

What Can Philosophy Do? A commentary to Alain Badiou's Seminar on Lacan (1994-1995)

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At what conditions is it possible to do philosophy today? This question has obsessed Alain Badiou for over fifty years and since his early work *Manifesto for Philosophy* has found at least one answer: philosophy today is *possible* upon condition that it is *compossible* with Lacan, the “educator of every philosopher to come”, as Badiou describes him. Lacan represents a condition of possibility for philosophy because, according to Badiou, a (contemporary) philosopher worthy of this name is someone who “has the courage to traverse, without weakening, the antiphilosophy of Lacan” (Badiou 1995, p. 196). However, only a few are capable of this and Badiou does not hesitate to recognize it at every opportunity. Nevertheless, the conditions remain valid: to be considered a serious and important philosopher, in other words one that can be clearly distinguished from media pundits or “nouveaux philosophes”, so rampant on the contemporary scene, it is necessary to measure oneself with the Lacanian interpretation of philosophy, hence with the anti-philosophical identification that Lacan gives of it, venturing, if possible, to take one step beyond. According to Badiou, really doing philosophy always implies doing antiphilosophy, for several reasons, including the divided origins of philosophy, its “original duplicity”. Philosophy was born divided: if on the one hand, Badiou explains, it incarnates the temptation of *sens* (sense, meaning), on the other it has also always represented the resistance to this temptation. Philosophy's condition of possibility, Lacan is one such condition, as *conditio sine qua non* for its resistance or rebirth, i.e. of its return, uninvited by the search for ultimate guarantees or, least of all, by the dismantling of its specific task – capturing the real –, which too often leads to the failure of that search. The other condition is mathematics, which, significantly, Badiou has often praised in various parts of his works. Philosophy – the philosopher of *Being and Event* tells us – must confront itself with psychoanalysis and mathematics, though in this confrontation it must also prove that it has something that allows it to continue being what it actually is, i.e. philosophy. Otherwise, Badiou states, it capitulates, it becomes opinion, chatter, “a patient collection of imbecilities” and *nonsense*. But what must philosophy do to prove its worth? What must it prove it is capable of to carry on calling itself by that name?

The seminar Badiou dedicated to Lacanian antiphilosophy in the early 1990s is one on Badiouian philosophy, in other words a seminar on what Badiou thinks philosophy should be and ought to achieve. Reason why, when reading it, the philosopher, far more than the analyst, cannot help feeling called into question. The reason for this is undoubtedly the question of *the act*. Is philosophy – we ask ourselves leafing through these pages – capable of performing an act? In other words, does philosophy contain anything similar to the analytical act? Indeed, being compossible with Lacan means performing acts. Philosophy must prove that it is capable of performing acts, because this is what philosophy must prove to the antiphilosophy that questions it. Yet, precisely because the burden of providing evidence is entirely on its back, Badiou does not take it for granted that philosophy will succeed in doing so, that it will win: indeed, in philosophy we do not find the subjective trait that recurs in antiphilosophy and that Badiou calls “anticipated certainty of victory as subjective disposition with regard to the discourse being held” (Badiou 2013, 2016)[1]. Philosophical subjectivity is not a “subjectivity of victory in the present” (*ibid.*), philosophers *do not know* they are winning and therefore, Badiou seems to be saying, *they will not win*.

