

*'Truth Is a Child of Time'*¹

Practical Philosophy in Badiou and Whitehead

By Helmut Maassen, Claremont 2007

Badiou has published books on ethics and politics, or metapolitic, as he calls it. Let us begin with a quick look at the topic of my paper: the term practical philosophy is used to indicate an endeavor to include the personal and the political sphere of reality.

A classical concept of the state is found in the Leviathan of Thomas Hobbes.

His concept was developed in a world of turmoil, religious wars and uprising. The urge to attain peace was overwhelming. Hobbes based his theory of state on certain ontological and anthropological assumptions, as developed in his early treatises, *De Cive* (1642), *De Corpore* (1655) and *De Homine* (1658).

The condition of the mere natural state is described by Hobbes as *bellum omnium contra omnes*. Chapter XIII is an exposition "Of the Natural Condition of Mankind, as concerning their Felicity, and Misery" and contains the famous quotation describing life as a state of war of every man against every man:

the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

War, though, is not in the interest of mankind. Even the strongest can be killed by the weakest. Therefore Hobbes concludes:

¹ Galileo Galilei, B.B.

"the passions that incline men to peace are fear of death, desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living, and a hope by their industry to obtain them" (xiii, 14).

Through reason Human beings are capable of perceiving certain laws of nature (*ius naturale*), which are independent of each person's perceptions and which can lead out of this desperate state of mere nature. According to Hobbes, two basic laws govern human life:

'THE right of nature, which writers commonly call jus naturale, is the liberty each man hath to use his own power as he will himself for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life; and consequently, of doing anything which, in his own judgement and reason, he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto.

*From this fundamental law of nature, by which men are commanded to endeavour peace, is derived this second law: that a man be willing, when others are so too, as far forth as for peace and defence of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men as he would allow other men against himself.'*²

Through this contract, people try to achieve a peaceful and 'commodious living'. It includes shifting power, basically arms, from the individual to the state, the Leviathan. 'LEVIATHAN (Heb. NTyvl, *livyatan*, Ugaritic *ltn*, presumably pronounced *lotan*). In the Bible and talmudic literature the leviathan denotes various marine animals, some real, others legendary, and others again both real and legendary. The word leviathan seems to derive from the root *lwy*, "to coil," which is

² See CHAPTER XIV OF THE FIRST AND SECOND NATURAL LAWS, AND OF CONTRACTS

further confirmation of its serpentine form. In the Bible it is used interchangeably with several other sea monsters—*tannin* ("dragon"), *rahav*, and *yam* ("sea"; of which the last-named alternates with *neharim* ("flood") in Hab. 3:8)—all of whom are represented as supernatural enemies of God. This hostility directly reflects a myth widely known in pre-biblical sources of a primordial combat between the creator deity and the forces of the sea, personifying chaos, which the former must overcome to create and control the universe.’³ The name of the Hobbesian state already indicates, how the laws of the state can be executed successfully: only by fear. Cosmic powers, not just the humans on earth, are fighting against each other, and only fear of a supreme authority can guarantee an unstable equilibrium. This highest power and law maker and executor does not have to be God or justified by God, because laws are dictates of reason, although in the English version of the *Leviathan*, Hobbes maintains that: ‘These dictates of reason men used to call by the name of laws, but improperly: for they are but conclusions or theorems concerning what conduceth to the conservation and defence of themselves; whereas law, properly, is the word of him that by right hath command over others. *But yet if we consider the same theorems as delivered in the word of God that by right commandeth all things, then are they properly called laws.*’⁴ Hobbes wrote the first

³ *Leviathan* in: Encyclopedia Judaica, Peter Machinist: The article then shows similarities with earlier traditions: The Hittites knew it as the struggle between the dragon Illuyankas and the mortal Hupasiyas (Pritchard, *Texts*, 125–6). In Mesopotamia it appears in several forms, of which the most famous is the battle of Marduk and Tiamat in the creation epic (*ibid.*). More relevant is a cylinder seal from Tell Asmar of the 24th century B.C.E., which pictures two men fighting a seven-headed serpent. And recently, the leviathan itself may have been found in a Mesopotamian incantation designed "to revive a serpent" (see van Dijk in bibliography). The closest Near Eastern parallel to the biblical materials, however, and probably their actual source, is the Ugaritic myth(s) of Baal and Anat pitted against various sea monsters, one of which is named Lotan (Pritchard, *op. cit.*). Not only is this merely another form of the name leviathan, but the same epithets used of leviathan are here prefigured of Lotan, e.g., *btn brh* and *btn 'qltn* as compared with *nahash bariah* and *nahash 'aqallaton* of Isaiah 27:1.

