

## INTRODUCTION: RETHINKING THE ONE AND THE MANY WITH BADIOU

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The topic of this volume of *Symposium* originally started as a proposal submitted to Dr. Paul Fairfield, the previous editor of our journal. He graciously agreed to take on a special volume devoted to the work of one of France's more eminent thinkers, Alain Badiou. Both Alain Beaulieu and I are very pleased to be able to present here new essays devoted to Badiou's thought.

The problem of unity and multiplicity, the one and the many, continues to be a pre-eminent question for Western metaphysics and philosophy. It would be fair to say that in the last thirty years or so Continental philosophy has struggled against totalising or grand, unified narratives of identity, culture, science, gender, etc. The destructive legacies of National Socialism, Stalinism and free-market capitalism have played constitutive roles against which these recent philosophies struggle. This has resulted in a rich philosophical effort that focuses on alterity, difference and disjunction, especially for, among others, Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, Lyotard and Levinas. In many ways Badiou is the inheritor of this rich legacy. What makes his thought unique is that it marks a transition in contemporary philosophy. Badiou acknowledges the force of the undecidability of the multiple and the singularity of the event but he also gives us a way to rethink the relations among differentiated elements of multiple realities. Badiou does so by employing set theory and a counting-as-one achieved through retrospective apprehension.

I believe that Badiou's work marks an important new beginning for Continental philosophy. He rethinks the relations between the one and the many in ways that are very challenging and critical of recent philosophy. In presenting this special volume of *Symposium*, Alain Beaulieu and I hope it will go far in helping scholars, philosophers and interested readers in deepening their knowledge of one of France's more interesting living philosophers.

The essays collected here all explore the significance of Badiou's thought concerning the question of the one and the many; they think through his new ideas and their implications. Alain Beaulieu's

short essay sets the stage by explaining who Badiou is and why he has become so prominent.

The next article is by Alain Badiou with a brief introduction by Simon Critchley. Here, Badiou considers Critchley's recent book, *Infinately Demanding*, and poses various questions concerning the nature of the political and of responsibility. He challenges Critchley's notion of individuality, distinguishing it from his own concept of the subject. Badiou also challenges Critchley on the relation between ethics and general contexts. As would be expected, Badiou defends his notion of the event that defines itself against the general context or situation. The debate between the two thinkers is rich and concretely amplifies Badiou's notions of subjectivity, ethics, ontology and the political.

Alberto Toscano's "Emblems and Cuts: Philosophy in and against History" examines how Badiou shifts from an earlier conception of time rooted in periodisation to a more recent notion of sequencing. This shift, Toscano argues, allows us to better account for the ordering within and between events. The immediate implication of this philosophy of time is a new approach to history that can account for both the unity and multiplicity of events and their respective meanings. Gabriel Riera, who like Toscano is a translator and scholar of Badiou's work, focuses on Badiou's *Logics of Worlds*, soon to be released by Continuum. Badiou is often accused of being too theoretical and mathematical: the ontology and philosophy that issue from his masterwork *Being and Event* have no practical application. In his "'Living with an Idea': Ethics and Politics in Badiou's *Logiques des mondes*" Riera demonstrates how Badiou concretely applies his theory to questions of ethics and politics by placing emphasis on living and experiencing the struggle between many worlds that are counted as one.

Jeff Love and Todd May's contribution, "From Universality to Equality: Badiou's Critique of Rancière," raises the question of how we can 'unify' diverse political subjects and how equality or universality can act as central concepts for thinking political subjectivity. Ultimately, Love and May critique Badiou for subsuming equality under an hierarchical universality. Tzuchien Tho's essay, "The Consistency of Inconsistency: Alain Badiou and the Limits of Mathematical Ontology," again addresses the classic critique of the impracticality of Badiou's thought, albeit in the context of mathematics. Tho shows us how Badiou's

mathematics tries to reconcile the unity and multiplicity of sets and helps us think through concrete multiple relations that can be counted as one.

Gert-Jan van der Heiden pushes us to reconsider the impact of Badiou's *Logics of Worlds* on phenomenology. His essay, "The Scintillation of the Event: On Badiou's Phenomenology," examines key concepts, especially manifestation, and shows how, through Jean-Luc Nancy, Badiou helps us think the very appearing of the event in its singularity. In his "What is to be Done? Alain Badiou and the Pre-Evental," Nick Srnicek deploys sequencing and ordination to argue that Badiou shows us not only how to think politics but also how to do it. The next piece of the volume deals with Badiou's more popular works on Saint Paul. Dan Mellamphy and Nandita Biswas Mellamphy examine the event of Christ's resurrection and Paul's fidelity to it. They argue that this event implies certain soteriological and eschatological claims that yield rich notions of subjectivity and politics which redefine the site of the political.

The book panel that is included in this volume focuses on Jay Lampert's *Deleuze and Guattari's Philosophy of History*. We here reproduce a book session that was held at last year's meetings of the Canadian Society for Continental Philosophy (CSCP). The relation between Badiou and Deleuze is very tight, and this round table gives us pause to think through the implications of Lampert's ideas not only for Deleuze and Guattari but also for Badiou. Alain Beaulieu, Fadi Abou-Rihan, Eugene Holland and Jay Lampert dialogue with one another, providing us with interesting ideas about time, the unconscious, phenomenology and the nature of history.

The final article in this special volume is Florentien Verhage's "The Body as Measurant of All: Dis-covering the World," which was awarded the Graduate Student Essay Prize at last year's meetings of the CSCP. We are very pleased to present the work of this young scholar and philosopher.

As usual, the journal contains our Book Reviews section, which contains many reviews of new and interesting works.

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