



Alain Badiou
Central Europe in Contemporary Capitalist Globalization
What is a Truth?

Alain Badiou is a French philosopher, playwright and novelist (born in 1937 in Morocco). He is professor emeritus at the *École Normale Supérieure* in Paris and is known for his broad-reaching political engagement. He is author of *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds*. In his philosophy, he claims that truths exist, and he describes four truth procedures: love, politics, art and science. By drawing inspiration from contemporary mathematics and set theory, Badiou delineates a universe composed of multiplicities in which the one does not exist. According to him, mathematics are a discourse on these multiplicities that constitute being. His thinking is grounded in materialistic dialectics; its central categories are: the subject, the event, the truth and the set. In Prague, Badiou will deliver two lectures: the first, "Central Europe in Contemporary Capitalist Globalization," will present a more political side of his thinking, while the second, "What is a Truth?" will be oriented toward more purely philosophical issues.



Jana Beránková
What Does the Word "Architecture" Mean?

What does the word "architecture" mean today? What are its fundamental principles? How can we define the relationship between architecture and truth procedures? I will use Alain Badiou's concepts in order to answer these questions. I will sketch out the ontology of architecture while analyzing the changing relationship between architecture and the event (in Badiou's sense) during the 20th century. The lecture will include examples drawn from Czechoslovak modernity and Berlin after 1989. It will analyze the dialectic between architecture and its excess, between "formal" and "informal" architecture. In this lecture, I will evoke rearrangements of architectural knowledge and sequences in which architecture includes what was formerly excluded.

My goal is to go beyond the current state of architecture, to move towards an architecture that would be based on axiom rather than on aporia. I will attempt to overcome the finitude of an architectural form and I will outline architecture of a count-as-one. Thereafter, I will try to point the way toward a consistent architecture that would be able accommodate its excess and eventual sequences taking place within its walls. The first indication of this architecture can be anticipated in Karel Teige's maxim: "We do not live in order to inhabit; we inhabit in order to live."



Bruno Besana
Practically: Plato reversed, twisted, emptied

The work of Alain Badiou appears to the reader as twisted between two trajectories: the affirmation of the eternity of ideas, and the centrality of the notion of change. At a first glance, the pivotal point of intersection of these two trajectories is to be found in the notion of equality - always identical to itself but void of any content, and ultimately identical to its capacity to perform transformations (to undo given, specific inequalities). On a more precise note, this pivotal point is to be found in Badiou's notion of 'empty truth' - truth being eternal inasmuch as it has no other content than the fractures that it produces in, for and against the time in which it appears (namely by undoing both opinions and the representational structures supported by these opinions).

This paper aims at investigating the line that, starting from the reversal of Plato that Badiou operates by taking seriously the last hypotheses of the *Parmenides*, leads to another reversal (or rather torsion) of Plato: namely the one operated by positing that the eternity of the idea is essentially inseparable from the possibility of radical change.

Alain Badiou offers an important corrective to the current state of philosophy. He admits that, as others claimed, there are "only bodies and languages," but he adds: "except there are also truths." According to Badiou, truths are eternal and universal, although they appear locally when an event overturns a given situation. Badiou's "except there are" is of considerable importance for the contemporary era: it leads thought out of the impasse of postmodernism, of finitude and of a "democratic materialism." His conception of truths is supported by the consistency and the breath of Badiou's thought (which includes mathematical ontology, set theory as well as Lacanian psychoanalysis and contemporary logic) and constitutes one of the most important philosophical projects of our time.

The symposium "Philosophy of truths" will analyze the richness of Alain Badiou's philosophy and its potential contribution to understanding Central and post-communist Europe. The symposium will further address the relations between Badiou's thought and other disciplines such as aesthetics, politics, and architecture.

In connection with the symposium Alain Badiou will deliver two lectures in Prague: one for a broader public on October 29th in Prague's Municipal Library, the second within the framework of the conference on October 30th.

It is starting from this perspective that it is possible to investigate not so much *per se* Badiou's claim of a certain actuality of Platonism, but rather the notion of a certain effective in-actuality of eternal ideas, acting against the present, but also constituting the present as truly present.



Giuseppe Bianco
Totalize and map. »Inverse trajectory« (1962 - 1982)

The lecture describes the trajectory of Alain Badiou at the beginning of the 1960's (*Almagestes*) and at the beginning of the 1980's (*Theory of the Subject*).

It focuses among all on the issue of totality that appears in the author's oeuvre from his first novel, through the *Concept of the Model* until the *Theory of the Subject* and *Being and Event*.

Building the totality is drawing the map that helps one to orientate; and this is precisely the main concern of Alain Badiou appearing in his metaphors and terms that originate in asWtronomy or navigation.