⁴ *Leviathan*, end of Chapter XV. Italics added by HM

version of the Leviathan in Latin, from which this last sentence is missing. It supports the interpretation of an already wholly secular concept of the state in Hobbes.

The contract has to keep the balance of freedom for the sovereign and that of the individual. In case of doubt, the sovereign can decide, because, otherwise, the achievement of peace could be impeded. Certain liberties are explained, like freedom of speech, of religious beliefs etc and guaranteed in the Hobbesian concept. We do not have to dwell on this here. The points I want to make are the following:

1. The cosmos is understood as a struggle of contrary forces and therefore human beings only live in an unstable equilibrium.
2. Therefore, human beings have to try their utmost to contain these forces by giving up power to a supreme authority, which, in return, will guarantee some form of peace and (restricted) liberty.

On the whole it is fair to say that Hobbes was successful in destroying any religious (Biblical) justification for single concept of a state, because through a scrupulous historical interpretation of the Bible, he could prove that there is no one single Biblical concept.⁵

Similar concept of a secular (modern) state were developed by other philosophers, to mention only two: Spinoza in his *Tractatus Theologico-Philosophicus* (1670) or John Locke (1688) in his *Two Treatises of Government*.

⁵ Mind you, almost 1/3 of the Leviathan is an interpretation of the Bible, proving the point that there is no one Biblical concept of state, which could therefore be identified as God's will.

Later on Kant was the first to combine the natural laws and the idea of a state in one principle, as shown in his writings on practical philosophy and in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.⁶

This he achieves through the categorical imperative. One of the forms of the categorical imperative: '*Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end*' (4: 429) may suffice. The imperative is a formal principle (often criticized, for example by Max Scheler⁷) To call it categorical indicates, that it implies duties, which are not heteronomously added onto it but which are implicit. The duties 'appear' the moment a person realizes the imperative. Any feeling or intention would distort the clear duties of the imperative. This pure thought seems to indicate a form of Protestant thought, more precisely that of Martin Luther, who, in his work *Concerning Christian Liberty* (1520)⁸, proclaims the christian person to be absolutely free (through faith).

In the *Groundwork* , Kant distinguishes two forms of duties, duties to oneself and duties to others, which can be either perfect or imperfect. Duties of justice are the ones which in order to be executed, allow coercion, though one has to keep in mind that 'the majority of our moral duties are duties of virtue which are

⁶ **Kant, I.** (1900-) *Kant's gesammelte Schriften (Kant's Collected Works)* , ed. Royal Prussian (subsequently German, then Berlin-Brandenburg) Academy of Sciences, Berlin: Georg Reimer, subsequently Walter de Gruyter, 29 vols, in 34 parts; vol 4: *Grundlagen der Metaphysik der Sitten: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*; Vol 6: *Metaphysik der Sitten, Metaphysics of Morals*

⁷ *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik* (1916). See *Scheler, Max* (by Georg Scherer), in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 30,87-92

⁸ Absolute freedom of the inner, spiritual or new man will be achieved by faith (alone). See the first of the opening theses in Luther's tractatus: 'A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none...' 'The Harvard Classics" vol. 36. (New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1910), pp. 353-97

not appropriate subjects for coercive legal enforcement'⁹, since freedom is the ultimate value. From this ultimate value follows the duty of justice. An action is only right, if, 'on its maxim the freedom of choice of each can coexist with everyone's freedom in accordance with a universal law' (6: 230) Laws of a just state, therefore, can be enforced insofar as they prevent the limitation of the freedom of some of its citizens. Only the person who disobeys the rational, and therefore just law, feels the burden of the law¹⁰ ; if one acts rationally the rational law of ones own mind and the laws of the state are one; there is no difference whatsoever between the two, these two are identical.