There are good premises to suppose that it is this very conviction that determines the fact that in the “Lacanian” seminar these questions are not explicitly articulated. Badiou does not formulate them, nor does he supply answers: he leaves them pending. Yet, only a positive answer to these issues would secure a future for philosophy; a future that would not be exclusively mathematical, one before which philosophy would not stand in a daze, helpless and befooled, before mathematics (“*bouché*” is Lacan’s diagnosis: a French word meaning at once blocked, stuffy and dim-witted). In other words, only by proving that there is such a thing as a philosophical act may prevent philosophy from falling under the shots that Lacanian antiphilosophy inflicts on it. The latter risk being lethal because, in just one move, the analytic one, Lacan managed to disarticulate the three great postulates that philosophical *discourse* stands upon: 1) that there is a truth of the real; 2) that there is a knowledge of the real; 3) that there is a knowledge of the truth. And he succeeded, proving that these postulates are the result of an improper segmentation of the triad truth-knowledge-real by philosophy, which, when it is poor and insincere, works towards “the illicit dismantlement of the triad”, towards “a subversion of the three with the two” (Badiou 2016, p.134). When it is a prisoner of what Lacan called the discourse of the *Maître* (the master and teacher), philosophy claims to “elude the rotation of discourses” in the hope of acting as “a stop point of their dynamics” (*ibid.*, p.126), i.e. of the discursive disposition in general. But the effect of this operation and of this claim, Badiou says, is “a false thought of the One”: *the One is*. In the deviation between the latter and a true thinking of the One – *there is (such as thing as) the One*, or, as Lacan affirmed towards the end of his teachings, *y’a d’l’Un* – lies the whole difference between philosophical *activity* and analytic *act*. And it is for this reason that “if the analytic act exists, philosophy is displaced” (*ibid.*, p.135). The category of “antiphilosophy” is not new. Nor was it by any means invented by Badiou or Lacan, who grabs it from the 18th century and uses it for his own aims: to warn analysts of the danger philosophy represents. Philosophy is dangerous, it is harmful because it threatens to “transform the cure into condescending chatter” (*ibid.*, p.73 – and this, incidentally, is the accusation the so-called “analytic” antiphilosophy makes against the so-called “continental” philosophy). The temptation of philosophy is “forgetting the analytic act in favor of the philosopher’s hermeneutic position” (*ibid.*), i.e. sacrificing clinical practice to hermeneutics on the altar of Sense and Truth. “Ultimately – Badiou comments – Lacanian antiphilosophy exists because something in philosophy endangers the analytic act” (*ibid.*) and it does so – this is Lacan’s thesis – in a measure directly proportional to “how far outside we are from the condition of being able to identify philosophy” (*ibid.*, p.72). This is why in Lacan, “the antiphilosophical identification of philosophy” (*ibid.*) is directed exclusively at analysts. Indeed, if “an authentic antiphilosophy is always an apparatus that must snatch someone away from philosophers” (*ibid.*), this someone, that Badiou calls the “counter-character”, is in Lacan’s case the psychoanalyst. It is, in other words, on the backdrop of an essential appeal to analysts that Lacan “rises up against philosophy”: like the libertine for Pascal, the analyst too is from his point of view the lost man, the man that needs to be freed from the enchantment of philosophy.

According to Badiou, therefore, what characterizes an antiphilosophy is the fact that it is something therapeutic: “it is not a question – he specifies – of criticizing philosophy, but to heal man from the philosophy he is suffering from terribly: purely and simply healing humanity from the disease of philosophy, which consists in the inclination to producing absurd senseless propositions” (*ibid.*, p. 33). In other words, “antiphilosophy” is not just the category we use to indicate any system of thought that opposes the singularity of one’s own speculation, based on experience, to the philosophical category of Truth. “Antiphilosophy” is also the name of a therapy philosophy must undergo. As long as, like religion, it offers accommodation to sense,

the philosophical intellect must be amended, but the emendation, in the case of antiphilosophy, materializes in the form of a challenge that philosophy must accept and win if it wants to survive. Not because there is a risk that it may die, but because philosophy is either *philosophia perennis* or it is not. Badiou is absolutely convinced of this. Here surviving simply means “healing”. But healing means continuing to be what it is, hence *prôte philosophia*, a science of principles, without delegating to others, for example to mathematics, the task that belongs to it; without, in other words, giving up its constitutional vocation – the absolute – which Badiou never fails to recognize even in his lessons on Lacan of 1994-1995. Philosophy, he argues there, either deals with the real – the *ab-solutus* – or it is not. But as philosophy has decided to do without it, i.e. to *relate to it*, it is not in good health today. Sick and weak, philosophy therefore risks succumbing to the attacks that from Pascal to Wittgenstein, antiphilosophy has launched against it and that have become lethal since Lacan.