The lecture begins with a debate on totality that appeared at the moment of the conflict between "phenomenology" and "structuralism" (initiated mainly by *The Savage Mind* of Claude Lévi-Strauss) and concludes by a polemic with Jeanem-François Lyotard relating to the end of meta-discourses. It analyzes also issues such as organization, organism, social body, structure, multiplicity and set and reminds debates between Badiou, Canguilhem, Hyppolite, Sartre and Cavailles.

Furthermore, it analyses the "abandon" of philosophy and the return to it that the author experienced in that time and tries to place this trajectory in the context of transformation of relations between philosophy, social sciences and literary avant-garde in the field of French philosophy. The lecture takes also advantage of the theory of generations, comparative prosopographies and description of the space of the possible between 1960's and 1970's. It includes, when it is relevant, a few yet unpublished texts.



Petra Ceferin
Constructing an architectural object

The starting point of this lecture/paper posits four fundamental positions to the way in which architecture appears and works today, and which I identify as follows:

1. Architecture of Market Logic,
2. Architecture of the Imperative of Invention,
3. Architecture of Impotent Resistance,
4. Architecture of Reformist Sociality.

Each of these four positions points, in its own way, to the inability of architecture to position itself and work in the given world as a creative thinking practice. By following Badiou's maxim «to hold on to a real point» and his concept of materialism in the second part of the lecture/paper I develop the possibility of a fifth position. This position is based on the construction of an architectural object as an object with an inner minimal difference, one which gives this object its specific materiality and presence that resists merely spatio-temporal determination. In the field of architecture we could call such objects joints.



Oliver Feltham

Badiou and the Arche-Theatre of Action

In *Eloge du théâtre* Badiou offers the following definition of theatre: 'true theatre is the incarnation of an idea,' "theater, when it takes place, is the representation of the idea". This definition does not emerge, however, from the careful philosophical reading of a play, a sequence of plays, a performance, a series of performances, or the delimitation of a specific 'theatrical configuration.' Of course, Badiou speaks of particular plays – of Corneille's *Le Cid*, and Koltès' *Dans les champs de coton* – and he mentions Antoine Vitez' productions at the *Théâtre Chaillot*, but there is no sustained, detailed investigation of a theatrical work of art. Given the long and detailed analyses devoted to poetry (Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Pessoa, Celan) or to novels by Rousseau and Julien Gracq in *Logics of Worlds*, this absence is significant, the dissymmetry is flagrant. At this point, one could resort to a biographical answer: Badiou does not analyze plays because he writes them, because he is a playwright – Ahmed se fâche, *Les Citrouilles*. I suspect, however, that something more complicated is at stake behind this dissymmetry in the inaeesthetic treatment of theatre. Our first clue is that the incarnation of an idea, the bodily presentation of an idea, is also Badiou's term in *Logics of Worlds* for the generic truth procedure. In the preface he speaks at length about the existence of ideas, in Plato's language, or 'eternal truths' in Descartes' language, and about their presentation in a body of truth. A 'body,' in Badiou's phenomenology, is the 'appearing of a truth.' It has to render possible the thinking of truth; it has to manifest "the visibility of the True within the existence of a world. And, to produce that visibility, it needs the characteristics of separation, cohesion, synthetic unity, in short, of organicity". At the level of appearing, thus, a generic truth procedure presents itself as separate, cohesive, synthetically unified and organic. Does this remind you of anything in classical aesthetics? Are these not the ontological characteristics of an authentic work of art? Note that this is a far cry from Being and Event's conception of a generic truth procedure as an infinite, indiscernible and unpredictable sequence of local investigations. Theatre and the appearing of a generic truth procedure are thus undifferentiated at the level of aesthesis, at the level of appearing. The doctrine of conditions – apparently for lack of a detailed application – has not succeeded in differentiating theatre from any other truth procedure. Why is this the case?



Michael Hauser

Re-formation procedures and Central Europe

How can the uniqueness of central Europe be interpreted at the background of the Badiou's theory of event? I will focus on the Hussite movement and the Prague Spring of 1968, which arose in the space of central Europe. I will argue that these movements are not related to an event belonging to the given situation (they are not configurations of a generic procedure linked to an event which is a part of the *then* historical situation). These movements came into existence as generic procedures related to events belonging to other historical situation. Hussite movement bound to the founding Christian event and revived an original form of Christian community but in *other* situation. The Prague Spring of 1968 attempted to renew some organization forms as induced by the October Revolution of 1917 (a party democratization, worker's councils). These movements strove for repeated establishing of organization forms which resulted from a founding event but afterwards underwent a deformation and became a part of the state.

The return to a founding event taking place in a different historical situation can be called the re-formation procedure. It is not simply a repetition of past truth-procedures but it's a creation of a new generic procedure which transposes effects of a past event into the given situation. Organization forms arise which are different from those in an original situation. Cf. first Christian communities and Hussite Tabor linking first Christian ideal of equality with well-organized troops.