Leaving Kant and focussing on the the current philosophical discussion it is noteworthy, that e.g. Badiou wants to move away from modern forms of ethics, which he feels are defined 'by an immense return to Kant'¹¹, 'or from an image of Kant, or, better still, from theorists of 'natural law'.'¹² He assumes, that 'these' concepts of Ethics are conceived 'both as an a priori ability to discern Evil..., and as the ultimate principle of judgement, in particular political judgement: good is what intervenes visibly against an Evil that is identifiable a priori'. 'Law [*droit*] itself is first of all law 'against' Evil.'¹³

Badiou wants to start from a completely different point of view:

⁹ GUYER, PAUL (1998, 2004). Kant, Immanuel. In E. Craig (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. London: Routledge. Retrieved October 23, 2007, from <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/DB047SECT9>

¹⁰ As Schiller aptly remarked.

¹¹ *Ethics, An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, Translated and introduced by Peter Hallward, Verso 2001, 8

¹² Ibid. In his introduction to the English edition of Badiou's *Ethics*, Peter Hallward points out the similarities between Kant's and Badiou's approaches, their apparent differences notwithstanding: Translator's Introduction: XX, XXI: Kant's very procedure – the evacuation of all heteronomous interests and motives, the suspension of all references to 'psychology' and 'utility', all allusion to any 'special property of human nature', all calculation required to obtain 'happiness' or 'welfare' bears some resemblance to Badiou.'

¹³ Ibid

‘ 1. Man is to be identified by his affirmative thought, by the singular truths of which he is capable, by the Immortal which makes of him the most resilient [*résistant*] and most paradoxical of animals.

2 It is from our positive capability for Good, and thus from our boundary-breaking treatment of possibilities and our refusal of conservatism, including the conservation of being, that we are to identify Evil – not vice versa.

3. All humanity has its root in the identification in thought [*en pensée*] of singular situations. There is no ethics in general. There are only – eventually – ethics of processes by which we treat the possibilities of a situation.’¹⁴

What does he mean by this? What does it imply?

As Ethics is only a part of Badiou’s concept of the event - philosophy, only a few remarks on it may suffice.

Philosophy , in his sense, has to move through its truth processes in four areas:

Art, Love, Politics, and Science. The four areas are encompassed by the four dimensional desires of philosophy: the dimensions of revolt, of logic, of universality and of risk.¹⁵ Philosophy, thus described, faces four major obstacles: the reign of merchandise, the reign of communication, technical specialisation and the obsession with security.¹⁶

According to him, whatever is transmittable or is capable of repetition, is knowledge and therefore incapable of grasping truth. Badiou cites Heidegger on poetry to explain his view on truth: ‘The poet always speaks as if the being was

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ The Desire for Philosophy and the Contemporary World, The SYMPTON, online Journal for Lacan.com, p.1

¹⁶ ibid

expressed for the first time.’¹⁷ If all truth is new, the problem and task of philosophy is its appearance and its becoming. In his open lecture of August 2002 he defines truth thus: ‘Truth itself is generic and untotalizable, and the halting point of its potency is the unnameable.’¹⁸ The experience of truth generates something new, it means a rupture with what has been and for that newness, there must be a supplement.

Badiou does not hesitate to analyse the event character of what happened to the Apostle Paul.¹⁹ In it he shows his apostolic subjectivity and the rigour of life and speech through the event, which Paul experienced, the resurrection of Christ. The rapture, which took place in Paul changed his life, his name, his speech, gave him universal language and mission.

In focussing on the rupture and the newness, Badiou wants to avoid a common critique of ethics, not only of ethics alone, but of philosophy as a whole: that it is always belated.

‘Philosophy is always behind! Philosophy is always trying to catch up with non-philosophical novelties! And I would have to say: correct! That was in fact Hegel's conclusion. Philosophy is the bird of wisdom, and the bird of wisdom is the owl. But the owl flies off only when the day is over. Philosophy is the discipline which comes after the day of knowledge, the day of experiences, at the beginning of the

¹⁷ On the Truth-Process, 2002,1: [European Graduate School EGS](#) • Media and Communications • 158 East 7th St C 5 • New York, NY 10009 • USA

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Badiou, SP (1997) *Saint-Paul et la fondation de l'universalisme*. Paris: PUF

night.’²⁰ Badiou tries to avoid this belatedness through defining philosophy not as knowledge, but as action.