Generally speaking, we can say that what the various antiphilosophical positions have in common is their affirming the impossibility of capturing the real through the discursive, resulting in the absurdity and senselessness of saying. The real – this is the *mainstream* antiphilosophical thesis – is only accessible through an extra-logical point out-of-discourse, be it that of Pascal’s conversion, Rousseau’s passion, Kierkegaard’s anxiety, Nietzsche’s Noon that splits the history of the world into two, of Wittgenstein’s mystics or Saint Paul’s grace, to whom Badiou dedicates the seminar after the one on Lacan. Yet, far from resolving itself in a pure and simple rejection of philosophy, antiphilosophy instead proposes traversing it. Its aim is identifying an excess point with respect to the logo-centric apparatus philosophy used, a point that, especially in contemporary antiphilosophy, coincides with an act: a political one in Nietzsche, an aesthetical one in Wittgenstein and a scientific one in Lacan. Antiphilosophy essentially consists of three operations: 1) a linguistic and logical critique of philosophical propositions aimed at overthrowing the reactive category of “truth” through which philosophy tries to establish itself as a theory of the real; 2) a clarification of the nature of philosophical activity that the discursive appearance tends to dissimulate and that according to Badiou consists of three operations: deploring mathematics, the occlusion of politics, promoting a love, the love for truth, which is its deviation; 3) a call for a radically new act that, it were it to be called philosophical, would risk generating misunderstandings.

And yet the antiphilosophy elaborated by the French analyst interests Badiou for two reasons that make it something irreducible to the antiphilosophies that preceded it. Lacan’s is the first example of immanent antiphilosophy, and for this one reason it is capable of launching the most radical challenge yet against philosophy. Its being immanent means that it is neither prophetic nor mystical. Proof of this, Badiou specifies, is the existence of its founder: Freud. That the challenge being launched is the most radical yet depends on the fact that “the analytical act is the real of the philosophical act” (ibid, p. 21) and only with Lacan, therefore, the opposition of the former to the latter is capable of producing effects: the crisis or rebirth of philosophy. The analytic act, which Badiou judges to be ultra-scientific insofar as he places the real of Lacan in knowledge, as a hole in knowledge, as an *impasse* of symbolization, is neither expected, nor promised, nor programmed. The analytic act has occurred and “nothing can be argued against its having-occurred” (ibid, p.85). Freud is the name of this accomplished act that we must face with no guarantees of the moral, institutional or religious order, because in Lacan “immanence” means that the act is not a long way off, confined in an unfathomable messianic transcendence. Though it cannot present itself, as such, in a proposition; indeed, the act is not even silent, unutterable. On the contrary, its enunciative strength is such, according to Lacan, that it foils any attempts to establish *a priori* the conditions of its production.

With Lacan antiphilosophy ceases to be the identification of the possibilities of the act: there is a place of the act, true, a site to be built and of which the act determines, at the appropriate time – the logical – the rupture, but there are no norms for its construction. “The act is the act” (ibid, p.82), Badiou writes, and this means that it is self-normed: it no longer refers, in its signification of truth, to an exterior norm, but “takes place in its place” (ibid.): the couch. The divan replacing the divine – for Wittgenstein the latter was still the place of the act – is what keeps Lacan from asking analysts, like Lenin asked, “What is to be done?”, because when the act takes place in its place, it creates its own conditions *by itself* and *automatically* settles in knowledge. Not, therefore, *in truth*, which has an incestuous relationship with the real, but *in knowledge*, because it is knowledge that, according to Badiou, touches the *ab-sens* (ab-sense/absence), the real, the absolute. But how? The fact that the act settles in knowledge, Badiou explains, means that it is decipherable in knowledge itself: a knowledge that is un-supposable but wholly transmittable, it doesn’t matter to whom. The “stupidity” of the *passé*, the practical organization invented by Lacan, that the French philosopher judges to be the definitive expression of antiphilosophy. Indeed, what counts in the *passés* not the sense, but the passage. What counts is *that* something passes, not *what* passes. The *passés* indeed a *machinic* apparatus, insofar as it a *quodditative* one: it is not interested in essence (the *quid*), but in existence (the *quod*); an existence, though Badiou does not say so, that is entirely Platonic, because “being”, according to a too frequently forgotten Plato, means to produce effects, even minimal, at least once (*Soph.* 247D: “...to produce a change in anything or any nature or to be affected even in the least degree by the slightest cause”).

