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CHAPTER NINE

Revolution and the Return of Metaphysics

Thomas Nail

What is the relationship between metaphysics and political revolution? Despite being two of the most widely discredited concepts in contemporary European philosophy, this chapter argues that we are witnessing the return of both in the work of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Alain Badiou.[1] Their return, however, is no mere repetition of the previous forms of classical metaphysics and modern revolution—defined by totality and the state. Rather, it is a differential return: a return that changes something fundamental about these concepts and breathes into them a desperately needed new life. Many contemporary European philosophers have announced the "end of metaphysics" and the "death of philosophy." They have buried the ideas of metaphysics and revolution many years ago, but continue to pursue the endless task of vilifying them—lest their specters return from the grave.

Contemporary philosophy is thus pulled in two post-metaphysical directions: a positive post-Kantian direction and a more negative critical direction. In the first direction, philosophy's access to the real is relativist or "correlationist," as Quentin Meillassoux argues. In this direction, philosophy's access to the real is mediated through and limited by its cultural-historical context, its language, or its body-consciousness. The world only appears "for us" and never "in itself." In the second direction, philosophy is the watchdog of the real, vigilant, and critical against every metaphysical pretender that dares to usurp the kingless throne of the true and the real. These two post-metaphysical traditions can be mapped on to the two dominant traditions in continental philosophy: phenomenology and deconstruction.

In the political domain the concept of revolution confronts a similar fate. Not only is there no single sovereign with direct access to political truth, it is argued, but there is no representable will of the people that can access this truth either. After the failure of the communist experiment, it is no longer philosophically tenable to believe in the power of people to determine the truth of political life. Like metaphysics, revolutionary politics is pulled in two directions—each

of which denies the existence of a contemporary political truth distinct from the present situation of parliamentary capitalism. In one direction, revolutionary politics has become merely relative or correlative to some form of the state or party: state-socialism, national liberation movements, etc. Even the recent Icelandic and Egyptian "revolutions," have all fallen back on a mediating body of revolutionary truth: the state. In the other direction revolutionary politics has busied itself with the endless critique of all revolutionary struggles whose implications claim to be universal, egalitarian, or true in any way. The real revolution, it is argued, is in an eternally future politics "to come," beyond the party, state, and market. The revolution is always potential, but never actual. Metaphysics and revolution thus share a similar disrepute: it is no longer possible to believe in the real without the mediating forces of language, culture, party, and state.

Against this disrepute, this chapter argues that we are witnessing the return of metaphysics and revolution without mediation and political representation. But if this return is not a mere repetition of classical metaphysics and revolutionary statism, what is it? The return of metaphysics and revolution is a bold claim and requires some unpacking. To help me unpack this claim I will draw on the work of two contemporary philosophers who, throughout the later twentieth century, have rejected the so-called 'end of metaphysics,' the 'death of philosophy,' and the 'exhaustion of revolution': Gilles Deleuze and Alain Badiou. Ultimately, my argument is that whatever differences may exist between these two thinkers, we can find a very specific and common formulation of the return to metaphysics that I believe also offers us a promising new direction toward a non-representational theory of political revolution. More specifically, I argue that despite (or precisely because of) their important disagreements over ontology and the relationship between philosophy and politics, Deleuze and Badiou both share a commitment to what I call a "metaphysics of the event." By a metaphysics of the event, what I mean is that their realism is based on two philosophical commitments: (1) the necessary condition of ontological contingency (or multiplicity), and (2) the sufficient condition of the existence of events and their consequences. While for Badiou events may be relatively rare, and for Deleuze they are more numerous, what is important here is that for both thinkers events are what make possible the return of metaphysics and revolution.

But before developing this thesis any further, the first part of this chapter will respond to what is likely the most immediate objection to my thesis: that Deleuze and Badiou's philosophies are not only different but that they are incompatible. In particular, there is a significant recent literature from both Badiou and Badiouians critiquing Deleuze's philosophy and politics (or supposed lack thereof). In the face of such overt criticisms, how is it possible to argue that both share a revolutionary metaphysics of the event? But these criticisms are not just an exercise in polemics, they are the key to understanding the political dangers posed by a return of metaphysics based on a philosophy of the multiple—as it is in both Deleuze and Badiou. Additionally, understanding these criticisms will allow us to clarify, as appropriate, a certain vision of evental metaphysics worth pursing beyond the work of Deleuze and Badiou.

