

# Seven crossings of the shadow line inspired by the philosophy of Alain Badiou<sup>1</sup>

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Abstract: How can different intellectualities within the four procedures of truth—political, musical, mathematical, and amorous—benefit from Alain Badiou's philosophy without becoming bound to it, thereby accepting to regularly cross the protective shadow line that this philosophy provides them? I will present seven cases of such crossings by developing the indispensable militant crossing implied by the invention of a new type of communist politics in the 21st century. I will specify this in the need to inscribe the Cultural Revolution within a broader Chinese Communist Revolution that began in 1958 with the spontaneous creation of the People's Communes.

Keywords: Alain Badiou – philosophy – intellectuals – classicism and modernity – male-female love – musical romanticism – modern mathematics – communist politics – Cultural Revolution – People's Communes

*“Yes, we move forward. And time, too, moves forward—until the day when we see before us a shadow line announcing that we will also have to leave behind the region of early youth.”*

Joseph Conrad (*The Shadow Line*)

## Position

When Frank Ruda asked me to contribute to this special issue of *Crisis and Critique* on Alain Badiou, I immediately accepted without entirely realizing the scope of the challenge: I thought I could specifically treat a particular militant point (the category of *revolution* in his book *Petrograd Shanghai*) without taking into account the specifically philosophical resonances of this political point.

Hence, in order to account for what appeared to me to be a **lacuna in his conception of the Cultural Revolution** (the surprising absence of the event of the *Popular Communes* in 1958), I felt necessary to examine Alain Badiou's philosophy more broadly.

## Reading Orientation

One might object that it would have been sufficient to approach the book in question as purely political, leaving aside the fact that its author is also a philosopher.

Indeed. Save for the fact that Badiou's *Foreword* already reminds us of the intertwining of the texts collected in this work are deeply intertwined with the writing process of *The Immanence of Truths*, suggesting that, in truth, these political events are subject to philosophical reassessment here (rather than being exclusively understood in terms of

their political interiority), thereby explaining how he divides his material according to his own philosophical imperatives<sup>2</sup> : Alain Badiou can take a philosophical interest in:

1. the *Shanghai Workers' Commune* event in early 1967 without politically correlating it with the *People's Commune* event in the spring of 1958,
2. the *Cultural Revolution* event of 1966 without politically correlating it to the *Communist Revolution* event that began in 1958.

This is because the philosophical issue at stake in this book is to establish that **politics** (especially communist politics) **is not without work (oeuvre)**, that is to say, that political works exist just as artistic or scientific works do. The **philosophical scope of this concept of political work (oeuvre)** attaches itself to Badiou's philosophical concepts of *world*, *body* and *absolute index*.

In making my argument, I will orient my reading in the following way: this book, **praising the political oeuvre** (that is, the capacity of communist politics to produce an oeuvre), is in line with the series of praises that Badiou has successively dedicated to Love (2011), Theater (2013), Mathematics (2015), Politics (2017), and ultimately Philosophy (2023). Yet, all these books deploy strictly **philosophical** forms of praise (just as in other books, Badiou has been able to **philosophically** define the various conditions of philosophy itself).

The point that seems crucial to me is the following: just as there can be no musical definition of music, no mathematical definition of mathematics, no lover's definition of love and no political definition of politics, logically, there can only be definitions from outside (philosophical, sociological, anthropological, literary, psychoanalytical, etc.) –any praise of music, mathematics, love, and politics can only come from outside them (in this case, from philosophy) and cannot therefore be the result of internal intellectuality: **there is no more self-praise than there is self-definition!**

### Difficulty of Reading

In doing so, a major difficulty arises: how, then, can we interrogate Badiou's philosophy (or rather, his philosophical praise of the active dimension in politics) in a way that is not philosophical but rather from a political (here, communist) point of view?

I propose to do so in terms of intellectuality (particularly political intellectuality). Hence the need for a detour to clarify what I personally mean by **intellectualities**.

## Context

Musician (composer), mathematician (“barefoot”), activist (communist), lover (heterosexual) without being strictly speaking a philosopher, I coordinate this simultaneous exercise of four “truth-procedures”—a sort of “four-legged” walk—through a specific intellectuality that reflects the “reasonances (*raisonances*)”<sup>3</sup> between these four forms of thought.

Such a “heterophonic”<sup>4</sup> type of intellectuality is not strictly speaking philosophical in nature: coordinating a **contingent set of ideas** formed over the course of an individual life, such intellectuality does not aim to produce any concept of time common to the different truth-procedures humanity practices simultaneously at any given moment in its history.

In my case, I am interested in a particular art (music, not dance, and even less Art in general), in a particular science (mathematics, not chemistry, and even less Science in general), in a militant communist politics, and in love with a particular woman.

However, such intellectuality cannot be deployed over a long course of time without the support from some great philosophy—which is for me, that of Alain Badiou.<sup>5</sup> This is to guarantee that the intellectual categories at work are backed by properly philosophical concepts.

Hence, for example, the *mamuphi* seminar<sup>6</sup>, which since 2001 has been developing “*a musical intellectuality in the light of modern mathematics and in the shadow of contemporary philosophies*.”

Thus, my own intellectuality (musical, militant, amorous, and mathematical) draws on Badiouian philosophy (its ontology of being and event, its ontic account or phenomenology of worlds and bodies, its subjects of truth) in order to consolidate the promotion of Badiou’s own intellectual categories that are: stunning musical **beauty**, political **justice**, severe mathematical **truth**, and the demanding amorous **happiness**<sup>7</sup> by means of Badiou’s philosophical consistency of the concept of harsh **Truths**, universal, eternal, and absolute.

This long practice now leads me to examine this philosophy in a new way, which, in a sense looking back over my shoulder, seeks to shed new light on its protective and nourishing “shadow.” The aim of this “backlighting” is not, of course, to dispel it (according to a positivist model inwhich “scientific” light would lift the shadows of a philosophically “metaphysical” cave) but rather a certain **crossing by the intellectuality of philosophy** in the shadow of which it operates, establishing a fruitful gap between their respective immanent demands and their own mobilizations and motivations.

