

Phl420, Radical European Political Thought, Prof. Christian Lotz, Fall 2012

Reaction Paper Assignment I (10 points)

The following assignment is challenging and requires you to invest several hours of serious thinking about issues we have so far discussed in class, though this time in relation to Badiou's rather classical take on questions related to the relation between philosophy and politics. As we know from our class discussion and careful reconstruction of the first essay in *Metapolitics*, Badiou argues against liberal political philosophy, which he connects to parliamentary politics. In contrast, he claims that politics and thought, i.e. politics and philosophy, only merge in a militant conception of politics that is opposed to liberal philosophy and its three principles, namely, [1] liberal political philosophy is based on a theoretical analysis of empirical politics, [2] this politics is subjected to norms and turned into ethics, and [3], it is carried out from the perspective of a spectator. In contrast, Badiou does not argue for a political philosophy, which, he believes, is just another form of sophistry; rather, he argues for (a) politics that thinks, i.e. encounters truths in events that turn individuals into political militants. According to other writings by Badiou, the ultimate idea of this militant politics is the idea of communism, which he defines as "egalitarian passion, the idea of justice, the will to break with the compromises of the service of goods, the deposing of egotism, the vow of an end to the State" (Badiou, *Infinite Thought*, tr. O Feltham and J. Clemens, London: Continuum 2003, p.98).

In his EGS lecture, delivered in 2006, Badiou explains some claims about philosophy and democracy that underlie his broader – almost Platonic - picture of how politics, democracy, and philosophy are interrelated.

1. Listen to the full lecture by Alain Badiou on *Democracy, Politics and Philosophy* (EGS, 2006; you'll find the link to the lecture in five parts on the syllabus).
2. Take notes while you are listening/watching the lecture; you'll need to stop the video several times, as his lecture is not easy to grasp!! The parts in which Badiou refers to Deleuze and Heidegger are not central; so, do not bother trying to make sense of it.
3. Write a brief essay of around 600 words, in which you *explain* Badiou's thesis that, *although democracy is a condition for philosophy, philosophy implies a concept of politics that necessarily is in conflict with common conceptions of democracy.*