

Introducing Architheater: Modellings

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Je vous récapitule tout ça dans l'espace.¹

As some of the contributors of the volume observe, Badiou's philosophy does not entail an explicit theory of architecture: nevertheless, his thought is rigorously architectural. That is, a philosophy directed at the definition of foundations, erection, installation, solidity, destruction, consistency, demolition, stability, discernment of chance and circumstances, all pertaining to basic procedures and gestures of architecture. As **Marc Belderbos** underlines in his contribution, "Théâtre sur le Réel – Architecture sur le Réel," to the present volume, *Journal of Badiou Studies (JBS) 5: Architheater*, placement is an important theme in Badiou's philosophy, if not, from a certain perspective of viewing his work, its central theme. Yet of course, placement is not identical with architecture. Nevertheless, what are 'conditions' for Badiou if

¹ Alain Badiou, *Théorie du Sujet* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), 191.



not calibrations of placement? What is a 'subject' if not an interlacing of these conditions and the truths generated by them? What is 'being', in Badiouian terms, if not a structured grouping of such placements? In fact, what is philosophy itself, in Badiou's terms, if not a genre of placement, the giving of an account of the compossibilities of the transcendental of a certain truth-procedure which is always a subject to be generated?² Philosophy, for Badiou, so this *JBS* volume suggests, is architectural. It is a manner of collecting the bits and parts of truths in their respective generative domains of production, and staging and mounting them in certain historical moments of surge.

This architectural orientation of Badiou's thought appears from early on, but it comes in many guises. In *Théorie du Sujet*, for example, Badiou defines the "objective" as "the process by which force is placed, being impure".³ *Objective*, in Badiou, is the placement of force. And while philosophy is placement, it is, in its nature, impure. It relates to states and to the State, to ontology and to logics of worlds, all being differentiated from the fidelity of ethics, which is the subjective gesture par excellence. It seems that Badiou is one of the last architectural thinkers, his books sometime remind of (but only *remind* of) the great Idealist constructions of the nineteenth century. That is why, differently from many other twentieth-century philosophers, both analytical and continental, Badiou's philosophy is properly *monumental*, not in the sense of being 'big' or 'great' but in the sense of being tectonic, extending, expressing an effort for stability, a resistance to the anti-philosophical skeptical drifts, both from the continental and the analytical fronts of philosophy.

In Badiou's philosophy, both subject and object relate to architectural practices. Their coming together, their actuality, is already, so this volume suggests, *architheater*. It involves not only placement but also force, which is *pure*. Not only a terrain but also a fidelity. Not only the impurity of placements but also the purity of action, of generation, of *surging*. Not only *esplace* then, but also *horlieu*.⁴ In his *JBS* 5 contribution "Badiou en Architecture", **Renaud Pleitinx**, a practicing architect and a theoretician of architecture, states the difficulties in *applying* Badiou's philosophy to the practice of architecture, but nevertheless claims that Badiou's philosophy carries genuine interest for architects. Pleitinx touches a nerve regarding the status of Badiou's philosophy itself: it is a philosophy which is only with difficulty applied, a character which differentiates it from many of the key players of French philosophy of the second half of the twentieth century (for example, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and

² Alain Badiou, *Logique des Mondes* (Paris, Seuil, 2006), 107-84.

³ Badiou, *Théorie du Sujet*, 59: "On appellera (...) 'objectif' le processus par quoi la force est placée, donc impure."

⁴ *Ibid.*, 23-29.

