

Alain Badiou, *Nietzsche. L'antiphilosophie I. 1992-1993*, Paris: Fayard, 2015. 336pp. ISBN: 978-2-213-68616-5. Paperback, 19€.

It is common knowledge that Nietzsche is very critical of traditional philosophy and strongly opposes a number of (if not all) philosophers, but Alain Badiou elaborates on this critical dimension to interpret and classify Nietzsche as an “antiphilosopher.” As such, Badiou’s interpretation sides with the vast amount of literature focusing on Nietzsche’s critique of metaphysics and truth. However, Badiou goes a bit further and develops a notion of “antiphilosophy” which is not only critical but also has a positive impact: Nietzsche is not only a critic of metaphysics, he is also an antiphilosopher siding with, among others, Pascal or Rousseau. *Nietzsche. L'antiphilosophie I* is the transcript from a seminar Badiou gave in 1992-1993 and, as the title suggests, is the first of a series of seminars on antiphilosophers (which includes Wittgenstein, Lacan, and Saint Paul). Badiou’s interpretation of Nietzsche is a first step in establishing his concept of “antiphilosophy” and, to do so, he studies Nietzsche under three intertwined questions: “My strategy in this seminar will be to intertwine three interrogations: topical, on the status of the Nietzschean text; historical, asking whether the century was Nietzschean and in what sense; and generic, on the germane question of art” (16, unless noted otherwise, my translations throughout). Even though these interrogations are indeed intertwined, the first half of the book focuses more on the first question whereas the second half focuses on the third. Badiou’s first task is to define Nietzsche’s philosophy—and that means to define what the Nietzschean text is—in order to establish and stabilise his notion of “antiphilosophy.” Badiou does not give a clear definition of “antiphilosophy” in this book but builds it through his comments on Nietzsche. In another one of his books, *Wittgenstein’s Antiphilosophy*, Badiou defines “antiphilosophy” as three joint operations: 1) “A deposing of the category of truth,” 2) “Philosophy is an act,” and 3) “This act without

precedent destroys the philosophical act, all the while clarifying its noxious character. It overcomes it affirmatively” (Alain Badiou, *Wittgenstein’s Antiphilosophy*, trans. Bruno Bosteels, London and New York: Verso, 2011, pp. 75-76). “Antiphilosophy” would therefore be an act of overcoming the philosophical act; “anti” is to be understood as an overcoming rather than a destroying or an opposing. How does Badiou understand Nietzsche’s philosophy and how does he fit under these three operations? His interpretation, Badiou announces, focuses mainly on the later texts from 1887-1888, as their critical character is more germane in elaborating the notion of “antiphilosophy.”

For Badiou, Nietzsche’s philosophy is above all a philosophy of (e)valuation and transvaluation, which is not surprising as the later works of Nietzsche aim towards a “revaluation of all values.” But if a revaluation of values must take place, philosophy cannot remain unchanged, and Nietzsche represents a rupture in philosophy. The revaluation of values is not limited to the field of morality but philosophy itself must be reevaluated. This revaluation of philosophy is what gives birth to “antiphilosophy.” Antiphilosophy is thus not only a critical term but also a metaphilosophical notion which reflects on the nature of philosophy and philosophical works. A first characteristic of this rupture is Nietzsche’s identification with his text: whereas traditional philosophers attempt to eliminate their subjectivities from the text, Nietzsche does the opposite and by doing so he becomes the center of the evaluating process. The whole of Nietzsche’s critique of systematic philosophy can thus be seen as an attempt to bring subjectivity back into philosophy and the use of the term “mask” to designate the systematic form of Spinoza’s philosophy is a clue to this lack of subjectivity: Spinoza hides himself behind a system (*BGE* 5). If all philosophy is the philosopher’s “unconscious memoir” (*BGE* 6), Nietzsche brings this subjective side to the fore.

Looking at his text reveals that Nietzsche works towards deconstructing traditional argumentation; for Badiou, his texts are not argumentations but declarations. This could lead to a reflection on the performative dimension of Nietzsche's texts and the effects it could have on the readers, such as Nietzsche states in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* "On reading and writing," but Badiou uses this to consider Nietzsche's philosophy not as a doctrine but as an act, as an "event." This notion of "event" is another of Badiou's important concepts he develops in *The Being and the Event* for instance. According to Badiou, an "event" marks a rupture and is opposed to "being": in contrast to the fixity of "being", an "event" happens and brings multiplicity to the fore through its happening. Nietzsche can be seen as an "event" which marks a rupture in the history of philosophy as he opposes the history of philosophy understood as the history of being. Nietzsche's philosophy therefore does not ask for agreement but for recognition. We cannot agree to an "event" but we can acknowledge its happening. But what does it entail for philosophy to consider Nietzsche as an "event"? As such, Nietzsche leads philosophy to become a double revolution: a linguistic revolution—as argumentation is abandoned for declaration—and a political revolution. Indeed, Badiou interprets Nietzsche's act as archipolitical, a notion he defines as follows: "The archipolitical conception must be understood as an extraction from any foundational thesis, and much more, from any ethical thesis, from any thesis that would belong to a philosophical surveillance of politics" (69-70).