With regard to Freud, Badiou invites us to imagine something like a “powerful historical *passé*” (ibid, p. 85) in which the Freudian act has made a passage to knowledge interrupting philosophy’s discourse. The name Freud is the name of an act and an act is a cut, a rupture: something in which there is no passage, nor could there be. When it is a question of producing knowledge, one can only return to the act, and this is why, in contrast to science, the history of which can be reconstructed without “the need of the watchword of a return to Euclid” (ibid, p. 84), psychoanalysis has ultimately done nothing other than return to Freud, i.e. to the foundation, to the evidence, as Badiou writes, “that there has been analysis” (ibid, p. 85), once and for always. But the return to Freud is also the formula of Lacanian antiphilosophy, because in Lacan *rising up against* philosophy means *proceeding towards* he who broke it. Freud, Badiou explains, opened something, and this opening is the existence of an act “of which everyone knows that it concerns sex in its effects on thought” (ibid, p. 86) and that, according to the French philosopher, can be summed up as follows: “the ab-sense/absence (*ab-sens*) designates sex, thus discovering a central point of the Subject, a real point in which a transmittable knowledge can sustain itself” (ibid.). Lacan reminds us in *L’étourdit* (from *étourdi*, “dazed” or “scatterbrained” with an added final “t” that allows us to read the title as “le tour dit”: the said turn) that “Freud puts us on the track of the fact that lack-of-sense (*ab-sens*) designates sex (...) Starting from the expression: ‘it does not go without saying’ (*ça ne va pas sans dire*), one sees that this is the case with many things (...) including the Freudian Thing (...) Not to go without is to make a couple which, as they say, ‘is not all that obvious (*ne va pas tout seul*)’” (Lacan, *L’étourdit*, www.lacaninireland.com/web/translations/ecrits). The couple is not right, it cannot be made, because Freud showed that something comes undone and fizzles out. *There is (some) One* means that there is some real, some real outside the symbolic, some real detached from the knowledge of which philosophy, under certain aspects even Badiou’s, seems to want to know nothing about. Philosophy, when it is bad or inauthentic, ignores that the real is the ab-sense/absence of sexual relationship (*rapport sexuel*), i.e. that the One – the real – is not something that is, but something that does, that operates, and that truth is nothing but a

function: the function of the real in knowledge. Philosophy is built on the repression of this point because, according to Badiou, there's always a moment in the activity of philosophy when non-relationship (the triad) is forced into relationship (the couple).