Jacques Lacan, and even Gilles Deleuze for that matter). His philosophy stands as a model: take it or leave it, walk with it as a companion or leave it aside. This, on the other hand and only to its merit, also makes of Badiou's philosophy a poor interpretive tool. Much more than a tool to be applied, Badiou's philosophy works itself like a model, producing a work of formalization (a concept to which he dedicated one of his earlier texts⁵), and perhaps supplying the doer some hints as to how to direct his own subsistence. Tzuchien Tho, in an interview annexed to the English translation of the *Concept of the Model*, asks Badiou about his formalism.⁶ Badiou answers that,

even if it is not right to consider formalism as something constituted as intentional subjectivity, it was necessary to take and maintain some aspects of subjectivity in the elements of formalism itself. [...] Formalization, in its essence, is not only mathematical or logical. While mathematical and logical formalization is a paradigm for formalization, formalization is not identical with this [...] Definitively, the study of different types of generic procedures is truly the study of the different types of formalization [...] And thus the model since my earliest reflections, has been something that assumes the particularity or the singularity of a region of being or of a world, and at the same time, raises the universality of a possible new formalization.⁷

Thus, a model must be built as a parallel to a particular generic procedure. The mounting of the model must follow, be loyal to, a particular generic reality in question. Yet even when erected, the model cannot be used as a hermeneutical prism helping to understand or to find the meaning of given phenomena: it is rather a persistent *batiment*, insisting and staying at its place, against which and to the side of which one can place one's own choices and erections. As a model, it can be used as a surface against which some realities can be evaluated or refigured. This is how Badiou's philosophy reinforces the transfiguration of architectural placements into theaters of forces. Artistic truth-procedure, or in-aesthetics itself has a function of a placement of a truth *within* a model.⁸

Not everything is placement in Badiou. There is also a subject. The subject which is pure ethic, a drama, but also a whole theater production, hazard, risk and heroic fidelity. A subject

⁵ See Alain Badiou, *The Concept of Model: An Introduction to the Materialist Epistemology of Mathematics*, ed. and trans. Z.L. Fraser and Tzuchien Tho (Melbourne: re.press, 2007).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 88-91.

⁸ Alain Badiou, *Petit Manuel d'Inesthétique* (Paris: Seuil, 1998).

which is courage, justice, anguish, over-me (*surmoi*, the translation to “super-ego” seems, in this case, improper).⁹ Here comes theater. Here we have the dramatic, subject figures that Badiou discusses: Orestes, Athena, Antigone, Creon. The play can begin, and moreover it is not that the play, as the Mallarmean throw of the dice, can begin, rather, sometimes, when truth calls, it **must** begin. Working in the spaces between architecture and theater, Badiou’s philosophy works and reworks what one can call a ‘consistence’: how a figure concurs and shapes the State: Antigone challenges and overcomes Creon. This ethical scenario is no less than a theater of individuation, demanding a whole technical construction in order to come about.

One of the ways to approach this technical aspect of Badiou’s thought is canvassing Badiou’s philosophy with the French epistemological tradition of Georges Canguilhem and Gilbert Simondon. **Johannes Schick’s** JBS 5 essay, “Theaters of Individuation: Simondon and the Interrelations of Ethics, Techniques and Ontology, on the Theater of Individuation in Simondon,” presents the general principles and considerations of the actual mounting of ethical mechanics of individuation. Simondon, it seems, suggests a middle way between Badiou and Deleuze: a formation of the subject which is entirely engineered by the technical strata. Both **Schick** and **Wiame** (see below) are writing from without the badiouesque framework and they elicit issues that one should necessarily consider when approaching theater and placement in Badiou, with its location within the history of philosophy of our times.

Architecture and theater belong to two different generative domains in Badiou’s philosophy. Theater, as Oliver Feltham (2016) has been arguing (for example, in “Badiou and the Architheatre of Action,” a seminal and groundbreaking lecture-essay not yet printed but already influential¹⁰) has to do with emergence, with the generation of truth and with the generative practices, in as much as architecture has more to do with the maintenance and the making consistent of a generated truth. Theater is primary (and pure) while architecture, in this sense, is secondary (and impure). As always in Badiou (a true Cartesian [also] at this point) the two are not only the conditions of revolution, but also of love, of *dialectique*, hence of truth. Without *architheater* and with architecture (or with theater) alone there will be only improper naming, which Badiou conceives as a threat to ethics.

Daniel Whistler, in his contribution “‘Unutterable Utterances’ and ‘Mysterious Naming’:

⁹ Badiou, *Théorie du Sujet*, 191.