In other words, taking up the slogan of the “*intellectuality in the shadow of philosophy*,” we raise the question of better defining what “in the shadow” means. Or, taking up the title of Conrad’s book, we draw a “shadow line” between different intellectualities and the philosophy of Alain Badiou, a shadow line that can then better define the specific coordinates of the indispensable intellectualities that are immanent to the various “truth-procedures.”

## “Intellectuality”

To establish my lexicon, I propose here to distinguish between:

### 1. thought at work (oeuvre) in a truth procedure;

*In the case of music, this musical thought (which is specific to musical works) is non-linguistic<sup>8</sup> (which is also largely the case for mathematical thought).*

### 2. thought about this thought, also at work (oeuvre) internally within this same procedure: thought about the inflections of thought, its twists and turns, its decisions and consequences, etc.:

*Still in the case of music, this musical thought of musical thought remains the specific domain of the musical work and, in doing so, extends its non-linguistic nature.*

### 3. intellectuality specific to those who practice this procedure (scientists, artists, activists, or lovers) and come to reflect, this time in common language, on their thought about thought (which they practice) in order to insert themselves into a broader environment—into the heterophony of human thoughts—by endowing them with a theory, a critique, and an aesthetic (understood as *the logic of the sensory*).

*Thus, musical intellectuality becomes the musician's own business, reflecting, in their vernacular language, on the organization of music into its own world as well as on the articulation of this music-world with other worlds that the musical individual frequents.*<sup>9</sup>

## Seven crossings

Considering this is an article, I will impose a certain thetic character on myself (rather than a deductive or demonstrative one). What follows seven points delimiting the capacity of Alain Badiou's philosophy to provide a conceptual shadow which would “shelter” the various intellectualities (militant, musical...) from contemporary nihilistic attacks and, correlatively, identifying the precise places where these intellectualities must cross the shadow line of this philosophy in order to continue to assume their own tasks.

The corrosive power of contemporary **nihilisms**, whose tireless refrain is “*What's the point? Everything is pointless!*”,<sup>10</sup> is now being exercised at will in all areas. This is why humanity has lost confidence in itself, in its capacity to overcome its internal ineluctable division, and thereby put its long march of emancipation to work.:

- *What good is* music? Its stunning beauty is *pointless*!
- *What good is* mathematical science? *Its perspective on truth is pointless*.
- *What good is* communist politics? Its imperative of justice is in vain
- *What good is* love between a man and a woman? Its promise of demanding happiness *is in vain*!

These seven crossings are thus rooted in the contemporary situation of emancipatory intellectualities.<sup>11</sup> They concern Badiou's philosophy, but in a certain sense do not directly address it. Let us repeat; it is not a question of asking him for an answer that would extent his protective shadow. Rather, it is a question of accounting for an accurate intellectual measure of what cannot be covered by it and thereby **delimiting the respective contemporary tasks of the various intellectualities and philosophy**. Rather than illustrating the shortcoming of Badiousian philosophy, the seven crossings point to<sup>12</sup> the tasks of musical, communist, amorous, and even mathematical intellectualities, which must be remedied.

- Three will concern Badiou's philosophy more specifically.
- Four others will concern more specifically the retroactive treatment, by this philosophy, of its various "conditions": love, mathematics, music, and finally politics.

I will address each of them in turn, starting with the intellectual demands of our time, in order to highlight the inability to respond to them by simply relying on Alain Badiou's philosophical system and, correlatively, to emphasize the need for new types of intellectuality, particularly a new type of communist intellectuality for the 21st century.

## Philosophy

### 1. Becoming and Dialectic

The first step (like the last) will be of the political and militant genre (as well as having resonances with musical composition). How can we discern, in a global situation that is sinking into nihilism as well as unjustifiable wars (ultimately concerning a great imperialist war between the USA and China), a separate future that gives us (in the here and now) some kind of minimal foothold for the project of reactivating a new kind of communist politics?<sup>13</sup>

Here, there is a great temptation—and Alain Badiou does not always escape it—to ultimately ("in the last instance") rely on the necessity of an event, by definition unpredictable, that would fracture the established impossibility and redistribute the cards of possibility.

Hence we are, in my view, confronted with a one-sided discourse on the **disorientation** of the contemporary world, which ignores the fact

that communists themselves are not disoriented; if it is true that they are communists because they consider that the communist orientation remains relevant<sup>14</sup> but that they lack a political strategy, that is, the ability to decide on a political direction for intervention in the contemporary world.<sup>15</sup>

Doesn't this difficulty to grasp an emancipatory future, undergroundingly at work in a world that has become massively obscure (and no longer simply reactionary like in the late 20th century<sup>16</sup>), have its philosophical basis in Badiou's idea that **the becoming of being is subordinate to the occurrence of events** (in the strong sense that Badiou gives to this concept)?

But if time only affects being in the form of events, if becoming is only the effect of an addition (or of an adjunction) of evental non-being, if being is not intrinsically affected by non-being, how can becoming be an intrinsic property of being?

In Alain Badiou's philosophy, being must certainly appear (in worlds), and this being-a-part (*à-part-être*),<sup>17</sup> can make an eventful return to being (so that "something then happens to being itself"), but this dynamic looping back of being does not, strictly speaking, constitute becoming.

Of course, at this point we find all the untangle of the three volumes of *Being and Event* with the dialectic, which, driven out of being in the first volume, returns with force with existence and appearing in the second volume...

My crossing can thus be summarized as follows: if there is no becoming intrinsic to being and if becoming only occurs eventually,<sup>18</sup> how is it possible today to escape the simple, quasi-messianic expectation of a saviour-event? And since it is precisely a matter of escaping such an expectation for those who are not disoriented, they must rely on some being that has not yet come to pass (Ernst Bloch), that has not yet emerged. Put otherwise, it is a question of admitting that in a certain sense (not strictly philosophical), there is a being capable of emerging, knowing that if we call such an emergence *an event*, this event will no longer be strictly Badousian since it will become an event of being.

