

CRITICAL NOTICE

Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy

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In his 2005 paper *The Adventure of French Philosophy* (1), Alain Badiou identifies what he refers to as a *moment* in the history of philosophy in France which has a quite particular significance. This moment he believes to be comparable in its own way to the period which he describes in classical Greek philosophy that stretched from Parmenides in the 5th to Aristotle in the 3rd century B.C., or to that of German Idealism in the late 18th and early 19th centuries which encompassed both Kant and Hegel *via* Fichte and Schelling.

The moment he identifies lasts from Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* in the early 1940's to the last writings of Deleuze in the early 1990's. The totality of work produced in that period he regards for the purposes of his exposition as 'Contemporary French philosophy'. It is a period that saw the writings of famous philosophers including Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Derrida and Lacan, not to mention those of Badiou himself. But was there a historical unity to this period captured perhaps by those terms that have now become particularly associated with it, terms like 'existentialism', 'structuralism', and 'deconstruction' ?

Badiou finds one aspect of his 'moment' in the epic discussion that took place within the period about the significance of Descartes, remarking that all philosophers at this time had something to say on the question of the *subject* that lies at the heart of Descartes' thinking. Another rests in what French philosophers took from Hegel, Nietzsche, Husserl and Heidegger, transforming what they appropriated in the course of discovering a new relation between 'concept and existence', or 'thought and its living subsoil'. Yet another move, and this time a more obviously methodological one on the part of these philosophers, was to regard science itself as a 'practice of creative thought', as distinct from being merely 'the object of reflection or cognition'. The philosophers of this period were also politically active. As Badiou puts it, they looked to politics for a new relation between

concept and (collective) action just as they had looked to German philosophy for a new approach to the relation between concept and existence. French philosophers of the period were *intellectuals* in this wider sense with which we have become only too familiar, people who were also very interested in the latest cultural and artistic developments, and who were intent on directing their philosophical thinking towards the 'most intense expressions of the modern world'.

There are two further elements in Badiou's description of the period which are important to an understanding of philosophy as practiced in France, and one is the alliance between philosophy and literature, illustrated by the desire of philosophers generally to find a style of their own and a new way of creating prose, and by the fact that at least some of these writers including Badiou were novelists and playwrights themselves: their activities inevitably served to blur the distinction between literature and philosophy. The final element to be considered is the role played by Freud, who revealed that the human subject is 'more than' his conscious self, wherein lies the significance of *the unconscious*. So, according to Badiou, this fact lies behind the long-running conversation that contemporary French philosophy has had with psychoanalysis, so that a writer like Lacan is taken for granted to be as much a philosopher as a psychoanalyst.

It is an important feature of Badiou's account of what contemporary French philosophy *is*, that certain things should just be 'taken for granted' in this way. In the U.K. and in the U.S.A., on the other hand, it would not normally be taken for granted that a philosopher is someone who would be actively engaged in the political arena, in manning the barricades, say, or that he would be intensely involved, or even remotely interested in the latest cultural or artistic developments. Similarly, it would not normally be taken for granted that psychoanalysis has anything whatsoever to do with the 'self' in philosophy as this subject is generally understood in an 'Analytic' context.

It would, then, be rather naive to believe that Badiou's concept of what philosophy *is*, or even what it ought to be in France is not going to colour his understanding of Wittgenstein. In fact, there are aspects of his description of the new *subject* of experience revealed to him within this period, that are distinctly Wittgensteinian in character, for Badiou emphasises that this subject cannot be the

rational, reflective conscious *subject* that he describes as having come down to us from Descartes.

On the contrary:

The contemporary human subject has to be something murkier, more mingled in life and the body, more extensive than the Cartesian model; more akin to a process of production, or creation, that concentrates much greater potential forces inside itself (*Ibid.*).

The very title of his new book might even lead the analytically inclined philosopher to surmise that what he is about to read is a treatise concerning a 'therapeutic' Wittgenstein: yet another attempt to present his work as a way of undermining traditional philosophy by revealing that its theories are largely the product of a kind of confusion, a confusion that is only too easily connected by some commentators to psychoanalysis. Wittgensteinian therapy is in their eyes a form of 'treatment' for the 'illness' to which indulgence in philosophical activity inevitably gives rise, or of which it is itself described as the very expression. But what Badiou understands by the term 'antiphilosophy' in his particular context has a quite specific role to play in his thinking, just as the role played by psychoanalysis in French philosophy as presented by Badiou is misunderstood if it is compared to that of a 'clinical' evaluation of certain confusions of a psychological kind with which Wittgenstein's 'treatment' of philosophical problems has sometimes been identified (2).