‘The philosopher is useful, because he or she has the task of observing the morning of a truth, and of interpreting this new truth over against old opinions. If « we must endure our thoughts all night», it is because we must correctly corrupt young people. When we feel that a truth-event interrupts the continuity of ordinary life, we have to say to others: "Wake up! The time of new thinking and acting is here!"’²¹

Badiou turns to polemics in order to describe ethical concepts, mainly that of Levinas and the ethics of ‘Recognition of the Other’. For him Levinas’ attempt of basing his ethics of the face of the other ultimately has to end up with the ultimate other, who is God.

‘The phenomenon of the other (his face) must then attest to a radical alterity which he nevertheless does not contain by himself. The Other, as he appears to me in the order of the finite, must be the epiphany of a properly infinite distance to the other, the traversal of which is the originary ethical experience...Lévinas calls this principle the ‘Altogether-Other’, and it is quite obviously the ethical name for God....’²² For Badiou, this attempt fails in putting ethics on its own feet, rather it destroys any attempt of developing a philosophical ethics altogether, because it subordinates it to religion. ‘In Lévinas’ enterprise, the ethical dominance of the Other over the theoretical ontology of the same is entirely bound up with a

²⁰ Philosophy as Creative Repetition, p 1 The SYMPTON, online Journal for Lacan.com, p.1

²¹ ibid

²² Ethics p.22, or later his remark on otherness, which he thinks can be summed up as: ‘Become like me and I will respect your difference.’ Ibid p. 25

religious axiom...In truth, Lévinas has no philosophy – not even philosophy as the ‘servant’ of theology.’²³

Looking for another target for his polemics he focuses on the Ethics of Recognition. He concludes ‘... since every truth is the coming-to-be of that which is not yet, so differences are then precisely what truths dispose of or render insignificant. No light is shed on any concrete situation by the notion of the ‘recognition of the other’.²⁴

The otherness of the other, according to Badiou, is simply the multiplicity, which is there. ‘Infinite alterity is quite simply *what there is*. Any experience at all is the infinite deployment of infinite differences.’²⁵

What would be ethics like in Badiou’s sense? First, one has to recognize, that there is no general ethics. This is the case, because there is no abstract subject. The subject is in the process of becoming as truth is. ‘If there is no ethics ‘in general’, that is because there is no abstract Subject, who would adopt it as his shield. There is only a particular kind of animal, convoked by certain circumstances to *become* a subject. This is to say that at a given moment, everything he is...is called upon to enable the passing of truth along its path. This is when the human animal is convoked [*requis*] to be the immortal that he was not yet.’²⁶ If that is so, with which criteria should a discourse on ethics take place?

Only if one becomes involved in the event, can one grasp what truth is and therefore act accordingly. Badiou is aware of the difficulties he faces with descriptions like this, because, right from the beginning, they exclude any

²³ *ibid*

²⁴ *Ibid* 27

²⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶ *Ibid* 40

possibility of criticism from without. No observer, no member of the right or left, neither a Deleuzian nor a Whiteheadian philosopher, gets a chance to criticize the event of truth and what follows out of it.

Badiou summerizes the truth – event as follows:

‘ I shall call ‘truth’ (*a truth*) the real process of a fidelity to an event: that which this fidelity *produces* in the situation. ..

Essentially, a truth is the material course traced, within the situation, by evental supplementation. It is thus an *immanent break*. ‘Immanent’ because a truth proceeds *in* the situation, and nowhere else.’²⁷ The emendation of truth involves a break with all previous concepts and form of knowledge. ‘... there is no heaven of truths. ‘Break’ because what enables the truth-process – the event – meant nothing according to the prevailing language and established knowledge of the situation.’²⁸

Badiou even gives a formal description of the ethics of a truth:

‘ What I will call, in general, the ‘ethic of a truth’ is the principle that enables the continuation of a truth-process – or, to be more precise and complex, *that which lends consistency to the presence of some-one in the composition of the subject induced by the process of this truth.*’²⁹ There is not one truth, an absolute truth, truth which is not affected by time, but only a process which generates truth. Truth cannot be observed, after which one can decide what to do, or ask others, philosophers or contemporaries, no, the event itself evokes passion, action, justice and equality.