This whole point involves a modern intellectual understanding of **emergence**, understood not as the simple appearance of what was already there but inapparent (as in the case of the tip of an iceberg), but as the constitution of a new superstructure (as in the case of the canopy of a dense forest). Here, emergence stratifies the structures of being into hierarchically interlinked level.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. Ek-sistence and Existence

The second crossing stems from the following problem, which is related to the previous one: how to exist as a communist in the contemporary world, that is, not only to exist objectively through one's physiological body, social functions (daily occupations), and relationships with other inhabitants of

this world, but how to ek-sist subjectively<sup>20</sup> through a project that is not transitive to the established world order and does not entirely conform to its internal norms of existence (its *logical transcendental*, to use the vocabulary of *Logics of Worlds*)? What actions must be taken in this world so that the communist orientation to begin to ek-sist and thus be able to aspire to exist later (according to the institutional measures of this world)?

We know that communist existence is not standardized by a historical materialism that dialectically combines productive forces and social relations of production; above all, it is subjective ek-sistence. In other words, **when it comes to communism, the subjective factor is decisive** (even if, of course, this factor cannot be separated from its objective determinations: its autonomy is relative and does not amount to independence from objectivity)—where we then encounter the need for a new type of materialism that includes the subjective factor not as a reflection but as a full-fledged operator (a need that, since *Theory of the Subject*, Alain Badiou's philosophy has contributed greatly to clarifying).

But the point here is this: in a given world, *Logics of Worlds* makes little distinction between **the objective existence of things and the subjective ek-sistence of individuals** (in doing so, I distinguish here between the subjectivity of individual subjects and the collective “Subjects” of truth specific to Alain Badiou's philosophy). But to ek-sist subjectively is quite another thing (for example, when holding onto a particular point of personal affirmation against all winds and tides). It is, indeed, endowed with an entirely different intensity.

At this point, where subjective ek-sistence comes to slide between the existence of objects and the generic existence to come of Truths forced by certain collective Subjects, we must therefore proceed without any strictly philosophical guarantees. Is this not precisely the task of the various intellectualities who seek to take an immanent measure of their intervention by formulating it according to their own categorical network?

### 3. **D**ividual and Anthropology

The third crossing comes to complete the previous two: if communists are currently unable to establish the precise coordinates of the new type of communist organization they want to build,<sup>21</sup> it is because the collective “Subject” that needs to be built collectively is not immediately on their agenda and the subjective resources that are currently being mobilised are more a collection of individuals, of people, who refuse to resign themselves to a given art, a given science, a given love, that would be tasked with saving what can be saved at least until **the global saviour event** would finally arrive.<sup>22</sup> – And they are committed to grouping together to study, investigate, and intervene on their small collective scale.<sup>23</sup>

Here again, this disposition implies giving rights to a figure that remains very oblique (or even absent) in Alain Badiou's philosophy: the human

individual (whose subjective division prompts me to rename **as a *dividual***) with its imagination, affect, and unique ability to symbolize the possibilities its glimpse at in order to open up a concrete field of realization.

In other words, we must compensate here with non-philosophical means—thus, in intellectuality—for **the absent anthropology** of Alain Badiou's philosophy: by this I mean an anthropology, certainly non-systematic,<sup>24</sup> that gives rights to affects, unconscious decisions, and conflicts between the sexual animal and the human being living in body and mind. Undoubtedly, Alain Badiou's philosophy addresses this aspect, which I call “anthropological” for lack of a better term, in *Theory of the Subject*. But this was hardly hardly successful in the long-run, especially in the remainder of his work (that is, of course, except in the form of that strange return of the repressed that ultimately constitutes the philosopher's autobiography, where the individual, almost eclipsed by his earlier philosophy, reappears in full light in the singular form of the philosopher-individual, equipped with this very strange desire to produce nothing<sup>25</sup> in order to better recapture what non-philosophers have produced!).

### Conditions

Let us now turn to four crossings specifically linked to the four types of “truth procedures” which, for Badiou, constitute the general conditions of philosophy.

#### 4. Love Between a Man and a Woman

The next crossing focuses on what is today a very important question: if humanity has lost confidence in itself, it is not only due to the failures and defeats<sup>26</sup> of communist politics (but also partly of the modern arts, contemporary mathematics remaining somewhat untouched by these collapses). If humanity no longer knows how to account for its ineluctable antagonism – between partisan enthusiasts and the fierce enemies of their emancipatory vision – it is also because humanity's division into men and women has been suspected of being nothing but a source of domination and oppression; nothing more than a breeding ground for a (more or less) latent warfare between the two sexes.

Regarding this topic, it does not go without saying that the (proclaimed) defeat of heterosexual love stems from a genuine immanent failure. Concerning this question specifically, it is difficult to tell the difference between actual practices (which are very individualised and are scattered across the globe) and representations that are proposed by the “democratic” and “parliamentary” doxa of the capitalist West (which is ultimately interested in the dissolution of this anthropological difference, just as it was previously concerned with dissolving any social bond that

isn't monetised on mutually agreed terms.

It remains that today, in France at least, the perspective of love between a man and a woman finds itself in a situation where that love is hugely devalorised. But on this point, as on many others, a communist cannot conform to the dominant doxa: if heterosexual love is suspected of being nothing more than a hypocritical pretense concealing an inevitable rivalry over who will dominate the other (e.g., matriarchy *versus* patriarchy), then how can we establish egalitarian collectives oriented towards common practices of emancipations?

If the reinvention of love between a man and a woman is a question for 21st century humanity, then communists must share their perspective on the matter to the best of their ability (even if it is clear that the arts will play a leading role here).