In this wider context, Badiou's Wittgenstein is rather an antiphilosopher *because* Badiou has decided to take anything written subsequent to the *Tractatus* to be a retrograde step, an abandonment of whatever insights accrue from 'one of the rare contemporary attempts axiomatically to lay the grounds for a doctrine of substance and of the world' (in *Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy*, 93). This in his estimation makes the later Wittgenstein a 'sophist' who indulges in 'too much arrogant skepticism, too much scabrous virtuosity, too much futureless deconstruction, too much attention given to syntax, at the expense of Ideas' (*Ibid.*, 71), and who is punished for his own sins. This comment allows for a finer appreciation of the position from which the later Wittgenstein is being attacked. Amongst other things, it quickly becomes clear that the adoption of what Badiou calls 'Platonism' is a major

factor underlying his outspoken attack on the 'anthropological tendencies' of the later work.

Badiou becomes particularly fierce when talking of Wittgenstein's understanding of mathematics:

And the gravest of all, the temptation to which antiphilosophers gladly succumb, in the first place Nietzsche, who knew nothing about it, but also, more underhandedly, those who like Pascal or Wittgenstein began by being geniuses at it: the ability to despise mathematics, reducing it, in regard to what is morally serious and existentially intense, to a mere child's game. The contempt for mathematics is something from which no philosophy can lift itself up again. This is why I stop my reading of Wittgenstein's work at the *Tractatus*, where this contempt is already present, but mixed still with admiration (*Ibid.*)

One of the main reasons that Boudiou provides for what has been a long delay in bringing his thinking on Wittgenstein to publication is that he had originally hoped to present, in addition to his work on the *Tractatus*, an analysis of the *Philosophical Investigations*, a project which he has abandoned after some 'desperate, discouraging attempts' (*Ibid.*,70) which on his own assessment have not produced anything of interest:

To tell the truth, as my readers moreover will be able to read for themselves, I do not really like this later book, and even less so, I must say, for what it has become, to wit: the involuntary undeserved guarantee of Anglo - American grammarian philosophy - that twentieth-century form of scholasticism, as impressive for its institutional force as it is contrary to everything that Wittgenstein the mystic, the aesthete, the Stalinist of spirituality, could have desired (*Ibid.*, 71).

But this in a book originally published in France only a couple of years before its

translation betrays such a misunderstanding both of Wittgenstein's intentions and of the actual role played by his work in the context of 'Analytic' philosophy today, that it may lead the reader to the conclusion that nothing at all that Badiou says about Wittgenstein, outwith his assessment of 'the unique masterpiece that is the *Tractatus*', can be taken seriously. The problem again partly arises from the standpoint of what philosophy *is* in France that Badiou adopts, one which helps to determine what he regards as *antiphilosophy*.

Amongst the characteristics of antiphilosophy that Badiou identifies are 'a deposing of the category of truth' and 'an unraveling of the pretensions of philosophy to constitute itself as a theory' (*Ibid.*, 75), but this at times has at least the appearance of degenerating into what Badiou thinks of as something even more extreme, a kind of sophistry or nihilism opposed to what it sees as the 'Plato-disease' and expressed in Nietzschean terminology as an 'overturning of all values'. So, according to this rather more extreme presentation, this radical antiphilosophy is an *act*, one opposed to the pretensions of the traditional 'act' of philosophy. This new act Badiou regards as 'archipolitical' in nature, and is accompanied, again in Nietzschean terminology, with a directive to 'break in two the history of the world' (*Ibid.*, 76).

In the course of asking whether these features of antiphilosophy are represented in Wittgenstein, Badiou again stresses that he means the creator of the *Tractatus*, 'the only text that he deemed worthy of public exposure during his lifetime' (*Ibid.*) compared with which the later writings as a whole are merely 'an immanent gloss, a personal Talmud'. Finding that the *Tractatus* does meet his criteria, he quotes 4.003: philosophy is a sick and regressive 'non-thought' because 'it pretends to present the nonsense that is proper to it within a propositional and theoretical register' (*Ibid.*, 77). The antiphilosophical act for Badiou consists in letting what there is *show* itself where what is *shown* is what cannot be *said*.