²⁷ Ibid 40

²⁸ Ibid 43

²⁹ Ibid 44

At this point, one can see how ethics and politics in the traditional sense are transcended by Badiou. Ethics and politics start in the event or the events and cannot be separated. They are personal and subjective and not impersonal and objective.

Politics, according to him, is always (in the real sense), or, traditionally speaking, should always deal with ‘collective emancipation, or the problem of the reign of liberty in infinite situations’.³⁰

Political goals have to be immanent in the sense, that no outside authority orders you to do something or to leave something, and transcendent in the sense, that they break with that, which is there and give birth to something new. ‘...every historical event is communist, to the degree that ‘communist’ designates the trans-temporal subjectivity of emancipation, the egalitarian passion, the Idea of justice, the will to break with the compromises of the *service des biens*, the deposition of egoism, an intolerance of oppression, the wish to impose a withering away of the state. The absolute pre-eminence of multiple-presentation over representation.’³¹

Similarly, justice is nothing objective, that can be grasped outside the event. ‘‘It is very important to notice that here, "equality" signifies nothing objective. It is not at all a matter of the equality of status, of earnings, or functions Political equality is not what we want nor what we project [for the future], it is what we declare in the heat of the moment, here and now, as what is, and not what should be’’.³²

³⁰ DO: 54 ((1991) *D'un Désastre obscur (Droit, Etat, Politique)*. Paris: L'Aube) ; cf. TC: 60 ((1975) *Théorie de la contradiction*. Paris: Maspéro)

³¹ DO: 12-14; cf. DI: 55-6, 61, 67 ((1976) *De l'Idéologie*. Paris: Maspéro)

³² AM: 111-112 (1998) *Abrégé de métapolitique*. Paris: Seuil)

This leads, at the very least, to an ambivalent view of the state. But Badiou changed from an early form of ‘de-statification’ in his writings. ‘I have been obliged to change my position as regards the state. The guiding principle can no longer be, in a unilateral way, "de-statification". It is a matter more of prescribing the state, often in a logic of reinforcement. The problem is to know *from where* politics prescribes the state’.³³

Critical evaluation

Badiou is not alone in seeing the solely ugly face of the Leviathan, while he ignores the ugly, but necessary face, which, through fear, provides security and a certain degree of liberty.

Carl Schmitt in his famous, highly decisionistic concept of the modern state defines authority as follows: ‘Sovereign is he who decides on the exception.’³⁴ Only with this kind of authority, a modern state, according to Schmitt, can function properly. Beyond this understanding the situation of exception makes it possible to run a state effectively even in normal circumstances. As a trained lawyer, he stresses the functional aspects of a state and concludes: ‘All law is ‘situational law’. The sovereign produces and guarantees the situation in its

³³ Badiou, letters to Peter Hallward, 17.06.96; 13.10.97; cf. ‘Politics and Philosophy’, 1998: 114-115; TA, 26.11.97 (*Théorie axiomatique du sujet. Notes du cours 1996-1998*. Unpublished typescript, 121 pgs)

³⁴ Carl Schmitt, *Political Philosophy, Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, translated by George Schwab MAS 1985 (originally in German 1922, revised 2nd ed. 1934): 5

totality. He has the monopoly over this last decision. Therein resides the essence of the state's sovereignty...³⁵

The experience of the 20th Century has dramatically changed the emphasis on what the role and function of a state should be. The basically ugly face of the Leviathan has been shown by several political theorists.

Giorgio Agamben, e.g. takes up Schmitt's analysis of sovereignty but concludes that the exception has become the norm or rule of contemporary politics. The term *homo sacer*, taken from Roman law, alludes to the few who 'can be killed but not sacrificed'³⁶. In modern times, "we are all virtually *homines sacri*,"³⁷ that is to say, outside the law.

Characteristically most atrocities in modern times have not been committed by single individuals, but by states, e.g. by fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, Stalinist Soviet Union, Maoist China, Maoist Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, and so on.