Philosophy is what doesn't pass. Of this Lacan is profoundly convinced. But that it does not pass does not mean that it is eternal or immortal, at least not in the sense of *philosophia perennis*. This non passing is not a positive quality, or even less so the brand of philosophy's superiority compared to other sciences. There is no Cartesian Tree to hang on to help justify it: for Lacan philosophy just does not pass. It does not pass but should do so because the fact it does not pass means that it does not pass onto knowledge and remains a discourse, chatter, bla bla bla. "The *écart* [gap/discard/distance] of a *passé*— Badiou comments in some finely written pages — is entirely philosophical" (ibid, p. 83): if we could look inside the garbage bin of the *passé*, we would find "the most brilliant interpretations, new sparkling concepts, the most refined psychological explanations. The postures and impostures of the analyst. And all this is philosophical" (ibid, p. 84), because philosophy, when it fails to generate mathemes and aristocratically disdains formulas, remains stuck on Sense, on Truth and on their correlation within the couple. This is however its doom, not its glory. Sense and Truth are the imaginary guarantors of the possibility of a meta-language "projecting on the rotation of the four discourses" (ibid, p. 126), hence of a fable (Nietzsche), a lie (Wittgenstein), a roguery (Lacan). Such is philosophy: when it is sick it does all it can to find "a point of arrest to allow its discourse to be self-sufficient" (ibid.). This is the Fundament. But this enterprise exhausts it; insofar as it confuses the impossibility of sexual relationship with its provisional powerlessness, philosophy, when it is a false thought of the One, sighs, agonizes ("*s'ouïre*", Lacan says, sighs/self-or-worse), falls ill. When it is a false thought of the One, philosophy loses itself, because that of meta-language, or to use Lacan's words, of a complete Other, a non-lacking Other, is only a supposed thought, hence one that is non-transmittable, aristocratic instead of democratic: it inhibits the act instead of giving the philosopher the opportunity to deal with it. If philosophy is what does not pass, this is because the Other is what remains. It remains and produces mud. Where there is the act there is no Other and, vice versa, where there is the Other the act is impossible. Where there is the Other, there's comfort, safety, *jouissance*: therefore no act, but relationship, a stretching of the ab-sense/absence to sense, even in the form of non-sense. Where there is an act, on the other hand, there's horror, horror and *no Other*. But then how can philosophy pass the test of the act and establish itself as something else in respect to its reiterated exorcization? According to Badiou, in the light of Lacan's antiphilosophy, the trial against philosophy can be instituted with completely new accusations: 1) by ignoring the register of ab-sense/absence, philosophy remains in the snares of the opposition between sense and non-sense; 2) by ignoring ab-sex/abscess (in French there is a pun here between "*ab-sexe*" and "*abcès*") it cannot reach a position in the real of knowledge; 3) by persisting in putting before the mirror sense and truth, the speculative is condemned to remain specular. The victim of a triple repression, philosophy blocks up and becomes blocked up (*bouchée*), dim-witted, and for this reason it believes it can make do with a love for truth, which is always love of its power (ibid, p. 123) instead of a love for its weakness, of the fact it can only be half spoken of (*mi-dite*). In this way, more than in knowledge, as knowledge, philosophy settles as ignorance, as a passion for ignorance. And so, not too slowly, it gathers up inside the antiphilosophical machine to which Lacan entrusted the evidence that, on the contrary, knowledge has been produced, in other words that "there has been analysis". In virtue of its automatism and of a certain fundamental dose of anonymousness, the *passécan*, in other words, function as an antiphilosophical apparatus capable of sorting and discovering "the philosophical dirt" (ibid, p. 83) locked in the body of the beautiful soul. Following Badiou,

it would even seem to possess the necessary characteristics to force philosophy into honesty: it is in the absence of the candidate (the voluntary future analyst) that the *passé* occurs, an absence that Badiou acutely interprets as the scenic metaphor of the absence of sexual relationship. But is it really to institute something similar to the *passé* philosophy? Is it possible, to use words that are not Badiou's, to identify a Freud of philosophy to return to with one's own act in order for a knowledge to be produced?