The connection he discovers between Wittgenstein and Nietzsche is once again emphasised when he recalls, *via* a reference to Brian McGuinness, a statement made by Wittgenstein in a journal of 1914 that he had been strongly affected by Nietzsche's hostility to

Christianity, and that Nietzsche's writings have some part of truth in them (*Ibid.*, 74). Badiou believes that Nietzsche was Wittgenstein's greatest predecessor as an antiphilosopher. He does, however, describe in the following way one of a number of features he takes to distinguish them:

For Nietzsche, metaphysics is will to nothingness; for Wittgenstein it is the nothingness of sense exhibited as sense. The sickness bears a name: for Nietzsche, it is nihilism; for Wittgenstein, perhaps worse, gassing or babbling (*Ibid.*, 81).

Whilst Nietzsche and Wittgenstein are also both devoted to solitude, and seek to *show* this solitude, Badiou sees Nietzsche exhibiting 'the sainthood of an unevaluatable affirmation' whilst Wittgenstein exhibits 'the sainthood of someone who renounces the unsayable and ignoble authority of death in favour of "the mystical element"' (*Ibid.*, 90).

Remarking in the next section that academics on all sides, by whom he clearly means those who represent his 'Anglo-American grammarian philosophy', are delighted by the fact that Wittgenstein later abandoned 'the ontological construction of the *Tractatus*', he believes instead that it is in this very 'ontological construction that we ought to situate Wittgenstein's radical effort to *render possible* the sovereignty of the mystical element' (*Ibid.*, 93), where this comprises what can be shown but cannot be said. Readers may find themselves rather bemused by Badiou's claim, however, that because of a connection he identifies between antiphilosophy and misogyny, *viz.*, that the more flagrant the misogyny the more we are in the vicinity of this antiphilosophy, it should follow in the case of Kant that, 'in Wittgensteinian language, "woman" is that of which we cannot speak, and which we must therefore pass over in silence' (*Ibid.*, 96).

Badiou's treatment of the *Tractatus* itself, of substance, objects and their simplicity together with elementary and complex propositions, does not call for a great deal of comment except insofar as it bears on his reasons for thinking of Wittgenstein as an antiphilosopher, although it is worth mentioning that the philosophers with whom he compares Wittgenstein when commenting on 'the metaphysics of the *Tractatus*' turn out to be Leibniz and Spinoza and

not Russell and Frege. *Tractatus* 2.0233, for example, is said to violate the 'principles of indiscernibles' associated with Leibniz, and so it does if, in Badiou's characteristic terminology, 'Wittgenstein's substance, as eternal form of being, is only the contingent juxtaposition of identically unthinkable objects' (*Ibid.*, 99). Badiou sees the antiphilosophy of the *Tractatus* revealed primarily in the way in which *thought* is differentiated from *non-thought*, because Wittgenstein on his assessment wishes to extract the mystical element from thought 'so as to entrust its care to the act which alone determines whether our life is saintly and beautiful':

In order to achieve his goals, Wittgenstein must give a particularly narrow definition of thought....Thought is the proposition endowed with sense, and the proposition endowed with sense is the picture, or the description, of a state of affairs. The result is a considerable extension of non-thought, which is unacceptable to the philosopher (*Ibid.*, 107).

This is recognisable as familiar territory, and it leads Badiou to ask of Wittgenstein 'in what sense does he understand "nonsense" when he declares that such is the status of philosophical (metaphysical) questions and propositions?' (*Ibid.*, 115). Remarking, perhaps in this context somewhat ironically, that this point 'is extremely convoluted', he answers his question in a way which may seem at least a little problematic: '*philosophical nonsense consists in believing that there is a possible truth of (the) sense (of the world), whereas there is only a possible (divine) sense of (scientific) truths*' (*Ibid.*, 115). He does, however, come to speculate a little later on in a way which points him in the direction of a major topic of current debate in Wittgenstein circles, without presumably being in any way familiar with a Diamond/Conant reading of the *Tractatus*:

The only other path....would be to affirm that philosophical propositions are forms of 'strict' nonsense, words without consequences, material sequences that are linguistically incomprehensible....But in that case the antiphilosopher would be deprived of all critical subject matter....Aside from the fact

that it would be rather difficult to comprehend how it happens that whole centuries have *understood* the philosophical propositions. (*Ibid.*, 120).