The remainder of this chapter is thus broken up into two sections. In the first section I highlight two important political dangers of a return to metaphysics based on multiplicity in the form of a Badiouian critique of Deleuze: political ambivalence and virtual hierarchy. Ultimately, I argue that, as criticisms, they fail, but as dangers they can help us clarify a realist position common to both Deleuze and Badiou. In the second section I argue that we can distinguish a metaphysics and revolutionary politics of the event common to both thinkers.

I. The Political Dangers of Multiplicity

The return of revolutionary realism, however, is not simply a politicization of multiplicity and contingency. In fact, the politicization of multiplicity poses two dangers to the return of revolutionary realism: political ambivalence and virtual hierarchy. Since 1997, three full-length books have been devoted to outlining these dangers in the form of a sustained critique against Deleuze: Alain Badiou's *Deleuze: the Clamor of Being* (1997); Slavoj Žižek's *Organs Without Bodies* (2003); and Peter Hallward's *Out of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation* (2006). The following section is a synthesis of these works and the dangers they identify in the politicization of multiplicity.

Political Ambivalence

The valorization of pure, contingent, ontological multiplicity poses the danger of political ambivalence. Deleuze and Badiou are both thinkers of multiplicity in the following sense, concisely formulated by Quentin Meillassoux: "Being is multiple to the strict exclusion of its opposite—namely, the One. Being is not therefore a multiplicity composed of stable and ultimate unities, but a multiplicity that is in turn composed of multiplicities. Indeed, mathematical sets have for their elements not unities but other sets, and so on indefinitely."[2]

The perceived advantage of affirming the multiplicity of being, in contrast to its unity, is that such a multiplicity would overflow any limits or political forms like the party or state that would aim to organize the multiples once and for all. Being *qua* multiplicity would always allow for a difference within itself that could offer the possibility of something new. Thus, the political affirmation of ontological multiplicity is the affirmation that something new is always possible—that political life is never totalizable under any form of political representation: the party, the state, the market, etc. The ambivalence of this political position is that being *qua* multiplicity *may* result in a new non-representational space of freedom and equality, *or* it may result in a new space of increasing militarization and capitalist expansion. Not only is there no way to know or fully control what the results will be, but either result is equally indifferent to being *qua* multiplicity.

Slavoj Žižek, in particular, frequently attributes this political ambivalence to Deleuze and Guattari's politics, when he (accurately) notes that deterritorialization is both the condition for capitalist expansion and revolution. Thus, for Žižek, "there are, effectively, features that justify calling Deleuze the ideologist of late capitalism."[3] But to say, as Alain Badiou does, that affirming multiplicity as such is to affirm a "purely ideological radicality" that "inevitably changes over into its opposite: once the mass festivals of democracy and discourse are over, things make way for the modernist restoration of order among workers and bosses," would be to overstate the problem.[4] Rather, it would be much more appropriate to say, with Paolo Virno, that "[t]he multitude is a form of being that can give birth to one thing but also to the other: ambivalence."[5] Bruno Bosteels offers a similar criticism of what he calls the "politico-ontological optimism and unapologetic vitalism" that can be found in the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri.[6] For Hardt and Negri, "The Multitude" is both the condition for the successful function of Empire, which is constantly setting up new barriers only to overthrow or deterritorialize them—thus allowing it to create even more expansive barriers further along. The politico-ontological affirmation of the multitude is, according to Bosteels, ambivalent and speculative.

Opposed to merely pointing out the ontological contingency of all political life and hoping for a positive outcome, Bosteels argues that we need something more politically constructive. "A subject's intervention," Bosteels says, "cannot consist merely in showing or recognizing the traumatic impossibility, void, or antagonism around which the situation as a whole is structured."[7] Rather, a "political organization," according to Badiou, "is necessary in order for the intervention, as wager, to make a process out of the trajectory that goes from an interruption to a fidelity. In this sense, organization is nothing but the consistency of politics."[8]

Insofar as Deleuze, Hardt, Negri, and others merely affirm the political potentiality of being's pure multiplicity, without theorizing the militant consequences of its consistency and organization in political struggle, their political philosophy remains fundamentally ambivalent. To be fair, this is not what I believe to be happening in Deleuze's political philosophy. However, a full defense of these criticisms would take us too far afield and duplicate what I have already defended elsewhere.[9] For our present purposes, it is important simply to understand that the political affirmation of being *qua* pure multiplicity is fundamentally ambivalent. By affirming it, we affirm only the vague potentiality that something *might* be real and revolutionary, not that something *is* truly revolutionary. This is a danger for a realist revolutionary politics and not a position held by either Deleuze or Badiou. But there is one more danger of politicizing multiplicity: virtual hierarchy.