The massive critique of states by a lot of modern thinkers is, therefore, justified. The problem of the connection of law, justice and force has already been outlined by Pascal. He was aware of the fact that justice needs power/force to be executed.³⁸ But, as is apparent, the situation in states has

³⁵ Ibid p. 13: These and similar passages make plausible, why the Nazi regard for Carl Schmitt as one of their strongest intellectual supporters.

³⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. tr. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998; *Homo sacer: Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita*, Giulio Einaudi, 1995. (HS)

³⁷ HS 115

³⁸ Pascal, *Pensées*, (1660) translated by W. F. Trotter (Christian Classics Ethereal Library) PENSÉES 298. *Justice, might*. -- It is right that what is just should be obeyed; it is necessary that what is strongest should be obeyed. Justice without might is helpless; might without justice is tyrannical. Justice without might is gainsaid, because there are always offenders; might without justice is condemned. We must then combine justice and might and, for this end, make what is just strong, or what is strong just. --Justice is subject to dispute; might is easily recognised and is not disputed. So we cannot give might to justice, because might has gainsaid justice and has declared that it is she herself who is just. And thus, being unable to make what is just strong, we have made what is strong just.

been reversed and abuse of power seems to be overwhelmingly widespread. As Foucault says, “for millennia, man remained...a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question”³⁹ Mahatma Gandhi said: ‘Western democracy, as it functions today, is diluted Nazism or Fascism. At best it is merely a cloak to hide the Nazi and the Fascist tendencies of imperialism.’⁴⁰ Gandhi was clearly critical of the power structure of modern states and its abuse.⁴¹ The strategy to end this state of being, called Saty_agraha implies a unison of action and thought, is a search for truth with an open end. The use of means to an ends is overcome. ‘I believe that ultimately means and ends are convertible terms.’⁴²

Justice and peace were realized, to a large extent, through Saty_agraha, not as a means to an end, but through its actual practice. This is again close to what Badiou says about equality and justice: ‘It is very important to notice that here, "equality" signifies nothing objective. It is not at all a matter of the equality of status, of earnings, or functions Political equality is not what we want nor what we project [for the future], it is what we declare in the heat of the moment, here and now, as what is, and not what should be’.⁴³ Equality is, as Badiou puts it, ‘immediately prescriptive’ and yet ‘free of any Programme’.⁴⁴ This is not the place to develop the similarities between these two ‘activists’, Gandhi and

³⁹ HS1 143

⁴⁰ The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Ahmedabad: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1958ff (100 vol.) VOL,78 : 23 FEBRUARY, 1940 - 15 JULY, 1940: 209

⁴¹ ‘The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence.’ VOL.65 : 16 SEPTEMBER, 1934 - 15 DECEMBER, 1934 318

⁴² VOL.54: 13 OCTOBER, 1931 - 8 FEBRUARY, 1932 269

⁴³ AM: 111-112

⁴⁴ C: 247-248 ((1992) *Conditions*. Paris: Seuil)

Despite the atrocities of state power in the 20th. Century, there is still the possibility (and , sadly enough, the reality) of civil war, when the Leviathan can play a positive role, despite the ugly face it shows at other times. The Organisation Politique refuses to accept a position of either state or revolution, it is rather a co-existence. In the December strikes of 1995, the OP even attributes a possible positive role to the state. ‘The state is what can sometimes take account of people and their situations in other registers and by other modalities than those of profit. The state assures from this point of Badiou further,⁴⁵ but they are striking, and after all, Gandhi achieved an empowerment of the masses, which is one of Badiou’s main goals oin his *Organisation Politique* . The OP relies in its actions upon an existing organisation like the French state, and calling it Organisation again shows a necessity for ‘planning’. But Badiou’s determination not to lose the event character of this movement and the aversion to static forms and values makes him say: ‘God protect us from "socio-political programmes"! The essence of modern politics is to be non-programmatic. Politics, as we conceive it in the OP, promises nothing. It is both without party and without programme. It is a prescriptive form of thought, discerning possibilities entirely inaccessible to