Here it would seem that Badiou has not reckoned with the kind of *resolute* reply, which at least some commentators find hard to take seriously, that *if* the *Tractatus* does read like a piece of real metaphysics, this is only because in so regarding it, the reader is illustrating that he has been taken in by the illusion of sense which Wittgenstein intends that he will in time be able to outgrow. It is, however, again in the field of mathematics that Badiou finds his major reasons for disagreeing with Wittgenstein the antiphilosopher:

The simple question 'Is mathematics a form of thought?' subterraneously organizes the debate between philosophy and antiphilosophy. Why? Because if mathematical propositions think, then this means that there exists a saying without experience of the object, an a-subjective and regulated access to the intelligible; that being is not necessarily foreclosed from all proposition; that the act itself is perhaps of a theoretical nature (*Ibid.*, 137).

Reading between the lines, the object of Badiou's scorn is the idea he attributes to Wittgenstein both in the *Tractatus* and afterwards that mathematics is not a means by which the mathematician becomes acquainted with the *objects* of his thought, but is instead nothing more than a form of *calculating* or *operating with signs*:

...Wittgenstein will prove himself extraordinarily stubborn in his resilience against the idea of mathematics as a singular form of thinking. To this end, he - who knew the question quite well - will employ means of the most provocative superficiality, giving such inexact and meagre versions of the most profound and ingenious theories (particularly those of Cantor or Godel) that his

most fervent flatterers are sometimes disconcerted by this and have to devote powerful volumes to attempts at a justification (*Ibid.*).

So, when Wittgenstein famously talks about (3) the *charm* he associates with Cantor's Diagonal Proof, a proof that if expressed in an entirely *different* way would enable this particular charm to evaporate, allowing Hilbert's Cantorian paradise to become nothing more than a mirage, he is almost bound to evoke Badiou's scorn:

Set theory in particular functions as an objection to this view on the topic, through the astonishing existential statements it demonstrates, especially regarding the infinite. In the infinite, it is doubtful that one could reduce existence to 'what is the case,' to what can be 'observed' as fact. Consequently, throughout his life Wittgenstein will pursue the Cantorian theory with vigilant hatred, and this starting with the *Tractatus*: 'The theory of classes is completely superfluous in mathematics' (6.031) (*Ibid.*, 141).

For Badiou, on the other hand, if there is what he refers to as *thought* in mathematics, then there is sense to 'Platonism'. He understands Wittgenstein to believe that mathematics 'is more than just an error of thought: It is thought's *sin*' (*Ibid.*, 143), a gloss he puts on the famous remark that there 'is no religious denomination in which the misuse of metaphysical expressions has been responsible for so much sin as it has in mathematics' (*Culture and Value*, 1). Badiou's Wittgenstein makes mathematics anaemic and unrecognisable, yet it is primarily because Badiou thinks in this way that Wittgenstein would regard him as someone who has become mesmerised by the *picture* of a world of mathematical 'facts' that constitutes the metaphysical 'sin' in question.

The final section of his book devotes itself to *The Languages of Wittgenstein* and begins by reiterating that Wittgenstein published only one book in his lifetime, one which explicitly states the uselessness of any other insofar as it makes a claim to the effect that the truth of the

thoughts it contains is 'unassailable and definitive'. The importance of the 'second' text of Wittgenstein, the *Investigations*, Badiou once again plays down with the claim that it cannot be considered complete or satisfactory either in its own right or in Wittgenstein's own assessment of it. The remainder of his writings are little more than drafts or notes, mere preparatory work described in such a way that the reader is invited to take for granted its lack of significance. This myopic approach to the *Investigations* and to anything written after the *Tractatus* generally, is something which, once again, the reader must find hard to understand, putting it down to Badiou's conception of what philosophy is. This from a philosopher who is sometimes regarded as the 'successor' to Derrida, must seem rather enigmatic. Jacques Derrida is actually mentioned favourably just after these comments on Wittgenstein's oeuvre in connection with the 'always diagonal and uncertain status of philosophical writing' (*Ibid.*, 163), albeit that Badiou disagrees with the emphasis Derrida gives to the written text as against the 'pre-eminence of voice'.

The book ends with Badiou's presentation of three linked theses about language he understands to be common to Wittgenstein and Heidegger, three anti-Platonic certitudes which are 'latent with despair', although one would be hard put to spell out what these come down to in terms which would prove intelligible to the average reader on this side of the Channel. On the most charitable interpretation, this can result only from a lack of familiarity with the lingo, and it must be admitted that grasping the sense of Badiou's texts in this book - though not one must add in his straightforward essay about French Philosophy already discussed - often does require a great deal of reading between the lines.