Virtual Hierarchy

In addition to the danger of ambivalence, politicizing multiplicity also poses the danger of forming a hierarchy of the virtual over the actual. This danger of multiplicity is spelled out most explicitly in Badiou's political criticism of Deleuze, in his book, *The Clamor of Being:*

> contrary to all egalitarian or "communitarian" norms, Deleuze's conception of thought is profoundly aristocratic. Thought only exists in a hierarchized space. This is because, for individuals to attain the point where they are seized by their preindividual determination and, thus, by the power of the One-All—of which they are, at the start, only meager local configurations—they have to go beyond their limits and endure the transfixion and disintegration of their actuality by infinite virtuality, which is actuality's veritable being. And individuals are not equally capable of this. Admittedly, Being is itself neutral, equal, outside all evaluation . . . . But 'things reside unequally in this equal being.' And, as a result, it is essential to think according to 'a hierarchy which considers things and beings from the point of view of power.'[10]

The political thrust of this argument is that, if we understand revolutionary realism as the virtual or potential for change as such, and not merely change for or against certain pre-existing powers, then, contrary to any kind of egalitarianism, there will instead be a hierarchy of actual political beings that more or less participate in a *degree* of pure potential transformation. The more actual political beings renounce their specific and local determinations and affirm their participation in the larger processes of pure multiplicity, the more valorized they are. If the task of political philosophy is to analyze local political interventions and in every case show to what degree these struggles renounce all their concrete determinations and affirm their capacity to become something else (*qua* multiplicities), then Badiou thinks there seems to be a new form of ontological "asceticism" and hierarchy in such an analysis.[11] If multiplicity were a normative category, its pure form would be at the top and its lesser degrees of actualization would be at the bottom.

Peter Hallward makes a similar criticism of Deleuze in his book, *Out of This World.* Hallward argues that, for Deleuze, the pure becoming of multiplicity is a superior form of life and that all others forms strive for this. Beings must reject their concrete life to affirm the life of the virtual. As such, Deleuze's political philosophy, according to Hallward, is absolutely "indifferent to the politics of this world."[12] Hallward claims that "once a social field is defined less by its conflicts and contradictions than by the lines of flight running through it," any distinctive space for political action can only be subsumed within the more general dynamics of creation, life, and potential transformation.[13] And since these dynamics are "themselves anti-dialectical if not anti-relational, there can be little room in Deleuze's philosophy for relations of conflict and solidarity."[14] If each concrete, localized, actual political being *is* only in so far as its actual being is

subtracted from the situation into a virtual event, "and every mortal event in a single Event,"[15] the processional "telos" of absolute political deterritorialization is completely indifferent to the actual politics of this world.[16]

By holding all actual political struggles up to the standard of pure multiplicity, Hallward argues that Deleuze is guilty of affirming an impossible utopianism. "By posing the question of politics in the starkly dualistic terms of war machine or state," Hallward argues, "—by posing it, in the end, in the apocalyptic terms of a new people and a new earth or else no people and no earth—the political aspect of Deleuze's philosophy amounts to little more than utopian distraction."[17]

Again, to be fair, this is not what I believe to be happening in Deleuze's political philosophy. A full book-length rebuttal of the accusation of virtual hierarchy is available elsewhere.[18] For my argument here, it is important simply to understand that if the task of political philosophy is to valorize only those political struggles that affirm their pure multiplicity over their concrete determinations then we risk creating a virtual hierarchy which devalues actual struggles. Further, this sort of political philosophy reaches the same unhelpful conclusion at the end of every analysis: being is multiplicity.

Revolutionary Realism

The upshot of these two dangers is that politicizing multiplicity is insufficient for returning to a revolutionary realism. Luckily, Deleuze's later work does not fall prey these dangers. Not only do these critics almost exclusively cite Deleuze's earlier works, but beginning at least with *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari explicitly reject the politicization of multiplicity. "Politics," they say "precedes being" [*avant l'être, il y a la politique*].[19] In fact, they say that such an "absolute negative deterritorialization" is politically the "worst thing that can happen."[20] Instead, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari, claim to overthrow ontology altogether and create a practical political typology of assemblages toward the aim of real revolutionary political transformation.

Revolution is real for Deleuze and Guattari, not because it is the realization of an independently determined correct mode of action, nor because it is against all normative modes of action altogether. Revolution is real, for Deleuze and Guattari, insofar as it is an event that creates new modes of existence that are not mediated by the pre-existing structures of parties, states, or capitalism. Revolutionary realism is the direct and participatory rule of the people over themselves without rulers, representatives, or markets. There is no single person or group who can speak for the others—there is no political totality. But the aim of this chapter is not to provide a detailed account of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of revolution, which I have done elsewhere in book-length.[21] The goal of this chapter is simply to uncover the minimal philosophical conditions required for the *realism* of their philosophy of revolution.