But it must be said that the philosophy of Alain Badiou, who until the end of the 20th century firmly supported the power of truth in love between the two sexes<sup>27</sup> has strangely come to praise a love of the other where the “two” lovers no longer refer to the “two” of the two sexes but to the flat and general duality of the same and the other!<sup>28</sup>

Having reached this point, where Alain Badiou's philosophy, after freeing his philosophical concept of “Two,” makes a gesture to level this condition, it is up to the militants of male-female love to deploy their own intellectuality on what heterosexual love means in terms of demanding happiness, at their own risk and peril, without being able to take shelter in any cove philosophically predisposed to mooring.

## 5. Musical Romanticism

The next crossing: this time in the arts and hence for me is the case of music. How to creatively prolong the category of modern music today, which I would call “contemporary” at least must as other instances of modernity: artistic (literary and poetic, pictorial and theatrical), mathematical (since 1830), and political (since 1848), not to mention the later modernity of Freudian psychoanalysis?

The more specifically compositional issue here concerns the musical assessment of a certain failure of **serialism** (which gradually became apparent at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s<sup>29</sup>). I will not dwell on this point here.<sup>30</sup> But this assessment naturally involves a conception of what *musical modernity* means and, in particular, at what point in history it began. While the importance of **Schoenberg's** position is uncontestable<sup>31</sup>, the question concerns whether **the musical romanticism** that preceded him and continued to influence Schoenberg's music constitutes a pre-modernity, or whether there is instead a radical break between romanticism and modernity.

I maintain the first perspective—that Romanticism, breaking with Classicism, initiated and ushered in modernity<sup>32</sup> —while Alain Badiou

separates them radically (somewhat, it seems to me, in the manner in which Althusser used an epistemological break to radically separate a humanist pre-Marx from a true scientific Marx). The issue at stake here is whether the actual destiny of musical creation is more neoclassical in nature (as Alain Badiou argues) or whether there is currently room for a modernity that is regenerating itself by taking into account the musical obstructions to musical modernity.<sup>33</sup> We will not dwell further on these points here, which are musically crucial but too peripheral for this review.<sup>34</sup>

Let us simply note that musical intellectuality cannot be confined here to the protective shadow of Alain Badiou's philosophy; not because the latter does not fulfill its own tasks<sup>35</sup> but because the intellectuality in question must assume its immanent autonomy of thought.

## 6. Mathematics and mathematical logic

Concerning mathematical thought, the question of the relationship between intellectuality and Badiou's philosophy takes a singular turn for two reasons:

1. Badiou argues that there is no such thing as a strictly mathematical intellectuality, and even that there cannot be one if it is true that the strictly ontological dimension of mathematical thought does not support reflexivity, so that the *working mathematician* cannot waste any time formulating mathematical thought in language.
2. Furthermore, what mathematically conditions Badiou's philosophy is essentially 20th-century mathematical logic—model theory (*The Concept of Model*), set theory (*Being and Event*), category theory (*Logic of Worlds*), the theory of large cardinals (*The Immanence of Truths*)<sup>36</sup> – rather than mathematics itself (with a few notable exceptions: topology in *Theory of the Subject*, arithmetic in the little gem that is *Number and Numbers*, and topos theory in *Logics of Worlds*<sup>37</sup>).

I differ on these two points for non-philosophical reasons, as they are inherent to any intellectuality that takes into account the abundant intellectual resources available in modern and contemporary mathematics.

1. First, it must be noted that the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries saw the emergence of mathematical intellectualities (from Henri Poincaré and Hermann Weyl to Alexander Grothendieck and Lawvere), much like the emergence of musical intellectualities from

the 18th century (with Rameau) and especially the 19th century (with the Romantics, led by Schumann). It's no more appropriate to classify each of these mathematical intellectualities under the philosophy of science, or even under a simple epistemology, than it is to classify the musical intellectualities mentioned above under musicology or the philosophy of music.

2. For my part, I have undertaken a vast exploration of the intellectual resources that mathematics provides us in abundance: modern mathematics since 1830<sup>38</sup> and contemporary mathematics since 1945.<sup>39</sup>

However, the use of the intellectual resources offered by mathematics (modern and contemporary) is particularly decisive for a renewal of communism - communism in the 19th and 20th centuries (from Marx<sup>40</sup> to Mao) completely ignored them, to the great detriment of communist politics (and not, of course, to the detriment of mathematics, which requires no intellectual validation other than itself: an aristocratic privilege of its thinking!).



This leaves the seventh crossing, which concerns political activity itself and requires that I expand at greater length on this topic here.

## 7. People's communes and the Cultural Revolution

I will start with Alain Badiou's recent short book *Petrograd, Shanghai. The Two Revolutions of the 20th Century* (La fabrique, 2018) to examine the category of *revolution* that he mobilizes therein.

This category has been at the heart of a split between former UCF-ml activists<sup>41</sup> since Sylvain Lazarus chose to declare it obsolete, making it a category intrinsically attached to the specific "political mode" of the French Revolution.<sup>42</sup>

Let us summarize this division as follows: must the invention of a new kind of communist politics for the 21st Century (in its heritage of 130 years of classical communist politics between 1848 and 1976) continue to think of itself and to declare itself as **revolutionary**? Or, is this qualification "saturated", and thus ought to be purely and simply abandoned?<sup>43</sup>

## Reduplication

Here, we can close in on the decisive intellectual point: if a new type of communist politics still calls itself revolutionary, it is because *revolution* must be understood in a new sense.

To this end, following Kierkegaard, let us call this type of dialectical necessity **reduplication**, where the enunciation must conjoin with the enunciated, where enunciation and enunciated are deployed in dialectical unity.

The canonical example is that of Pascal advocating *speaking humbly about humility* (and not proudly).

We find this same principle implicitly in Adorno's argument that a *philosophy of new music* must also be a *new philosophy of music*; since an old philosophy of music is incapable of accounting for new music.