Alain Badiou's new book is divided into three parts: an essay of just under 90 pages on *Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy*, an essay of 20 pages on *The Languages of Wittgenstein*, and finally a *Translator's Introduction* of 67 pages which provides a welcome overview of Badiou's philosophy, the role he allocates to antiphilosophy and how it relates to the oft-quoted work of Lacan and psychoanalysis. The main essay has a separate Preface of 5 pages which describes its original appearance in France in 1994, prior to a substantial revision for publication as a slim volume in

German in 2007, the content of which is now available in English translation. The work on Wittgenstein forms part of a series of seminars on Badiou's 'great modern antiphilosophers', Nietzsche, Wittgenstein and Lacan, followed by one on Saint Paul.

Bruno Bosteels begins his *Introduction* with an allegory which Badiou originally used in his main essay but decided to drop from the version printed here except for an oblique reference on page 76: a 'little psychoanalyst' who is spat upon every day in an elevator by a nobody, nonchalantly wipes the deposit from his jacket in the course of remarking 'that's his symptom' to an astonished onlooker. The act of the nobody is only to be expected. We are to understand that this allegory captures the fate awaiting psychoanalysis when it no longer has anything relevant to say. This 'moral lesson' Bosteels transfers to the 'European philosophical scene' in the course of relating Badiou's claim that there are today many 'little philosophers' who take a perverse delight in the fact that people have scant regard for philosophy in general, even to the extent of treating it as 'something vile or superfluous' (*Ibid.*, 2). Philosophers, Bosteels advises, have in effect decided in the court of world opinion to *plead guilty* to their abject inertia in the face of the evident horrors of their time, the examples provided being 'Kolyma and Auschwitz'. We are given to understand by Bosteels that this 'intellectual forfeiture' on the part of the philosopher involves an 'act of radical subjective destitution', an act which he compares to the 'hyperbolic doubt' leading to the assertion of the Cartesian cogito, something that 'would be a direct precursor to the subject's self-divestiture found in Lacan's psychoanalysis' (*Ibid.*, 5). Freud, according to Badiou, can only be understood within 'the heritage of the Cartesian gesture'.

The relevance of this to the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* is said to lie in the fact that this self-divestiture 'provides the leverage for the antiphilosopher who wishes to expose and depose the lofty claims of his philosophical rival' (*Ibid.*, 11). It is in this way that we are invited to see Wittgenstein's notion of that which manifests itself but cannot be said as a means by which the antiphilosopher can treat as sheer nonsense, or as a 'sick or reactive form of non-thought, the philosopher's masterful pursuit of truth'.

According to Bosteels, Badiou's interest in the figure of the antiphilosopher comes quite late in his thinking, after the publication of his *Being and Event*, in which Badiou claims that philosophy must begin again today with 'a Platonic gesture of foundation', a gesture that requires restaging the battle against the contemporary representatives of Gorgias or Protagoras. It is in this context that Wittgenstein first emerges as a 'sophist' who puts philosophy in a deadlock by reducing everything to the effects of discourse, rules and language games. If we see the ancient sophist as someone who replaced truth with a mixture of force and convention, then the modern sophist is someone who discredits the value of truth by subjecting thought to language and by treating language as the 'basis' of thought (*Ibid.* 18 & Footnote 17). However, a more sophisticated 'analysis' of the exact nature of antiphilosophy results in a clear distinction between the early Wittgenstein and the later: whilst the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* emerges as an antiphilosopher, the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations* becomes a sophist, someone who proposes 'a kind of cultural anthropology centered on the irreducible diversity of language games and forms of life' (*Ibid.* 19). The later work, which according to Badiou Wittgenstein fortunately had the good taste not to publish, illustrates his descent from antiphilosophy into sophistry (*Ibid.*).