The purpose of identifying the dangers above is not to settle once and for all the differences between Deleuze and Badiou. This is a problem for a different chapter. The present chapter is primarily concerned with their similarities—however few there may be. In what sense can it be argued that Deleuze and Badiou are both realists (i.e., that they are metaphysicians of the event)? In order to answer this question and further clarify exactly what kind of realism Deleuze and Badiou have in common we do, however, need to identify at least two major differences that will help us be more precise about their similarities. This will then put us in a better position to say, in what (most minimal) sense, Deleuze and Badiou are both metaphysical and political realists.

The first difference between Deleuze and Badiou is that, for Badiou, mathematics is the one and only speaking of being *qua* being, which he defines as "inconsistent multiplicity." Insofar as natural language presupposes that it is speaking about or referring to some thing, it assumes existence, or what Badiou calls an "existential quantifier." However, since mathematics, according to Badiou, is purely symbolic and does not refer to or presuppose that it is speaking of any existing thing, it is the properly formal language of being *qua* being— independent of existence. Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, however, not only reject such a mathematical formulation of being, but claim to "overthrow ontology" altogether. They argue that the logic of the "is" (ontology) should be replaced with a "logic of the AND," or what they call a non-substantive, non-totalizable, "multiplicity."[22] Opposed to the formally incomplete system of sets, they propose an expressive theory of assemblages. Accordingly, there is no mathematical bracketing of existence, only politically expressive types of assemblages.

These are very different positions. However, whether multiplicity is purely formal and mathematical or whether it is always expressed and arranged, it is equally necessary that multiplicity be non-substantive and contingent. For both Deleuze and Badiou multiplicity is not a thing or substance, nor is it determined in advance as a totality or whole: it is anti-absolutist. Every multiple composes and is composed of at least one more multiple, and so on indefinitely. Further, if multiplicity were a single substance, there would be no possibility of its becoming otherwise. If it were contingent that multiplicity was contingent (non-whole), then it would be possible that being was necessary and whole (thus contradicting the definition of multiplicity). While Deleuze and Badiou differ on whether multiplicity is formal or expressive, they both agree on the necessity of its non-totality.

The second relevant difference between Deleuze and Badiou is a political difference. For Badiou, politics, like mathematical ontology, is a *condition* for philosophy. Politics like mathematics has its own events that intervene in inconsistent multiplicity and create a consistency, which philosophy thinks. Philosophy, however, does not have its own events. Philosophy is a meta-thinking of its four evental conditions: politics, science, art, and love. For Deleuze, on the other hand, philosophy does have its own conditions and events. But there are also political events. Philosophy, for Deleuze, is not a meta-politics, nor does it claim

to speak for or think politics in any way. Rather, philosophy supports or combines with political events without representing or being conditioned by them at all. The relationship between philosophy and politics, for Deleuze, is not one of conditions and conditioned, but one of heterogeneity and "aparallel evolution."[23] In a conversation with Michel Foucault, published as "Intellectuals and Power," Deleuze describes the relationship between philosophy and politics as a parallel "system of relays."[24] Philosophy, politics, and other events are heterogeneous to one another but can also transform each other—not directly through "conditioning," but indirectly through influence, inspiration, and contagion. When philosophy seems to have slowed down or hit a wall in its thinking, politics is able to push forward and offer new modes of action, which can in turn inspire new philosophical modes of thought. For example, Deleuze and Foucault both site the *Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons* (Prison Information Group), and May 1968 as instances of political novelties that rejuvenated philosophical thinking.[25] One is not the condition for the other, but the parallel inspiration for the other.

These are very different positions, but they also help us more precisely identify the minimal commitments that both Deleuze and Badiou have in common, and ultimately in what sense they are both realists. But their return to realism it is not a return to a classical realism defined by an objective set of stable objects. It is a differential return that changes something about the definition of the real itself. In fact, Deleuze and Badiou's philosophical commitment to non-totality, that is, multiplicity, almost sound closer to anti-realism insofar as they deny an objective totality of the real. If, as they argue, the real is not a totality, then access to it is only partial and thus incomplete: illusory.[26] But Deleuze and Badiou are not anti-realists. They both reject the binary premise between the "for us" and the "in itself," by which anti-realism and realism are defined. By these definitions, Deleuze and Badiou are neither realists nor anti-realists. "Appearance," as Badiou says, "does not depend on the presupposition of a constituting subject. Being-multiple does not appear for a subject. Rather, it is of the essence of being to appear."[27] Reality, for Deleuze and Badiou, is thus neither defined by a constitutive subject nor a fixed state of constituted objects. Rather, reality is the immanent process by which objects become constituted and identifiable in the first place: as events.