Returning to Freud, according to the Badiou of these pages, means making philosophy undergo the test of the analytic act, a test that makes any lie impossible. Concluding on an antiphilosophy means concluding on its act and on the ethics of this act. The 1994-95 Badiou's Seminar deals just with this analytic act, i.e. the act "the place of which is precisely the singularity of a psychoanalytic cure and the evidence of which is the real of a Subject" (ibid, p. 162). For the Lacan of *Seminar VII* on the ethics of psychoanalysis, the ethical question, insofar as Freud's position helps us make progress, "is to be articulated from the orientation of the location of man in relation to the real" (Lacan 1986/1997, p. 11), a relation that is in the order of the act and not of sense, because clinical practice, when it is a *clinical practice of the real*, is a *clinical practice of the act*. In other words, Badiou's, "analytical discourse has value uniquely insofar as it allows to free a possibility of facing the analytic act, to assume its horror (...) Were it not for this chance being offered to face the act (...) ultimately it would only be philosophy in disguise" (Badiou 2016, p. 130). The analytic act makes it possible to unmask the founding pretense of philosophy, insofar as its "place" is a rigorously extra-temporal point, and therefore, according to Badiou, also an extra-philosophical one ("it could be shown that in antiphilosophy the unprecedented/unheard of the act always has as an attribute something like the non-temporal assurance of time" – ibid, p. 172), in which a precipitating thrust towards formalization converges with something like a "retention of affection that deceives not" (ibid, p. 162): this is anguish. This is why the act as "intemporal essence of time" (ibid, p. 172) represents the most radical challenge ever launched to philosophy: indeed, can philosophy do without time? Without the time that, according to Hegel, the mortal enemy of all antiphilosophers in Badiou's opinion, is "being-there [*Dasein*] of the concept" (ibid.)? Can philosophy, in other words, do without the sense of which time is the eponym, revealing the trick that makes many philosophers "virtually content men" (ibid, p. 128)? Does anything exist in philosophy that deceives not? Something like a certainty capable of nailing the shoulders of the *Ego cogito* to the wall of the *Id cogitat* building constrictions for its enunciations? In other words, is it capable of proceeding, like mathematics, "without a consciousness", leaving the said to be fuelled only by the saying and not also by reality, which is linked to consciousness like a synonym is linked to another? In short, is philosophy capable of touching the real and proving that it can succeed in doing so?

Realizing the impossible. This is what analysis and philosophy deal with. And 'realizing' must be understood literally: it is a matter of producing the impossible, of accomplishing it, because the *act* in Lacan is nothing other than the accomplishment of an impossible *action*, impossible for the *Ego cogito*. *The act is the accomplishment of the impossible for every conscious action*. This is why it is inscribed in the register of the real, that real of which Lacan, for a good part of his teachings, has preached the identity with the impossible: the real, Lacan said for a long time, is the impossible to know, the impossible to symbolize, the impossible to say. Yet, in the later years of his activity, Lacan collided with a real that is, so-to-speak, an impossible in itself and not only an impossible with reference to knowledge, namely an impossible for us. And for Lacan *the impossible in itself coincides with the necessary*. For the spinozan Lacan, necessity is the only mode of the real. This means that there is (some) One: there is something that one does and one enjoys everywhere, incessantly, whether we want to or not, whether we are aware of it or not. What is