In this respect, Central Europe does not present a site of events but appears as a site of re-formations. The idea of re-formation, however, has a broader meaning. It may extend the Badiouian conception of established organizations such as the political party. According to (late) Badiou, the party is tied up with the state and blocks truth-procedures. Due to re-formation procedures, the political party can be cleaved in a component bound to the state and a component disturbing the one. Established organizations wouldn't be only an affirmation of a given order but at the same time would be able to change it.



Rob Jackson

Alain Badiou & Georg Lukács: Subjectivity and Philosophy

This paper examines the theme of political subjectivity in the work of Alain Badiou. In order to assess both the novelty and the limitations of Badiou's philosophy, it will read his work against the conception of subjectivity developed by Georg Lukács, a thinker at the intersection between 'Western Marxism' and the history of communism in Central Europe. In his own time, Lukács sought to re-invent Marxism as a philosophy of praxis and therefore provides a useful prism through which to observe Badiou's ongoing project. This paper will be of interest to those seeking a clarification of Badiou's central theme of subjectivity, and its relation to key works in critical theory.

The paper will focus on Badiou's elaboration of the philosophical structure of the exceptional. It will explore the elements of continuity between Badiou's conception of change as a rupture from the normal routines of material existence with Lukács's rejection of conventional notions of progress. The paper will argue that pre-figurative moments of Badiou's formulation of the *Event* can be observed in Lukács's writings. As Slavoj Žižek has noted, one such antecedent is Lukács's concept of *Augenblick*, the moment in which it is possible to act in a situation.

I will test the hypothesis that a juxtaposition of these thinkers can reciprocally highlight underdeveloped aspects of their thought, and open a space for renewed dialogue between contemporary debates in subjectivity and the classical Marxist tradition. Recent research by Nina Power has explored Badiou's desire to find a mediating path between the philosophies of Jean-Paul Sartre and Louis Althusser. I propose that contextualising Badiou's thought against Lukács's philosophy will further focus attention on so far underexplored areas of this relationship.



Tomáš Pivoda

Can philosophy turn into art and art into philosophy?

The inaeesthetics of „Ister“.

In his concept of „inaesthetics“ (i.e. relation of philosophy to art), Alain Badiou emphasizes the independence and autonomy of art as a producer of truths. The "task" of philosophy is not to reflect upon art as its *own* object, but rather to let the (artistic) truths appear by themselves, to help to clarify the circumstances and possibilities of their creation, to think events that "carry" truths and to interconnect them and determine their values. This applies in the same way to a particular domain of art – called by Badiou „a philosophical experiment“ – cinema.

The aim of this paper is to examine Badiou's inaeesthetics (specifically the relation of philosophy to cinema) with the aid of an example of a film inspired by a lecture course Martin Heidegger delivered in 1942 on the poem "Der Ister" by Friedrich Hölderlin, inspired by the second longest European river the Danube (the movie called "The Ister" was directed in 2004 by David Barison and Daniel Ross). Since the film was conceived as an accompaniment to Heidegger's course and is concerned with many "philosophical themes" like time, space, technology, war, politics, Holocaust, National Socialism and East European history in general and also includes interviews with several philosophers and artists (Bernard Stiegler, Jean-Luc Nancy, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Hans-Jürgen Syberberg), it has been labeled by some critics more of a work of philosophy rather than "art" or "cinema". With the aid of this "philosophical documentary", we will analyze Badiou's definition of cinema and focus on his concept of relation of philosophy to cinema, poetry and art in general, while attempting at the same time in the background to contest hypothetically his well-known statement that „philosophy does not produce truths“.



Jelica Šumič Riha
Philosophy as an Education by Truths

The central aim of this paper is to examine the possibility of philosophy in today's world. Adorno and Foucault propose two incompatible answers to this question. According to Adorno, having missed the moment of its realization, philosophy can only contemplate the world from the standpoint of redemption. For Foucault, by contrast, the task proper to philosophy, as it turns to its time, consists in wrenching "something eternal" from the present instant. The key argument put forward by this essay is that, while Badiou and Agamben have taken up the challenge of sustaining the disjunctive tension between these two antinomian paths, they propose divergent strategies in their attempt at solving the problem of the contemporaneity of philosophy. Despite some indisputable points of convergence, Agamben's and Badiou's solutions – both articulated through a recasting of the relationship between the past and the present, both insisting on the creation of a breach in time separating time and that which in time is more than time itself, the instants of 'immanent eternity', and, consequently, on the subjective rather than the historical aspect of a break with the current impasse – are probably the two most diametrically opposed approaches to time. Attributing all transformative force to sovereign power alone, Agamben can recognize resistance only in terms of potentiality, which is to say, as passivity or inoperativeness. With Badiou's "education by truths" we have rather a different solution, one which essentially mobilizes philosophy in finding an exit from the current state of affairs, a way out that evades the powerlessness of Agamben's solution. Hence, for Badiou, if philosophy turns towards the past, this is not in order to restore the contingency of the past, but rather to produce a new kind of present – a paradoxical endeavor as it is a matter of producing, within the worldly present, a new present – while relating to something that has already disappeared, namely the event.