Accordingly, the philosophical position of multiplicity *on its own* is neither a classical realism (autonomous totality of constituted objects) nor an anti-realism (the illusion of constituted objects), but rather an "anti-absolutism."[28] Multiplicity is simply the philosophical position that there is no totality of constituted objects: being is non-whole.[29] It makes no claims about the reality or illusion of objects. What makes Deleuze and Badiou both realists is that there are events: *processes*, immanent to being, which give it appearance and order. Events should not be confused with pre-constituted subjects or objects themselves. Events are neither subjects nor objects; they are the processes that constitute both subjects and objects. Thus, if being were already wholly constituted, there could be no events. As Badiou says, it is precisely because "being as a whole does not exist," that "the being of entities [can] appear."[30] Deleuze and

Badiou are realists not insofar as they are theorists of multiplicity, but insofar as they are metaphysicians of the event.

Events are real insofar as they are the processes that constitute the appearance of being itself without the mediation of pre-constituted structures: subjects, objects, states, and parties. How many events there are or what they are called by Deleuze and Badiou are important differences. But these differences also reveal to us a common philosophical commitment: that Deleuze and Badiou are both philosophers of the event and its unmediated reality. If events are the immanent distribution of being itself, irreducible to pre-constituted subjects and objects, then the philosophical analysis of events can be defined precisely as a realist metaphysics of the event.

To conclude this section: it is precisely because there are so many differences between Deleuze and Badiou that we are able to locate the most minimal terms of their agreement and thus the basic requirements for a return to metaphysics and revolution. Firstly, whether multiplicity is formal/mathematical or expressive/constructive, it requires a philosophical commitment to non-totality and the necessity of absolute contingency. Secondly, whether philosophy has events or not, or how rare these events are is an important point of contention, but this should not cause us to overlook their common philosophical commitment to the reality of events. But we have yet to define precisely in what sense these two philosophical commitments to multiplicity and events constitute a return to metaphysical and revolutionary realism. Now that we have discovered the most minimally shared commitments of both philosophers we are finally ready to explore each of these commitments in more detail.

II. The Metaphysics of the Event

In a letter reproduced by Arnaud Villani in *La Guêpe et l'orchidée,* Deleuze says, "I feel I am a pure metaphysician."[31] Later, Badiou, in the *Clamor of Being* will say that "Deleuze's philosophy, like my own, is classical in nature (a metaphysics of Being and of the ground). . . . Accordingly, [Deleuze] readily declared that he had no problem of the 'end of philosophy' kind, which I take to mean (agreeing with him without reserve on this point) that the construction of a metaphysics remains the philosopher's ideal, with the question being not 'Is it still possible?' but 'Are we capable of it?'"[32] These are perhaps the two strongest statements of philosophical agreement between Deleuze and Badiou work to date. It seems that if Deleuze and Badiou agreed on nothing else, they agreed upon a return to metaphysics. As Foucault importantly argues in his review of *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense:* "to consider a pure event, it must first be given a metaphysical basis. But, we must be agreed that it cannot be the metaphysics of substances, which can serve as a foundation for accidents; nor can it be a metaphysics of coherence, which situates these accidents in the entangled nexus of causes and effects."[33] Rather, Foucault claims, "[Deleuze] leads

us joyously to metaphysics—a metaphysics freed from its original profundity as well as from a supreme being . . . a metaphysics where it is no longer a question of the One Good but of the absence of God and the epidermic play of perversity. A dead God and sodomy are the thresholds of the new metaphysical ellipse."[34]

If Deleuze and Badiou share no other significant philosophical commitments, or such other commitments can be derived from their commitments to multiplicity and events, then it seems likely that there is no other basis for their mutual self-identification as metaphysicians then precisely these two commitments.[35] Let's test this hypothesis philosophically. In order to prove that multiplicity and events are the two minimal philosophical requirements for metaphysical realism in the next two sections I will draw on three arguments offered by Meillassoux, Deleuze, and Badiou, in support of precisely this logical conclusion. In particular, Meillassoux offers a very concise formulation of the first necessity of metaphysical realism: "if contingency is necessary, then existence is possible outside thought."