¹⁰ Oliver Feltham, “Arche-theatre, the action zone and the declaration of the state,” paper presentation, Munich, Germany, 18 January 2016, Academia.edu: https://www.academia.edu/22087078/Arche_theatre_the_action_zone_and_the_declaration_of_the_state_Jan_2016_Munich.

Nomination in Badiou and the Theater of Mysticism”, develops from this point an important and thorough review not only of strategies of naming but also, sincerely, at the mystical character of Badiou’s philosophy. Whistler works with Badiou’s categories in order to make apparent the essential characters of Romantic literary generics, again treating Badiou’s philosophy as a model, not as a hermeneutical prism. As in *Ethics*, Badiou counts naming as one of the dangers for fidelity, Whistler shows to what extent the naming of what Badiou calls in *Théorie du sujet* “La force” is a task in itself and must always come to terms with the challenges of mysticism and, from the other direction, of iconoclasm: remaining vigilant regarding the danger of the false idols of all kinds. Badiou’s theory of art is iconoclastic in the good sense of the word. It is iconoclastic as it has no intention of endowing the senses with the status of supplying a first-philosophy, as that which is “placed” in a work of art is nothing but a truth. Both architecture and theater as generic forms are capable of being iconoclastic in this good sense of the term. Architecture is iconoclastic, as no one can argue against an architectural work that it seduces without avail: architecture is always in reality, it is always intended for the usage of the people and of some polis, and it is criticized or evaluated also according to this usage. That is why from all the arts it is architecture that must be involved in any conception of the city-state; it cannot be banished because if it were there would be no state at all. Architecture is the state, and it is the State. If architecture, impure, is always iconoclastic to some existent, theater, pure, can be iconoclastic when it works for a subject and against false and gross naming, against propaganda. But this is not given, in theater, in advance. This has to be negotiated, and in this negotiation there is always, essentially and necessarily, an architectural element.

Indeed, as one sees also from the contribution of **Aline Wiame**, “What Does It Take to Open a Theater? The Réouverture des Halles Experiment in Brussels”, Badiou’s views of arts, as well as of the State, are not immune to criticism, and they certainly verge on a certain amount of rigidity. Badiou’s always classical, indeed *architectural* approach to theater as well as to truth does not always go very well with a more open or elastic conception of instauration (as in Etienne Souriau). The limitation of working with Badiou’s concepts in order to give an account of the layered and dynamic happening of radical democracy is of course apparent also in the Badiou-Deleuze and the Badiou-Rancière divides. Badiou was never a great fan of democratic procedures and experiments. One can in fact draw from this another insight: the effect of Badiou’s philosophy is one of a limitation, or, if one wants, of castration. We all know, of course, how important castration was as a concept to Freud and to Lacan in their articulation of the subject, which Badiou considers as one of the important inventions of the twentieth century. As Oliver Feltham argues in the essay mentioned above, the rivalry be-

tween philosophy and theater is a grave one, and it has to do with the question of the order of the city-state. Wiame in her article touches on this point of the tenacity of Badiou's relation to theater and of the intricate, and always concrete, technical problems that are involved in such an operation. Building a theater in the city is a question of placement, and therefore, of what Badiou calls since *Logiques des Mondes*, a transcendental: a minimum and an enveloping of a "world."¹¹

Finally, but also firstly, the opening essay of the volume is a reprint, with a specially written new introduction, of **Martin Puchner's** pioneering essay "The Theater of Alain Badiou." Puchner was early to acknowledge the contribution of Badiou, not only to the understanding of the relationship between Philosophy and Theater, but also to the theory of theater itself. Again, as Feltham emphasizes, drama is not only the figure of truth but also the reality of action, standing at the basis of Badiou's philosophy. There is theater where action is not only generated but also staged. When an action is generated, there has been a truth. Puchner returns us at the beginning of his essay to Plato's cave, where theater takes place. It is, indeed, the cave, where shadows can be drawn, where shackles can be belted or disjoined, that this volume is interested: this is architheater.

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¹¹ Badiou, *Logiques des Mondes*, 175-77.