This creates what Bosteels refers to as a triangulation between 'philosophy, sophistics, and antiphilosophy' which Badiou elaborates upon in several sessions from his unpublished Wittgenstein seminar, by utilising two older readings of Wittgenstein from Richard Rorty and Jacques Lacan. Rorty, reading Wittgenstein as a pragmatist along the same lines as John Dewey, effectively sees Wittgenstein reducing philosophy to one cultural tradition amongst others, one which may even have outlived its usefulness. Instead of 'keeping philosophy pure' by seeking some necessary first ground in the order of things, in the faculties of the mind, or in language, it would be better to abandon the attempt which has cost too much 'waste motion' already. On this reading, the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations* becomes a satirist pointing in the direction of a post-philosophical culture:

If we stop thinking of Wittgenstein as the anthropocentric theorist

who said that necessity comes from man, and start thinking of him as the satirist who suggested that we get along without the concept of necessity, then we might have fewer dilemmas about what sort of discipline philosophy was, but only at the cost of being dubious about its very existence (Rorty, as quoted, *Ibid.*, 47).

The reader will predict that this on Badiou's assessment makes Wittgenstein a sophist who has reduced philosophy to a cultural tradition, abandoning any pretence to truth along with any attempt to provide science or mathematics with a foundational role. Whilst Rorty's position is at least clearly stated irrespective of the value of its assessment of Wittgenstein's work, the position said to be adopted by Lacan is, as presented here, very hard to make out. Whereas Rorty is quoted as saying that what gives Wittgenstein's work its power lies in his claim (§ 133) in the *Investigations* that he can cease doing philosophy when he wishes, Lacan's standpoint is captured by the statement that 'not just anyone can go mad who wants to' (*Ibid.*, 48). According to Basteels, this means that instead of Rorty's Wittgensteinian invitation to look towards a post philosophical culture, Lacan points towards 'the antiphilosopher's image of an almost aristocratic rarefying of discourse that borders on insanity'. Lacan is said to be fascinated by the 'discursive operations' in Wittgenstein's work which he believes to display an exceptional capacity for psychosis.

According to Bosteel's Lacan, then, a certain antiphilosophical operation is detected in the *Tractatus* which points towards the exact source of the philosopher's madness, so that the Wittgensteinian operation to put philosophy in its place entails detecting a form of crookedness: 'Philosophers are crooks insofar as they disavow the dimension of desire that subtends all speech' (*Ibid.*, 49). The elaboration of this point, however, reaches almost impenetrable levels of obscurity, as in the claim that philosophy's reliance on a metalanguage involves a sinful or dishonest betrayal of an ethical kind, so that from the standpoint of the antiphilosopher that Lacan provisionally recognises in Wittgenstein, 'there is no language other than the language of desire, which also means language faced with the inconsistency of an order that is not-All' (*Ibid.* quoting Lacan, 50). This is not helped

by the added claim made by Lacan that Wittgenstein reveals a 'psychotic ferocity', meaning that Wittgenstein exhibits the 'paranoid certitude of he who believes in saving the integral truth', the consequence of which is that the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* remains for Lacan a philosopher rather than an antiphilosopher. In the terms of what has by now become something of a *leitmotiv* in Bosteel's presentation, 'we could say that Wittgenstein does not submit fully to the challenge of the other's spittle in the elevator' (*Ibid.*, 54). Whilst Wittgenstein the writer of genius in the *Tractatus* takes whatever can be said about logic or natural science as the subject matter of his work.....

.....the ultimate aim of the operation is to traverse this material in the direction of a silent act or mystical element in which the psychoanalyst will have recognised the psychotic excess of an unsayable plenitude (*Ibid.*, 55).

In the next and final section of his *Introduction*, Bosteels asks a number of more down-to-earth questions about how ordinary individuals placed in the unwelcoming position of the astonished onlooker in his elevator are to react in the face of what he calls 'Badiou's unforgiving Platonism'. Stanley Cavell in his essay, described as having the 'highly Badiouian sounding' title of 'The Wittgensteinian Event' from *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow* (H.U.P. 2005), is introduced as a philosopher who talks of a 'counter philosophical tradition'. Even if Wittgenstein's inclusion in this tradition is based not on his earlier but on his later work, Cavell lists a number of literary and philosophical titles belonging to it which would also be favoured by Badiou. These include works by Emerson, Montaigne, Pascal, Schlegel, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. The point of compiling his list is that it sometimes seems imaginable to Cavell that the *Investigations* itself will in time be added to it because it will come to be regarded as no more than an honourable if rather eccentric questioning of philosophical orthodoxy. This alone, however, will ensure its failure to obtain a central place in any established philosophical canon. Cavell fails to mention that there are a number of observers who would attempt to remind us that this is a status which it has already achieved.

