the 'purified automaton' into a constructivist one. This point depends on a close encounter with Deleuze's ethics of the event through the concept of counter-actualisation. Two, the extraction from Deleuze's work of a new theory of illusion, cast in a deeply Nietzschean mode, that does not depend on the re-instatement of a separation between truth(s) and simulacra. The necessary prelude to this is an exhaustive account of Deleuze's theory of the problem. Three, the elucidation of the essential link between univocity and ethology, or, why Deleuze's is a *political* ontology. And four, a careful inquiry into the tensions which potentially mine the consistency of the relationship between immanence and virtuality.