Multiplicity

Let's unpack this a bit. Is being necessary or is it contingent? If all being is necessary being, then it is impossible that a being not be. And if becoming or change is defined as a being's capacity-to-be-other, to come into being or perish from being, then, according to Meillassoux, change is impossible. Meillassoux calls this dogmatic realism. If on the other hand being is contingent, or as Meillassoux paraphrases the position of the correlationist, "it is unthinkable that the unthinkable be impossible," then it is not only possible that being may become-other, it is also possible that being may be necessary [*il est impensable que l'impensable soit impossible*].[36] But if being is necessary then again change would be impossible. However, if being is necessarily contingent, then it must be possible for beings to become other, or perish, and it is necessary that there be no absolute necessity or totality—except the necessity of contingency.

If being is necessarily contingent then this necessity also cannot be contingent on human thought insofar as humans themselves have the capacity-to-be-other. If this necessity were contingent then it might be possible that being was necessary and thus it would be impossible for being not to be. Thus, change would be impossible. Accordingly, being's contingency must be a necessity that is not determined by human thought. No matter what or if we think, there must be an absolute necessity of beings contingency or there would be no becoming. Thus, if we can discover an absolute necessity independent of human thought, as we just did regarding the necessity of being's contingency, we have access to a mind independent truth: beings necessary contingency. Thus, according to Meillassoux, we have shown (here in brief) that knowledge is possible outside of human thought and the correlational circles of language, culture, party, and state.

This is precisely the philosophical commitment made by both Deleuze and Badiou in their respective, although different, commitments to multiplicity, that is, non-totality. For Deleuze, Badiou, and Meillassoux, all philosophical positions that deny the non-totality of being are logically inconsistent and contradictory. According to Badiou, there is a "logical inconsistency of any concept of an absolute totality or reference," because "it gives rise to a formal contradiction."[37] In fact, it is still Russell's paradox that remains the "mainspring of the logical demonstration of the inconsistency of the absolute totality."[38] Badiou recounts this paradox of totality in his own terminology: If there is a Whole of all multiples, this totality is divisible into two types of multiples: reflexive multiples (there is at least one which includes itself in itself, the Whole) and non-reflexive multiples (those that are included in the Whole, but which do not include themselves). But if the Whole is "all non-reflexive multiples," than it is nothing other than non-reflexive multiples. But this is impossible since we just presumed it was a reflexive multiple. The Whole is by definition the multiple *of* all non-reflexive multiples, that is, a reflexive multiple. However, if the Whole is a reflexive multiple, then it cannot be "all non-reflexive multiples," since it is not a non-reflexive multiple. Finally, Badiou concludes: "If the universe is conceived as the totality of beings, there is no universe."[39] In other words, if the universe is not included as a being within the totality of beings, which it cannot be, than it is not a being: it is not.

Similarly, according to Deleuze, it is Russell and Gödel that demonstrate the inconsistency of a formal logic of the Whole. "According to the two aspects of Godel's theorem," Deleuze says, "proof of the consistency of arithmetic cannot be represented within the system (there is no endoconsistency), and the system necessarily comes up against true statements that are nevertheless not demonstrable, are undecidable (there is no exoconsistency, or the consistent system cannot be complete)."[40] "Consequently," Deleuze concludes, "we can and must presuppose a multiplicity of planes, since no one plane could encompass all of chaos without collapsing back into it."[41] If there were One plane that was "the totality of all planes," this One plane would be nothing other than all planes, and thus, no longer a One plane, but the many planes themselves. As soon as the One plane becomes "all planes" it would thus "collapse back into" being multiple planes and no longer One plane.

Thus, the necessity of contingency, that is, multiplicity, is not simply a naïve presupposition for Meillassoux, Deleuze, and Badiou; it is a philosophical and logical argument, which they all accept. However, it is not yet a sufficient argument for realism, only one for the necessity of anti-absolutism. Multiplicity only guarantees the logical possibility of events, not their existence.

The Event

This brings us to the final and most important point of convergence between Deleuze and Badiou's metaphysics: the event. Although well-argued and persuasive in many ways, Meillassoux's argument is ultimately insufficient for the return of metaphysics and revolution. His argument that "if contingency is necessary, then existence is possible outside thought," only affirms the *possibility* of existence outside thought. Just as correlationism is, according to Meillassoux, not "an anti-realism but an anti-absolutism," so Meillassoux is not a realist, but an absolutist insofar as he affirms the absolute necessity of contingency.[42] The purpose of the event is to *actually* demonstrate the existence and consequences of an event constitutive of reality and subjectivity itself. This is the fundamental difference between Meillassoux and Deleuze and Badiou. Meillassoux has no theory of the event. Thus, one cannot locate a revolutionary realism or any identifiable politics at all in Meillassoux's thought.