As Bosteels correctly points out, however, Cavell would reject this assessment because the particular fascination which the *Investigations* possesses for him rests on its having an existence both within and outwith the philosophical profession. As Cavell puts it, the work's palpably philosophical dealings with subjects like meaning, reference, and grammar cannot be kept free 'from the patently and unembarrassed literary responses to itself' (*Ibid.*, as quoted, 61), which is as much as to say that it would be a mistake to separate the content of the work from its means of expression. That *means of expression* is illustrated in part by the famous and quite unforgettable episodes it contains, including the shopkeeper, the builders, the private diary, the beetle in the box, and the talking lion, together with many others.

On Bosteels' view, Cavell is implying if indirectly that to call Wittgenstein an antiphilosopher, or to think of him as part of a 'counter philosophical tradition' is to lose sight of what he refers to as 'the productive equivocation that lies at the very heart of Wittgenstein's own use of the term "philosophy"', one which in effect oscillates between its use within the context in which meaning, reference and grammar are being provided with an overview, and its use within those contexts in which those unforgettable episodes occur. But these are not different contexts. Badiou according to Bosteels is perfectly aware of this 'double valence' which the term 'philosophy' has for Wittgenstein, one which he recognises in his repeated reference to *Tractatus* 4.112, which claims that philosophy is not a doctrine but an act. (This instead of 'activity' is the rendering provided in the unpublished translation of the *Tractatus* by Etienne Balibar that Badiou employs.)

It is bound to be difficult to take seriously any further elaboration that Bosteels would wish to make of these points, given that Cavell's admiration for the *Investigations* is for a work upon which Badiou is largely content to do little more than cast his scorn. In this respect one cannot help being reminded of A.J. Ayer's book on *Wittgenstein* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), which is little more than an outline of the philosophy of A.J. Ayer, *viz.*, Wittgenstein as seen from and judged by reference to the standpoint of an empiricist, in much the same way as

Badiou provides us with a Wittgenstein seen through the eyes of what for want of a better term one might as well call a 'Platonist'. In neither case do we obtain anything like a rounded picture of the Wittgenstein we have come to know, although both these opposing approaches do serve to remind us of the anthropocentric perspective that is central to Wittgenstein's methodology in the *Investigations*, a perspective that underlies the unforgettable episodes referred to and the *pictures* that they usually serve to illustrate.

In the final analysis, Wittgenstein's work is treated by Badiou as little more than a foil for his own 'Platonic gesture of foundation' (*Ibid.*, 15). That together with the total neglect of the *Philosophical Investigations* makes for a highly truncated Wittgenstein who is interesting only insofar as he reflects the views of a major French philosopher whose works show how differently the job of philosophy is 'done' in France. Those who seek a rapprochement between the 'Continental' and the 'Analytic' traditions are unlikely to find support for their aims on the strength of what Badiou provides us with here. Indeed, as if to emphasise the cultural differences at stake in these traditions, U.K philosophers may be inclined to react with envy on coming across the reference made in this new book of Badiou's to its support by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of a Programme run by the Cultural Department of the French Embassy in London.

ENDNOTES

- (1) Translated from 'Panorama de la Philosophie Contemporaine' given as a lecture at a Conference in Buenos Aires, 2004, published in *New Left Review* 35, September-October 2005.
- (2) An identification familiar from the work, for example, of Phil Hutchinson & Rupert Read, See their several papers in *Wittgenstein Key Concepts* Edited by Kelly Dean Jolley, (Durham, Acumen, 2010). See also Eugen Fischer: *Philosophical Delusion and its Therapy*, (London, Routledge, 2011). These and similar interpretations in an 'Analytic' context simply do not compare with Bosteels' view that Lacan regards philosophy as a form of psychosis, 'a discourse of mastery based upon the complete disavowal of the fact of symbolic castration', *Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy*, 7.
- (3) *Wittgenstein: Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology & Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barrett, Lectures on Aesthetics, III, Sec.38, 28. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966).

As do most philosophers, Derek McDougall fondly remembers the publication of his very first paper. This was in MIND in 1972. He has, however, continued to worry whether Gilbert Ryle's comment that "the matter is stated well and almost interestingly" referred more to the quality of its treatment rather than to Ryle's aversion to the nature of its subject (religious belief). Other papers have appeared in organs including PHILOSOPHY AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH and PHILOSOPHIA. His latest, on Wittgenstein, appears in the 2008 edition of JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH, with a further in PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS January 2010.