In our case, we propose that a political intellectuality of new revolutions (primarily the Cultural Revolution) must itself be a **new political intellectuality of revolutions** (and not a classical political intellectuality).<sup>44</sup>

However, this dialectical step of reduplication effectively crosses the philosophical shadow line introduced by Badiou's book if it is true that this work is immediately presented under the sign of a "classical" conception<sup>45</sup> of revolution; a revolution initiated by a **seizure of power** (generally central and state)<sup>46</sup> and subsequently producing a **civil war** (a declared antagonism on a mass scale in the situation at hand).<sup>47</sup>

This "classist" side-taking of the book will have important consequences in its analysis of its central issue: the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, the Cultural Revolution is "classically" understood mainly from the perspective of the antagonisms it declares, and it is only in a secondary manner that it is addressed in terms of the social relations it sought to revolutionize.<sup>48</sup> However, it is one thing to seize power, or even to revolutionize it (for example, through the Triple Alliance Committees<sup>49</sup>); it is quite another to revolutionize the issues at stake in that power, that is, to determine what to do with it; to establish a politics of putting this power to work (*œuvre*)!

Here we find our principle of reduplication: in order to be able to revolutionise social relations, we must also revolutionise what power means rather than simply taking power as it currently exists.<sup>50</sup> The whole imbroglio of the Cultural Revolution thus seems to boil down to a non-reduplication but an inverted one (instead of speaking proudly of humility, we humbly speak of pride). If it is true that the self-declared "revolutionaries" were killing each other over issues of power whose "content" remained eminently vague,<sup>51</sup> the abstractly ideological revolutionary enunciation had no connection to (it did not "quilt") the effective concrete revolutionary enunciated.

## Occlusion

At this point, my hypothesis is that this imbroglio is due to two things.

1. In the space that is proper to communist intellectuality (the context for the present article), the confusion stems for a **classical** communist conception of what revolution means, even though the Cultural Revolution was obviously **modern** and not classical. But one cannot think of modernity in classical terms!

This *classical* communist conception is, of course, the *classist* conception of Marxism-Leninism and its tandem of *the Communist Party and Socialist State* articulated in *the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*.

2. In the space that is proper to the effective history, the confusion stems from the Cultural Revolution's unbelievable concealment of the **People's Communes**. First it concerned the case of the rural (late April 1958) and subsequently the urban (summer of 1958) which revolutionised socialist China during the Great Leap Forward!

But how was it possible that the peasants of the rural People's Communes and the women of the urban People's Communes were seemingly absent from the Cultural Revolution, for the benefit of the students (in the summer of 1966) and then of the workers (in the winter of 1966-1967)?

How was it possible that the contradiction that arose, from within the Great Leap Forward itself, which aimed to accelerate the socialist revolution (in an extraordinarily voluntaristic manner<sup>52</sup>), through the eventful invention of the People's Communes (away from any central directive from the CCP and Mao), an invention that added, in the effectiveness of social relations exemplified by the free canteens, the communist principle of "to each according to their needs" to the socialist principle of "to each according to their work", an invention that initiated what must be called the first truly communist revolution in all humanity, how was the apparent erasure of this contradiction possible during the Cultural Revolution?

To answer this question, let us distinguish between the different Chinese revolutions, all led by the communists (Mao and the CCP):

- the **Democratic** Revolution (1928-1949),
- the **Socialist** Revolution (launched in 1953 with the first Five-Year Plan 1953-1957 for the construction of socialism),
- and the **Communist** Revolution proper (which arose in the spring of 1958 from a mass initiative that Mao openly supported from the summer of 1958 onwards).

How was it possible that this Communist Revolution was so repressed that the first workers' commune in China (that of Shanghai) did not even refer to these recent popular communes (rural and urban) but... to the Paris Commune a hundred years earlier?!!!<sup>53</sup>

It is therefore that which has been repressed (and subsequently foreclosed) are the years 1958-1965; the years involving the political engagement of peasants and people. Ultimately, this resulted in a schism in the CCP for the first time since the 1930s. All of this culminated in the Lushan Conference in the summer of 1959 with removed Peng Dehuai from office, followed by the so-called 7,000 Conference in early 1962, marking the Thermidor of the People's Communes. Finally, this resulted in the Socialist Education Movement (1963-1965) which was launched by Mao in a (futile) attempt to regenerate a truly communist militancy (but under the overly cautious label of "socialist"!).

This is the situation we have inherited.

### A Tripple Gesture

Dealing with this legacy, as modern communists of the 21st century, seems to me to involve crossing the shadow cast by this book in threefold manner.

**1. Historically;** by restituting the cultural revolution (1966-1976) as the second major period of the Communist Revolution that began in 1958 , this second period being that which aimed at reactivating the worker's resources of the previous period; that which was most surprisingly absent from the first major period (1958-1965).<sup>54</sup>

In truth, the history of the urban People's Communes<sup>55</sup> clarifies the reasons for this absence, which in fact corresponds to a withdrawal of the workers: the worker aristocracies of the State factories ("Danwei) viewed the extension of their privileges... to housewives (who had seen up small-craft subcontracting workshops) with a degree of suspicion.

**2. Negatively;** by **observing** the inadequacy, during the period of this Communist Revolution, of the Marxist-Leninist principles put forward by Mao from the summer of 1967; the principles that sought to prevent the Cultural Revolution from sliding into Civil War that was (correctly) considered to be politically devastating: "*the vast majority of Party cadres are good*"<sup>56</sup> and "*nothing essential divides the working class.*"<sup>57</sup>

Clearly, we witnessed here the transition to a truly communist revolution (within a socialist revolution still in progress) divided the working class and provoked fierce opposition from the majority of CCP cadres (see the reactionary conference of 7,000 in early 1962).

Mao, in a sense trapped in a socialist revolution that had to be pursued.<sup>58</sup> no doubt hoped in this way to appease his comrades in the CCP, not knowing how to politically address the new antagonisms raised by this impromptu and politically unplanned Communist Revolution (unlike the Great Leap Forward, for better or for worse).

**3. Affirmatively;** considering that the Chinese Communist Revolution (and its second strategic period, the Cultural Revolution) failed due to internal **obstruction**.