⁴⁵ For an outstanding interpretation of Gandhi’s Political Philosophy, see: Dieter Conrad, *Gandhi und der Begriff des Politischen: Staat, Religion und Gewalt, Mit einer Einführung von Jan Assmann* (with an introduction by Jan Assmann) , Herausgegeben von Barbara Conrad-Lütt, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München 2006 and the ‘classical’ interpretation by Bikhu Parekh, *Gandhi’s Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination* (MacMillan 1989) *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi’s Political Discourse* (Sage Publications India rev. edn. , New Delhi, Sage 1999)

parliamentarism, and one that works entirely independently for their realisation'.⁴⁶

It is not enough to state the following, as Badiou does, concerning the rules and the order of a community: 'As a general rule, every generic procedure is in reality a process that can perfectly well be deliberative, as long as we understand that it invents its rule of deliberation at the same time as it invents itself.'⁴⁷ At certain levels, at a certain point of time, people might need 'structure' to benefit from. view the public space and the general interest. And capital does not incarnate the general interest'.⁴⁸

Generally speaking, though, I think one cannot really find a concept of state or a concept of the organisational structure of a community in Badiou.

If the event constitutes the subject and, through it, certain action and behaviour, Badiou undoubtedly is not belated, but *where* is he going?

Structure and a 'positive' universal outline of a community may be developed in a description of past events, as Badiou does himself, when referring to the French Revolution, the October Revolution, etc. In a truly Whiteheadian sense, this structure and universal outline should be described as the Adventures of Events.

Although the immediacy of the event is lost, the newness and the break with the existing may not necessarily happen. Whether or not this happens depends on the situation an event starts from. Any structure and any value would be taken as a past event and would therefore only have relative validity: the final test of truth is the new event itself. Talking about the past does not only need to be *historia* (narration) but also what is called *Geschichte* (happening) in German.

⁴⁶ Réponses écrites', 1992: 70 ((1992) 'Réponses écrites d'Alain Badiou.' Interview with student group at the University of Paris VIII (Vincennes/Saint-Denis). Philosophie, philosophie 4: 66-71)

⁴⁷ Ethics: 117

⁴⁸ LDP, 15.12.96: 11 (La Distance politique)

One could then rephrase this as a history , Event - Adventure s. This would mean, to some extent, a revision of Badiou's concept of universals. It claims, that a 'universal is essentially 'anobjective'. It can be experienced only through the production (or reproduction) of a trajectory of thought, and this trajectory constitutes (or reconstitutes) a subjective disposition'.⁴⁹ But because of the reasons mentioned above, it does not follow that 'the universal is always an incalculable emergence, rather than a describable structure. By the same token, I will say that a truth is intransitive to knowledge, and even that it is essentially unknown'.⁵⁰

Similarly, Plato has a critical assesment of objective descriptions of values and supposed security in Menon.⁵¹

⁴⁹ HUIT THÈSES SUR L'UNIVERSEL, Centre d'Étude de la Philosophie Française Contemporaine - 19 novembre 2004 p.1

⁵⁰ ibid

⁵¹ E.g. Plato, Meno 80 a 80 b trans. by Benjamin Jowett: MENO: O Socrates, I used to be told, before I knew you, that you were always doubting yourself and making others doubt; and now you are casting your spells over me, and I am simply getting bewitched and enchanted, and am at my wits' end. And if I may venture to make a jest upon you, you seem to me both in your appearance and in your power over others to be very like the flat torpedo fish, who torpifies those who come near him and touch him, as you have now torpified me, I think. For my soul and my tongue are really torpid, and I do not know how to answer you; and though I have been delivered of an infinite variety of speeches about virtue before now, and to many persons--and very good ones they were, as I thought--at this moment I cannot even say what virtue is.

MEN. !W SōkrateV, Åkouon mÅn Égwge prìn ka~ sy+genæsþðai
 80a soi äóti sp ouðån Állo É aütóV te ÅporeiV ka~ touV ÁllouV poieiV Åporeîn: ka~ nÿn, äõV
 gæ moi dokeiV, gohteúeiV me ka~ fðarmátteiV ka~ ÅtecðnvV kateþðeiV, äõste mestòn
 ÅporíaV gegonænai. ka~ dokeiV moi pantelV, eî dei ti ka~ skvq»ai, äomoiótatoV eînai tó te
 eïdoV ka~ tçlla taútñ t% plateía nárkñ t% jðalatt™ã: ka~ gàr /aúth tôn Åe~ plhsiázonta ka~
 äaptómenon narkân poieî, ka~ sp dokeiV moi nÿn ÊmÅ toioûtón ti pepoihkænai, [narkân]:
 ÅlhjðvV gàr Égwge ka~