If Nietzsche represents a rupture in the history of philosophy, there is a before and an after, and Nietzsche is archipolitical because he uses the wreck of the before to create the after. This act is an overcoming, moving from negation to affirmation; the archipolitical act creates the possibility of affirming the world, of saying yes to the debris of the old world. The possibility of yes-saying is closely related to the notion of language: in yes-saying, both the affirmation and the saying are important. Nietzsche's archipolitical dimension makes him an

antiphilosopher who sees in language not an adequate representation of reality but a means of creation. Badiou gives six reasons for which Nietzsche can be considered as an “antiphilosopher,” and they are all linked to Badiou’s understanding of philosophy (and antiphilosophy) as revolving around or against a “there is”: 1) In Nietzsche’s philosophy, the “there is” is “life” and this notion, while being the measure for evaluation, cannot be evaluated; 2) To say that the “there is” is “being” is a reactive naming: antiphilosophy is antiontology. Nietzsche’s understanding of life as the “there is” is a way to escape traditional ontology; 3) Mathematics and logic are unified as a system of signs and are therefore linked to language; 4) As there is no “being” there are only power relations; 5) The means of antiphilosophy cannot be found under the ideal of language as correspondence to the world; 6) The means of antiphilosophy is therefore that of intense fiction: the means of art (155-156). If we look at these six points from the perspective of Badiou’s aforementioned definition of “antiphilosophy,” we can observe that they belong to the first operation, that of “deposing of the category of truth”: they all aim to show that there is no such thing as an “objective” truth or language. The two other operations (philosophy as an act—an act which destroys and overcomes philosophy) are however not left aside as Badiou’s understanding of Nietzsche as an “event” goes in this direction. Whereas these two operations can be situated on a metaphilosophical level of thought, the first one could be seen as the “content” of Nietzsche’s philosophy.

There is however one domain in which these two types of reflexion coalesce, and it is the domain of art. In the second half of the book, Badiou questions the relation between philosophy and art and the place of art in Nietzsche’s philosophy. The link between art and philosophy appears in Nietzsche’s reflection on the relation between philosophy, nihilism, and its overcoming. Badiou’s interpretation of the overcoming of nihilism leads him to consider the Nietzschean act as the creation of the possibility of a yes composed with the

wreck of nihilism. But what makes this passage from nihilism to creation possible? According to Badiou, it is art that allows creation from the debris of nihilism and two forms of art are central for Nietzsche: poetry and dance.

Art is therefore the possibility of the archipolitical act. But who can achieve this act? In Nietzsche's search for a figure who could support that art, he first finds Wagner but soon realises that Wagner is like Euripides, the death of art. Nietzsche names "great art" the art capable of supporting the archipolitical act and this "great art" requires a true artist. But what and who is a true artist? The "true artist" of the "great art" is the one who sees truth as tragedy. The "great artist" is the only one who can avoid nihilism but this kind of artist is opposed to another one: the artist as Apollo, the man of appearance and illusion who leads to decadence. The artist is therefore an ambiguous figure as art is the only power that can save us from nihilism but is also the possibility of decadence. With Nietzsche, the relation between philosophy and art shifts completely. According to Badiou, Hegel marks the end of aesthetics as the domination of art by philosophy, and Nietzsche takes this into account, which leads him to the question: how can we avoid the domination of philosophy by art? Badiou then distinguishes three types of relation between philosophy and art (which are all related to the tension between art and truth): 1) didactic: art is put under the surveillance of philosophy, truth is external to art; 2) romantic: truth is inherent to art; and 3) classical: art is useful and is focused on truthfulness rather than truth. Whereas Hegel would belong to the first category, Nietzsche is part of the second.

Even though Badiou's interpretation of Nietzsche relies on rather well-known features of his philosophy—his critique of metaphysics and truth and the relation between art and philosophy—the main interest in his interpretation of Nietzsche is not in what he says about Nietzsche, but in the concepts he elaborates from his reading of Nietzsche. His categorisation of Nietzsche as an "antiphilosopher" relies more on his own conception of philosophy (and

his notion of “event” for instance) than on Nietzsche’s philosophy itself, but it does open interesting bridges to compare Nietzsche to philosophers with whom comparison does not seem obvious at first glance, especially Saint Paul or Wittgenstein. As *Nietzsche*.

L’antiphilosophie I is the first of a series, Badiou does not elaborate any comparisons yet. Badiou’s appropriation of Nietzsche interestingly leads him to conceptualize Nietzsche’s philosophy as “antiphilosophy,” a notion that expands out of Nietzsche’s scholarship and gives a new perspective on the history of philosophy at a more general level. This more general level of reflection is also to be found in Badiou’s comments on the relation between philosophy and art, and one of the merits of “antiphilosophy” is to make art a central concern for philosophy.

Philip Mills

Royal Holloway, University of London

philip.mills.2014@live.rhul.ac.uk