Rado Riha
Badiou, Kant, and the Materialism of the Idea

The departure point of this article is the assumption that Badiou's "philosophy under conditions" succeeds in avoiding the trap of a dialectics of theory and practice, of the objective and subjective precisely to the extent that it operates with the Idea. The Idea introduced by Badiou's philosophy under conditions is considered as a sign of the advent of a new materialism. The central thesis of the present article being that Kant's innovative doctrine of ideas, insofar as it initiates a materialistic turn of the Idea, can be seen as a pre-figuration of this new materialism. According to Kant's elaboration of the Idea, it is nothing but the functioning of a thought which is affected by the "thing of thought" in a given world. The author seeks to develop the "thing of thought" in terms of a point of the real in the Lacanian sense. From this perspective, as a point of the real, the "thing of thought" allows thought to establish itself as thought, at the same time it remains outside thought and irreducible to it.



Frank Ruda
How to Prepare? For A Comic (Badiouian) Fatalism

Alain Badiou has often argued that one of the most crucial tasks of philosophy is to prepare individuals for events. At the same time this has become the locus of one of frequent criticisms articulated with regard to Badiou's oeuvre, namely that philosophy withdraws from any direct intervention into concrete situation and condemns people to eternally wait for events that will never occur. The paper will oppose such criticisms by directly addressing in what way one can conceive of a philosophical preparation for an event. It will argue that – against the first intuition – a renewed notion of fatalism can serve as a conceptual tool to systematically grasp what it means to be prepared, it will demonstrate in what sense this fatalism is crucially linked to the dimension of the comic and why comic (Badiouian) fatalism might serve as an effective tool to oppose the universalized identification of freedom and capacity (Aristotelianism) that produces a state of generalized indifference.



Jan Völker
On What There Is. Philosophy and Sophistry.

Badiou's philosophical intervention is an intervention on of the most fundamental questions of philosophy, namely on *the question of what there is*. This question concerns not only the situation of ontology and the state of the given, but also the existence of philosophy itself. *What there is* divides philosophy from its ambivalent partner: sophistry. Sophistry is there, in our contemporary world. Sophistry not only counts the given, relies on the things that are there, but reduces everything to the same difference of opinions. It exists as the permanent reign of doxa and repetition, arbitrariness and interchangeability. But philosophy? Philosophy and its claim that there are truths has a weak existence, as it starts from the feeble exceptions to the given. Philosophy starts from that which is given as an exception to the given, and thereby proposes another account of *what there is*. But then, philosophy's aim cannot be, as Badiou emphasises, to 'reduce the sophist to silence', for this would lead to its own petrification and to the disaster of only one truth being there.

Thus philosophy remains in a dialectical *polemos* with sophistry, from which it cannot easily detach itself. Instead, philosophy presents a supplement to the given, and insists that there is also philosophy. Philosophy itself in its existence maintains that there is something else than what there is.



Petr Vopěnka
Prague's way of set theory:
From Bolzano to the present times.

Petr Vopěnka (born in 1935 in Prague) is a Czech philosopher and mathematician. He is professor emeritus at Charles University and author of numerous books on set theory, geometry and baroque mathematics. In his lecture, Petr Vopěnka will introduce key concepts of set theory and delineate the genealogy of this mathematical thinking from Bernard Bolzano to present times.

30 / 10		31 / 10	
9H00	Introduction	10H00	Introduction
9H05	Jelica Šumič Riha	10H05	Tomáš Pivoda
10H00	Rado Riha	10H50	Rob Jackson
10H50	Giuseppe Bianco	11H30	Bruno Besana
11H45	Lunch	12H30	Lunch
13H30	Oliver Feltham	14H30	Jan Völker
14H20	Jana Beránková	15H30	Frank Ruda
15H00	Petra Ceferin		
15H45	Michael Hauser		
16H25	Petr Vopěnka		
17H30	Pause		
18H30	Alain Badiou		

The symposium:
30 – 31 / 10 2014
9 – 20H00 / 10–16H30
Cinema 35
French Institute
Štěpánská 35
Prague 1
Free Entry

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The event is held under the auspices
of the Dean of the Charles University
in Prague Prof. MUDR. Tomáš Zima,
DrSc., MBA. The symposium is
simultaneously interpreted to Czech,
French or English. Organized by:
Michael Hauser a Jana Beránková