It may seem paradoxical to consider that such a motif – that of obstruction—is affirmative in nature. But many modernities (and primarily mathematical modernities) were affirmatively constituted under this motif: by positively considering what it is that obstructed the classical development of their field. That is, by understanding the impasse of this classical approach not only as an **obstacle** (in the sense where an obstacle is **extrinsic**, that would have to be circumvented or destroyed, as Yukong did with the mountains hindering his peasant work) but as an **intrinsic obstruction** revealing some real hidden, latent, and secret which organises (quasi unconsciously) an effective impossibility.

## Obstruction

Faced with this, what is the modern task of thought?  
It can be broken down into three stages.

1. It is impossible to unobstruct an obstructed situation, because destroying the obstruction in question would be tantamount to destroying the situation itself.
2. One can always consider the situation to be internally saturated and then decide to abandon it—this is the path taken at the beginning of the 19th century by great mathematicians (Lagrange, Cauchy, etc.) when they were faced with the obstruction of classical algebra.
3. The modern approach, on the contrary, is to invent a way of revealing the secret of the obstruction (and Lacan reminds us that “*a confessed secret remains a secret*”) by objectifying the point of impossibility in order to extend the situation by adjoining this new point of the real—the paradigm of this modern approach is the revolution in modern algebra through the adjunction of Galois groups...

## Saturation?

So, the modern point of view recaptures what appears to be saturation,<sup>59</sup> understanding it as follows:

1. as effective saturation, not of the situation as such, but of the old (or *classical*) relationship to this situation,
2. as a symptom of an intrinsic obstruction of the situation,
3. as an opportunity to revolutionize the intervention in this situation by establishing for it a new, properly modern objective of adjoining the object that obstructs the classical intervention project in order to **extend** the situation well beyond its initial region, definitively saturated by the negative effects of the obstruction....

Thus, modern algebra will be reconstituted in a considerably expanded way around group theory and no longer around the algebraic solution of its equations. More precisely, solving an algebraic equation algebraically will no longer mean, as classical algebra conceived it, to formulate algebraically each of its roots, but to algebraically formulate the Galois group that binds together all of its roots. Thus, the algebraic challenge of resolution will shift from the individual root to the collective roots.

This therefore presupposes a **revolution of the very notion of revolution** (reduplication obliges!): classical revolutions are by means of destruction/reconstruction,<sup>60</sup> whereas ancient revolutions (exemplified in politics by the anti-slavery revolutions of Spartacus in Rome or the Quilombos in Brazil) were by means of **abandonment/displacement**. Modern revolutions (exemplified by those in mathematics from 1830 onwards) are by means of adjunction /**extension**: thus, the Chinese Communist Revolution was an attempt to **adjoin** the communism of the People's Communes to the construction of socialism in order to **extend** communist politics (by revolutionizing social relations and initiating an effective decline of the socialist state).

If we communists inherit the strategic failure of the Chinese Communist Revolution, and in particular its Cultural Revolution, it is therefore up to us to identify its inherent point of obstruction.

## Hypothesis

The scope of this task is certainly vast, and for the moment I can only formulate the following hypothesis: the obstruction of the Chinese Communist Revolution is linked to the *classic* communist project of a proletariat that, through its postulated singularity, guarantees the compatibility between affirmative labour and labour of the negative,

between the resolution of contradictions within the people and the dictatorial treatment of antagonistic contradictions.

Let us note that the People's Communes clearly showed that a mass emancipatory advance inevitably gives rise to new political and social antagonisms which, even more than the well-documented old ones, are more difficult to confront because they are only discovered as the movement progresses.

### **“Proletariat”?**

“Proletariat” claims, in effect, to seal the dialectical unity of these opposites under the form of a political **singularity**.

Let us recall that this is indeed the essential characteristic of algebraic **singularities** (see Hironaka's theory): an algebraic singularity renders the antagonistic contradiction (“orthogonality”) between two indiscernible regularities, such as the tip of a vertical cone whose singular spike manifests the indiscernibility at this single point between two general and orthogonal constituents of the cone, both of which are smooth: its horizontal circles and its oblique lateral lines (themselves deformations of the vertical lines of a cylinder).

In this sense of singularity, the proletariat<sup>61</sup> renders two opposing determinations of the communist orientation indiscernible from one another:

- a **negative** determination: anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism;

Isn't the proletariat classically defined by an accumulation of negative properties, as in this characterization that intertwines three negative determinations? *“The proletariat brings together those who have nothing to lose but their chains.”*

We can therefore understand that such a “proletariat,” once engaged in the construction of socialism, which finally affords it the proper possession of a labour, a roof over its head, a family, health, and culture, may feel such strictly negative determinations wavering!<sup>62</sup>

- An **affirmative** determination: its ability to strategically direct communist politics (it is still necessary to characterize the communist revolution of social relations affirmatively and not to be satisfied once again with doubly negative characterizations such as *“the reduction of great differences”* and *“the withering away of the state”*).

Pointing out where the obstruction lies (or would lie) is of course not enough to identify the real issue, the impossible “secret” that must be objectified in order to effectively revolutionize modern communist orientation.

Nor did Abel's 1828 demonstration of the algebraic insolubility of the general quintic polynomial equation reveal his group of solidarity that accounted for this impossibility (this would be Galois's task in 1830).

Let us not be misled here by the small gap between these two dates: in truth, the obstruction identified by Abel had been quietly occupying mathematicians since the end of the 16th century. Thus, revolutions in human thought are measured on a scale of centuries, not on that of a human lifetime.

Reasons, then, to trust in humanity and to lean on the small victories it has already won (starting with this one: "A truly communist revolution did take place in China between 1958 and 1976!" and nothing can cancel out its objective existence and subjective *ek-sistence*) to base a communist hope in future victories of greater magnitude!