then to be done? What is to be thought? In this real, which Lacan already significantly defined in *Seminar III* as the entirety of what actually takes place, the entirety then of what produces effects, the relationship, this is true, is impossible. There is no relationship with the real if relationship means correlation, determination, knowledge. There is a demonstration of *the real* only if we intend the genitive in its double sense of subjective and objective. The real, Badiou writes, shows *itself*, it happens, because demonstrations, as Spinoza teaches, are the eyes things look at us with, the eyes of the sardine can staring at Lacan in *Seminar XI* and nailing him to the real of his gaze. In analysis, then, it is a question of making this sardine can, which means making the real happen within a demonstration. The demonstration lays the table on which, if all goes well, the sardines will have waited for us. They will have waited for us to eat us. The analytic act is the happening of the real as an *écart* [gap/discard/distance] of a correct demonstration, because every cure, the aim of which is to make the act effective, is nothing more than the formal demonstration of the real of the subject: the sardines. Badiou describes it as “the elevation of the symbolization that gives a reason to this symbolization to the point of the *impasse* that frees its real” (ibid, p. 149), because when well done, when cogent, symbolization allows analysands to decide in favor of a connection with their own real. But this decision, Badiou explains, is in the order of an absolute choice, in the order of a not being able to not choose and, therefore, in the order of a necessity: a free necessity. According to Badiou the analytic imperative of elevating powerlessness – the formalization that justifies powerlessness, and hence the phantasm – to logical impossibility – the *impasse* of formalization that frees the real incarnating it in a necessity – is the equivalent of what Kierkegaard called “leading a person to the crossroads” (ibid, p. 150). Demonstrating the real, for Badiou, a reader of Lacan, means constructing a constriction, producing a blind alley without which the cure, in the same way as philosophy, would be nothing but an endless hermeneutics. In fact, that the act is the effect of the discard of/distance from a correct symbolization means that it is the effect of the construction of a constriction: there is an initial non-chronological time, in which the question is situating the powerlessness by isolating its signifier: this is the topological work of interpretation, “what is equivalent to a sort of uncovering/discovering of the phantasm” (ibid, p. 151). And then, once the signifier has been isolated, a second time, in which it must be elevated to the impossible and jump from there into the real. “There lies the entire art of analysis – Badiou remarks – conducting, or *being the conduction* of the elevation of powerlessness to the impossible through *always unique* vicissitudes, once the operation of situating has been completed” (ibid, p. 153 – our italics).

Situate and elevate, interpret and formalize, intuit and demonstrate: these are the two phases that convoke the analysand to non-exit, i.e. to the point where the act will discover the real as a discarding (*écart*) of the symbolizing operation: if this operation is correct, it means that it is interrupted, interrupted by the act, because when you are put with your back against the wall of the impossible, “nothing but the act will be capable of attesting you as a subject” (ibid, p. 151). The second time, however, in contrast to the first, implies a true art of singularity. It is – Badiou says – “an ad hoc formalization” (ibid, p. 153), because there is no standard formalization, there is no formal theory of the impossibility of logical enunciation that is valid in all cases. In other words, in the second time, a truly crucial “time”, we are dealing with the act, the act of creation of the sardine-can matheme. There is no doubt that it is an act: no one knows in advance what to do. Not even the analyst. That the matheme is its result is instead assured by the fact that what is at stake in the logical end of an analysis is the identification of something like the cypher of one’s *jouissance* – it is a localization – and the possibility of embracing it – it is the *sinthome* as “passage” from the third to the first person of *jouissance*. Badiou, however, proves to be more Kantian than Spinozan when, situating Lacan’s real in

knowledge, and hence turning the triad into a couple, judges as fundamental above all the determining, through knowledge itself, of a place of the act, a place where the real, freed from the act, may produce a hole. Badiou blames Lacan for not saying ‘what is to be done?’, for not saying ‘what else is to be done?’. Lacan, he says, is silent regarding thought; he does not supply rules for building the place of the act and leaves the cure enshrouded in a mystery. “Everyone in his nook gets by as he can”, and this, from Badiou’s point of view, “is one of Lacan’s irreducible weaknesses” (ibid, p. 165). Badiou is sure of this and even proposes a hypothesis to explain this lack of determination: “Lacan provides no clear answer to the question ‘what is to be done?’ and hence, more precisely, to the question ‘what is to be thought?’, because he fears that taking such a direction would mean returning to philosophy, in this way filling the hole opened by antiphilosophy” (ibid.). But can we be sure that the absence of determination, which according to Lacan always risks being prescriptive, is the sign of a weakness rather than of a strength, of a confidence, for example, in winning?