This is a significant shortcoming identified by Nick Srnicek in the first edited collection of essays on speculative realism, *The Speculative Turn*. It is clear that speculative realism has demonstrated "a notable absence so far when it comes to issues of subjectivity and politics," Srnicek says.[43] However, Srnicek's contribution to the book attempts to locate the implications of speculative realism for politics and concludes that realism "constitute[s] the necessary, but not yet sufficient, conditions for constructing new empirico-transcendental spaces incommensurable with the capitalist socius."[44] In other words, speculative realism is *insufficient* for thinking politics. This insufficiency is further supported by other realists. For example Ray Brassier is quite clear when he says, "there can be no ethics of radical immanence."[45] Peter Hallward, too, argues that speculative realism even fails to account for any "actual process of transformation or development."[46] Thus, the return of metaphysics, following Meillassoux's work, only gets us the necessary conditions for possible reality: necessary contingency (i.e., multiplicity). For metaphysics and politics, or what I have been calling in this chapter, revolutionary realism, we need the event to determine the real consequences of worldly becoming. *The Speculative Turn* opens with an interview with Badiou saying exactly this:

> There is a detachment from the present in SR, a kind of stoicism of the present. There is no clear presentation or vision of the present. This is very different from me. There is no theory of the event in SR. They need a vision of the becoming of the world which is lacking but it can be realist in a sense but as of yet they do not say what we need to do. For Meillassoux the future decides, the future and perhaps the dead will make the final judgment. This is a political weakness. The question is how is the Real of the present deployed for the future?[47]

In other words, the political affirmation of necessarily contingent multiplicity confronts the danger of ambivalence. Meillassoux's realism is both the condition

for real parliamentary-capitalism as well as the necessary condition for a real revolutionary struggle against it. Thus, as mere ontological possibility, revolution is only a matter of optimism. One must have multiplicity to have becoming, as Meillassoux argues, but becoming as such, tells us nothing about what is in the present, or what should be, or what the consequences of a real event are: "This is a political weakness."

Without the consistency and order that the event gives to being, there is only contingency, potentially, and pure multiplicity. That is, the necessity of contingency risks falling prey to the twin dangers of virtual hierarchy and political ambivalence previously outlined in section two. Opposed to the mere possibility of the real, Deleuze and Badiou both develop complex logics of the event that are both diagnostic and imperative. These logics are far too complex to summarize here. In short, however, the goal of the event is to create a consistency of the real defined by immanent processes of connection that do not presuppose the product they produce (opposed to representation which is transcendent and presupposes the operation of a prior production, i.e. consciousness, the state, the market, etc.). While Badiou calls this the point by point connection of a subjective fidelity to a reflexive multiple, or transcendental index of a world and Deleuze calls this the construction of positively deterritorialized elements into an abstract machine and concrete assemblage; both insist on the importance, contra Meillassoux, of creating a sustained and real evental consistency.

It is thus precisely in this sense that both thinkers propose a return to metaphysics and revolution. Insofar as they remain philosophically committed to the necessary contingency of being's multiplicity, they allow for the possibility of real change independent of human thought. Insofar as they remain philosophically committed to the actual and non-representational reality of events which immanently order being, they are able to conceptualize concrete revolutionary events independent of the party, state, or market.

Conclusion: A New Philosophical Tradition?

If we want to understand the meaning of the contemporary return of metaphysics and revolution, we need to be clear what differences are meaningfully outside this return and what the minimal criteria for inclusion in it are. Thus, this chapter is not intended to be an exhaustive comparison of Deleuze and Badiou's theory of metaphysics or revolution. That is a much larger project. Nor is this chapter intended to create a typology of positions within the return to metaphysics. Again, this is beyond the scope of a single chapter. The aim of this chapter is merely to establish the most minimal conditions and philosophical features of what constitutes a meaningful return to political and philosophical realism.

The courage and boldness of the return to metaphysics to announce a break with the last 150 years of continental anti-realism is impressive and even exciting. However, when the editors of *The Speculative Turn* compare this sort of

return with the traditions of phenomenology, structuralism, post-structuralism, post-modernism, and deconstruction, one cannot help but feel an inadequacy compared to these other traditions. What constitutes a new philosophical tradition? There are too many characteristics to list here, but at least one of them is that it bears directly on the actual world in some fashion. Every philosophical tradition has been able to rethink not only "what is," but also how being is specifically distributed in art, love, ethics, and politics. In short, a new philosophical tradition requires a theory of the event.