Thus, communist intellectuality—which was my "subject" here—has a truly modern perspective if it is true that in these postmodern and cynical times, "*we communists assume that we are still modern!*"

### All in all...

On the one hand,

1. The various forms of modernity (artistic, scientific, political, and romantic)<sup>63</sup> differ from the classicisms that preceded them in the emergence of specific intellectualities developed by human agents (artists, scientists, activists, and lovers) and intertwined with the collective actors (scientific theories, artistic configurations, etc.) of these modernities.
2. to establish their own theories<sup>64</sup>, these intellectualities draw on specifically philosophical resources;
3. In doing so, they took stock of the limits of these resources, of their *shadow lines*, which they crossed so as not to become sutured to them.
4. Hence, for these mature intellectualities, there is the temptation to turn to the anarchic alternative of anti-philosophies.

On the other hand, we can claim that Badiou's philosophy has little use for intellectualities who can go beyond his own shadow lines.

Let us draw the following conclusion:

- if communist politics is fortunately no longer tied to the "philosophy" of *dialectical* materialism and the "science" of *historical* materialism,

- if communist intellectuality must now mobilize new types of intellectual resources<sup>65</sup>, so as not to sterilize its relative autonomy of thought in an autarkic retreat obsessed with independence,
- then 21st-century communists must learn to intertwine in new ways specifically political thought and other forms of thought, specifically communist intellectuality and other intellectualities, while making limited use of philosophies that unfold under conditions of emancipatory creations of political, artistic, scientific, and romantic orders.

On this point, the intellectual resources of Badiou's philosophy are decisive: our seven crossings do not constitute a liberation (if it is true—as I have already repeated—that it is a matter for the intellectualities internal to the four conditions to shed light on areas of thought where philosophy is voiceless).

Essentially, the intellectual resources of Alain Badiou's philosophy inscribe the following four Affirmations in a modern rationality:

- There is not only what is, because there is also what happens eventually;
- There are not only bodies and languages, for there are also singular, universal, eternal, and absolute truths.
- There are not only animals and human individuals, for there are also collective subjects, activists of these truths.
- There are not only the social, cultural, technical, and sexual activities of human beings, for there is also humanity's collective capacity to create politics, arts, sciences, and loves.

However activists, musicians, mathematicians, and lovers who subscribe to this philosophy must be careful not to remain stuck in it (just as this philosophy is careful not to become bound by its own particular conditions) and not to allow themselves to be carried away by the anarchistic temptation of anti-philosophies.

Inescapable long marches, advancing on two fronts!

•••

Translated by Daniel Barry and Frank Ruda

1 I would like to refer you to my personal website (<https://fnicolas1947.fr>) for the various intellectual backgrounds to this text. The communist website *Longues marches* (<https://longues-marches.fr>) also contains numerous articles (particularly in the journal *Longues marches*) on the question of a new type of communist politics in the 21st century.

2 Of course, a given philosophy freely selects, chooses, and decides which events will “condition” it, without being under any absurd obligation to be exhaustive and to include “all” artistic, scientific, and political events: a philosophy is not an encyclopedia! The validity of its choices can then be seen in their philosophical (rather than artistic, political, or scientific) fertility.

3 Resonances between different types of reasoning... [Translator's remark: This is a neologism created by F.N. that resonates in the English neologism “reasonance”].

4 **Heterophony** allows several heterogeneous voices to coexist peacefully through the intertwining of polyphonic cooperation, antiphonal emulation, and juxtaposed companionship.

5 I have been reading Alain Badiou's philosophy since 1966 (via *Cahiers pour l'analyse*) and have followed it very closely since my militant encounter with Alain Badiou in 1971.

6 Mathematics-music-philosophy

7 “*O severe mathematics, thank you for the countless services you have rendered me.*” Lautréamont (1869)

8 Strictly speaking, there is no *musical language* (the expression is only valid metaphorically).

9 I devoted the third volume of my tetralogy *Le monde-Musique* to a specific examination of *musical intellectuality*:<https://www.musicae.fr/livre-Le-monde-Musique-III-de-Francois-Nicolas-154-96.html>

10 **What is the point of** wanting, desiring, hoping? **It is futile** for nihilists, since the choice would only be between *wanting nothing* (active nihilism), *not wanting something* (passive nihilism), or assuming that *wanting is nothing* (neutral nihilism).

11 By this I mean the intellectualities involved in the emancipatory processes of humanity...

12 The Grothendieck revolution characterizes the **point** by its dynamic ability to **point**: the point thus becomes a **pointing** operator, a “point of view.”

13 As far as I am concerned, see the activities of the communist pole *Longues marches*: <https://longues-marches.fr>

14 From this point of view, the expression “*communist hypothesis*” seems inappropriate to me since, by definition, a **hypothesis** involves a verification procedure capable of invalidating it, whereas an **orientation** involves a long march that will be renewed and regenerated by assessments of experience. As I will return

to later, if there is a *communist hypothesis*, it concerns the proletariat, not communism as such.

15 Let us make the following distinction:

**orientation** is a matter for the compass;

**positioning** is a matter for the sextant; **steering** (in the sense of **deciding on a direction**) is a matter of choice once the two previous points have been established.

16 In the lexicon of *Logics of Worlds*, it can be argued that our era is one of **obscure** (and therefore nihilistic) subjects, rather than **reactionary** subjects (i.e., subjects who, at the end of the 20th century, were openly counter-revolutionary and anti-communist).

17 There is indeed a being of appearing (just as being or being-there is indeed a being), but appearing inscribes a “apart.”

18 In this case, dialectics strictly speaking does not concern being (this is, moreover, the central orientation of *Being and Event*) but only being or appearing (then understood as *being-apart*).

But then we come up against this more technically philosophical point: if it is indeed the nature of being to appear, and if appearing does indeed return to being in such a way that being is affected by appearing (theses of *Logics of Worlds*), how could the dialectic of being/being-there not also necessarily be an internal dialectic of being (otherwise, what would be the proper ontological basis for the necessity of being to appear, a necessity that is ignored in the ontology of *Being and Event*)?