Lacan never says *what is to be done* in the direction of the cure, true. But he doesn’t say it because he cannot, and above all because in the direction of the cure there is no question of “doing”. The doing is the job of the analysand, who on the couch “has to sweat it out hard”, Lacan (2004, p. 12) says. The job of the analyst is the act, an act that is never in the order of doing but that instead requires to be clearly separated from doing. From the point of view of doing, the analyst is “a loafer”. And he is so because, from the point of view of the real, with regard to the real, he is only a “dupe” (in the waters of Brittany, Lacan is at the mercy of a sardine can!). And yet “with no standard”, as the motto of Lacanian psychoanalysis recites, does not mean “with no principles”. There are in fact two conditions the observance of which, according to Lacan, is sufficient for acts to appear: 1) occupying a certain position: that of the *x* or of the dead one and 2) being caused by only one desire: the desire of the *matheme*. *Nothing Other than these*. But at a closer look these conditions are those of any act of creation: whether mathematical, analytical or philosophical. In fact, when not bluffing, analyst, mathematician and philosopher are nothing more than functions, functions of the act, vehicles of the anonymous production process of the *matheme* (“the written silence”, “Wittgenstein’s mystical element”, Badiou defines it). Analyst, mathematician and philosopher, when they are not lying, are *that* through which there is an act, an act they support thanks to their desire – which is always the desire of the formula – and *nothing Other than that*. Not even horror finds a place if these two functions work. Lacan knows it well and for this reason declares that he doesn’t expect anything from anyone and something only from the functioning. Lacan knew how to wait, Badiou remembers, because he was sure that it wouldn’t be he who would overcome, but “the discourse I serve” (Lacan 2010). This certainty, however, has nothing to do with a subjective presumption, because analytic discourse, Badiou explains, “is less proposed than it is served” (Badiou 2016). In other words, only the serving of an anonymous mechanism – topology, structure – allows a personality such as that of Lacan, for example, to affirm itself in “a rising that, as such, is unprecedented” (ibid.), unrepeatable.

“It has been a month since I broke up with everything” and “I found, alone as I have always been”. Badiou judges this mixture of founding and breaking up to be the testament of the thinking of Lacan, which apparently has written itself; it has been. “*Je dissous*” and “*je fonde*” are the two ethical times, the former antiphilosophical, the latter philosophical, of the only act that gave Lacan the certainty of victory: the analytic act. The early certainty of victory as a subjective trait of antiphilosophy belongs to “the order of the act (...), because of the act we cannot be certain, if not for its effects” (ibid, p. 19). Whether we will have won, whether the demonstration is good, is something we will only know afterwards, after the effect of the act, because in the act the object is active and the subject is subverted. This shows us the *après-*

comp, that temporality of the elevated order, elevated because atemporal, with which Lacan translates Freud's greatest invention: *Nachträglichkeit*, afterwardness (according to Laplanche's proposal). Surprisingly, Badiou doesn't mention it. But when in his last lessons he laments the absence of a theory of the time of the act, hoping for the construction of such a theory by antiphilosophy, he betrays the fact that he is not acquainted with it, or, if he is, that he neglects its importance. Pity, because there actually is, has been, and will be, a theory of the time of the act. And it is a philosophical theory before being a psychoanalytical one. Plato, the philosopher admiring mathematics, was its founder, he to whom philosophers keep going back to, as Whitehead, another mathematician philosopher, has well captured. *The Seventh Letter*: first the laborious work on the *lógoi*— which is the demonstration, *diánoia*— and then, suddenly, *exaiphnés*, the stroke of intuition, the leap into the real. But “the before” is caused by “the then”. The “after” is a cause of the “before”: this is the meaning of *Nachträglichkeit*. Lacan shrewdly picks it up, connecting to Freud as much as is needed to invent logical time and calling it “the real”. The Freudian Cause, as he wrote in 1980, is not a School, but a “*Champ*”, a “Field” or “Camp”, which makes us deduce that it will only be temporary (Lacan 1980, p. 40). If it will have won is something we shall only know in the after, but that it has passed we sense now and forever.

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[1] Quotations translated into English from the Italian edition of the *Seminar*. Badiou 2016 (p. 19).