A meaningful aim of the return to metaphysics is not only to argue for the position of realism against that of correlationism, but for a politically, aesthetically, and scientifically robust realism. There are several such interesting projects already underway that are making the return to metaphysics and speculative realism into more than an "interesting, but ultimately useless theoretical venture."[48] If speculative realism is defined only by its ontological commitment to some variety of realism, but remains too radically divided in its methodology and theory of actuality, it will not be intelligible as a new tradition. This is a particularly unfortunate dilemma given that we are witnessing today the largest world-wide revolutionary movements since the 1960s! It is also possible however, that the return to metaphysics and revolution is an untimely announcement: something which, at the moment, sounds absurd and insufficient, but which in time *will have been true*. Philosophical realism may be the necessary condition forward for contemporary philosophy, but it is definitely not yet the sufficient condition, that is, without events.

Notes

1. I thank my anonymous peer reviewers for their helpful comments and direction with this chapter. I also thank the organizers of the conference, "The Return of Metaphysics" hosted at Villanova University on April 8–9, 2011—at which a draft of this chapter was originally presented. And I finally thank the editors of this collection for their kindness and receptivity to my work, despite its late submission.

2. Quentin Meillassoux, "History and Event in Alain Badiou," trans. Thomas Nail, *Parrhesia: A Journal of Critical Philosophy* 12 (2011): 2.

3. Slavoj Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies: Deleuze and Consequences* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 184.

4. Alain Badiou and François Balmès, *De l'idéologie* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1976), 83.

5. Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life* (Cambridge: Semiotext(e), 2003), 131.

6. Bruno Bosteels, "Logics of Antagonism: In the Margins of Alain Badiou's 'The Flux and the Party,'" *Polygraph: An International Journal of Culture & Politics* 15, no. 16 (2004): 95.

7. Bosteels, "Logics of Antagonism," 104.

8. Alain Badiou, *Peut-on penser la politique?* (Paris: Seuil, 1985), 12.

9. For full defense see: Thomas Nail, *Returning to Revolution: Deleuze, Guattari, and Zapatismo* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

10. Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 12–13. Badiou is citing here from: Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 37.

11. Badiou, *Deleuze*, 13.

12. Peter Hallward, *Out of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation* (London: Verso, 2006), 162.

13. Hallward, *Out of This World*, 62n16.

14. Hallward, *Out of This World*, 162.

15. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. M. Lester with C. Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 152.

16. Hallward, *Out of This World*, 97.

17. Hallward, *Out of This World*, 162.

18. For a full defense see: Joshua Ramey, *The Hermetic Deleuze: Philosophy and Spiritual Ordeal* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

19. Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie. Tome 2: Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1980), 249.

20. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 161.

21. Thomas Nail, *Returning to Revolution: Deleuze, Guattari, and Zapatismo* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

22. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 25.

23. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 10.

24. Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 207.

25. For a historical account of Deleuze and Foucault's participation in the GIP see: François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, trans. Deborah Glassman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 309–13.

26. For a discussion of realism and anti-realism in Deleuze see: Jeffery Bell, "Between Realism and Anti-realism: Deleuze and the Spinozist Tradition in Philosophy," *Deleuze Studies* 5.1 (2011): 1–17.

27. Alain Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, trans. Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum, 2004), 170.

28. Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2008), 11.

29. Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 170.

30. Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 170.

31. Arnaud Villani, *La Guêpe et l'orchidée* (Paris: Belin, 1999), 130.

32. Badiou, *Deleuze*, 101.

33. Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 172–73.

34. Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 171.

35. I have not proved in this chapter these are the only two agreements between Deleuze and Badiou, nor I have I demonstrated that all other possible agreements are derived from these two agreements. This is only a hypothesis. It would lend additional support for my argument, but such support is not necessary for the success of my argument. What I have demonstrated *philosophically*, by thematizing arguments from Deleuze and Badiou, is that the minimum logical conditions for metaphysical realism are multiplicity and events.

36. If on the other hand being is contingent, or as Meillassoux paraphrases the position of the correlationist, "it is unthinkable that the unthinkable be impossible." [*il est impensable que l'impensable soit impossible*] then it is not only possible that being may

become-other, it is also possible that being may be necessary. (Meillassoux, *After finitude*, 41).

37. Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 177.

38. Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 178.

39. Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 178.

40. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. G. Burchell and H. Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 137, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit 1991).

41. Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 50.

42. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 11.

43. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman, eds., *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne: re.press, 2011), 165.

44. Bryant et. al., *The Speculative Turn*, 181.

45. Bryant et. al., *The Speculative Turn*, 178.

46. Bryant et. al., *The Speculative Turn*, 139.

47. Bryant et. al., *The Speculative Turn*, 20.

48. Bryant et. al., *The Speculative Turn*, 165.

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