Since the subject is created in the event, Badiou, unlike Hobbes, does not have to assume the wolfish nature of human beings. But he has to demonstrate what a human being can be. As far as evil is concerned, he has developed a concept of it in his ethics. If you do not stick to your experienced truth, you allow evil. If you do not do ‘all that you can preserve in that which exceeds your perseverance’, you will allow evil. Therefore, ‘Persevere in the interruption. Seize in your being that which has seized and broken you,’⁵² then you allow evil.⁵³

Badiou’s ethics of truth denies radical evil. It ‘ward off’⁵⁴ the remnant forms of evil, such as the failure to live up to a fidelity or to identify a total truth.⁵⁵

Classical virtues, such as wisdom, courage, temperance and justice⁵⁶ are reflected in his description of the truth process and run through all his writings on ethics and politics.

Describing the task of a new philosophy, Badiou refers to Aristotle: ‘Philosophy has to expose the possibility of a true life. As Aristotle has said, our goal is to

80b τὸν ἄριστον καὶ τὸ στόμα νῆκεν, καὶ οὐκ ἔσθω ἄοτι ἈποκρίνωμαTM σοι. καTMτοι μυριάκι
 γε περὶ Ἄρε^{2V} πάμπόλλου ἰλόγου ἑίρηκα καὶ πρὸν πολλού, καὶ πάνυ εὔ, ἄδ^V γε Ἐμαυτῶ
 Ἐδόκουν: νῆν δᾶ οὔδ) ἄοτι ἔστιν τὸ παράπαν ἔσθω εἰπεῖν.

⁵² Ethics: 47.

⁵³ This of course is quite close to the definition of evil by St. Augustine as *privatio boni*:
 Augustinus, *Confessiones* III, 7: quibus rerum ignarus pertubabar, et recedens a veritate ire in
 eam mihi videbar, quia non noveram malum non esse nisi privationem boni usque ad quod
 omnino non est.

⁵⁴ Ethics: 67

⁵⁵ Ethics: 71

⁵⁶ E.g. Plato in the *Laws*: wisdom: *swfiζa (sōphia)*, temperance: *σωφροσύνη (sōphrosynē)*,
 fortitude: *Ἄνδρεία (andreia)*, justice: *δικαιοσύνη (dikaiosynē)* *Laws*, Bk. I, 631

examine the question : How can we live really, that is, as immortals. And when we are incorporated within a truth-body, we are in fact as immortals.⁵⁷

Is Badiou himself turning into an ‘evental revisionist’? Or is one an ‘evental revisionist’ oneself, when relating Badiou’s ethics and his notion of a state to the Adventures of Events, in order to develop them further?

I would like to conclude with an eschatological quotation from Alain Badiou:

‘...when something happens in the day of living truths, we have to start doing again the hard work of philosophy : new logic of the world, new theory of the truth-body, new points... Because we have to protect the fragile new idea of what is a truth. To protect the new truth itself. So, when the night falls, we do not sleep. Because, once more, "we must endure our thoughts all night". The philosopher is nothing else than, in the intellectual field, a poor night watch-man.’⁵⁸

⁵⁷ "Bodies, Languages Truths" was originally delivered at the Victoria College of Arts, University of Melbourne, on September 9th 2006, 11: compare Aristotle in his Nichomachean Ethics: “...such a life [a life of excellent activity of intelligence] will be on a higher plane; for it is not in so far as he is human that he will live like this, but in so far as there is something divine in him, and to the degree that this is superior to the compound, to that degree will its activity too be superior to that in accordance with therest of excellence....One should...*so far as is possible*, assimilate to the immortals [gods] and do everything with the aim of living in accordance with what is the highest of the things in us.” (X,7,1177b26-1178a1: Rowe)

⁵⁸ "Bodies, Languages Truths" was originally delivered at the Victoria College of Arts, University of Melbourne, on September 9th 2006, p 12.