19 See my article in issue 3 (October 2024) of the communist journal *Longues marches* (<https://longues-marches.fr/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/3-F-maths.pdf>)

20 To simplify, let us say that we exist **in** a world (according to the intensity of its immanent transcendental logic) but that we **ek-sist** at this world (according to a subjective intensity that belongs to another logic, relatively autonomous from the previous one).

21 The communist orientation allows us to sketch out a general system of **parameters**, but we are not currently able to precisely situate a new type of political organization within it, to pinpoint it with precise **coordinates** in this general parameterization (except negatively: we know that it will no longer be, strictly speaking, a party, let alone a party of the proletariat...).

22 But music as consolation in times of distress is only cheap music, stripped of its own affirmative power! Even so, a consoling love would then be worth only “for lack of anything better”...

23 On this point, the communist group *Longues marches* talks about circles (it only takes three activists from different generations to form a communist circle, just as it only takes three non-aligned points to draw a geometric circle).

24 I am in no way referring here to Sylvain Lazarus' *Anthropology*, which was (as I will

discuss at greater length in note 42) merely the beginning of an uninterrupted, step-by-step liquidation of any prospect of communist politics. 25 *"The desire proper to philosophy is nothing other than to produce nothing."* (February 13, 1991; Seminar *Theory of Evil, Theory of Love*; p. 109) 26 The communist orientation maintains that, strategically, it is internal **failure** that causes external **defeat**, not the other way around (see the Maoist primacy given to internal causes...). 27 See, for example, *"Only Love Is Heterosexual"* (April 10, 1991). 28 See *In Praise of Love* (2009). 29 Note the synchrony with the global political shift resulting from the failure of the Communist Revolution that began in China in 1958 and led to its defeat after Mao's death in 1976... 30 I note here a long-standing disagreement with Alain Badiou, specifically on the following point: should we (as I believe) consider *dodecaphonism* and *serialism* as two separate entities, or can we (as he argues) consider them as two successive modalities of the same compositional orientation? In either case, *serialism* will not, of course, refer to exactly the same musical orientation of thought... 31 I devoted my book *La singularité Schoenberg* to this point... 32 The entire 2022-2023 season of the *mamuphi* seminar was devoted to examining this hypothesis, essentially validating it—a collective book will soon publish the proceedings. 33 My compositional hypothesis here is this: the serial problem is obstructed by an endogenous defect in harmonic syntax, a defect that must now be taken into account (all my future compositional work aims to address this point) in order to reconfigure contemporary music. 34 Here, we should link the debate on romanticism/modernity to the old philosophical debate of the 1920s between Georg Lukács, a proponent of neoclassicism, and Ernst Bloch, a proponent of expressionism... 35 It can be seen that music is not strictly speaking a condition for Alain Badiou's philosophy, but that it serves him (due to the philosopher's longstanding intimacy with this art) as a perfectly legitimate field of illustrations and examples. Need I point out that this fact is actually a blessing for musicians, who are thus spared the burden of philosophical discourse credited with coming from outside to tell the truth about their art: woe to those artists who, in search of recognition, pledge allegiance to philosophers (who, incidentally, are often powerless to help them!). For more details, see my articles on *Schoenberg* and *Wagner* in *The Badiou Dictionary* (ed. by Steven Corcoran; Edinburgh University Press; 2015). 36 See my texts examining these different volumes on my website: <https://fnicolas1947.fr/> intellectualites

37 It should be noted, however, that in *Logics of Worlds*, topos refer to Lawvere's **elementary** topos (relating to mathematical logic) rather than Grothendieck's **sheaf** topos (relating to algebraic geometry) – a day of the *mamuphi* seminar will be devoted to examining this point on April 11, 2026.

38 Starting with algebra with Galois, geometry with Gauss and then Riemann, analysis with Cauchy, arithmetic with Dedekind, etc.

39 Schwartz distributions, Kurzweil-Henstock integrals, Hironaka's algebraic singularities, Grothendieck's sheaf theory, Lawvere's synthetic differential geometry...

40 Marx's *mathematical manuscripts* contain only incidental reflections: in his own words, Marx practiced differential calculus as others do crossword puzzles, to relax. And he practiced it according to the ill-founded infinitesimal calculus of Leibniz and Newton, which had nevertheless been replaced several decades earlier by Cauchy's modern analysis. To take these manuscripts as a Marxist approach to mathematics is a deplorable misunderstanding that unfortunately persisted until the heart of the Cultural Revolution...

41 Of which I was a member from 1971 until its self-dissolution in 1985.

42 Let us restore the "diagnosis": *"As a category of politics, the term revolution is assigned to a unique situation. That is why I would say that, since the end of the revolutionary mode of politics [1794], the category of revolution has been saturated and can no longer be used to think about other political singularities. The revolution took place only once: between 1792 and 1794. It must be said to be exhausted. [...] There was only one revolution, and that was the French Revolution."* (*The Category of Revolution in the French Revolution*; Conférence du Perroquet; March 1988)

It is retroactively clear that this was the second theoretical step in an undertaking of political liquidation (which I detail a little here because of its entanglement with the category of *saturation*, central to Alain Badiou's 2018 assessment of the Cultural Revolution):

- Lazarus's first step having established (in the early 1980s) that politics was broken down into singularities (monadically closed in on themselves) that he called "modes,"
- once everyone had accepted that communist politics could no longer be *Marxist-Leninist* (hence the closure of the UCF-m1 in 1985 to join the ill-named *Political Organization*), communist politics could no longer—according to him!—aspire to be *revolutionary*;
- then, still according to him, since emancipation policy no longer really had to call itself *communist*,
- all that remained for Lazarus to do was to invalidate the idea of political emancipation in

order to liquidate any real prospect of organized militancy.

We also know the central role played in this liquidation by the anti-philosophical promotion of his anthropological nominalism...

43 And in this case, to whose benefit? If not to the benefit of social democratic reformism, then to whose benefit?

44 In a sense, what else is Alessandro Russo doing in his remarkable book *Cultural Revolution and Revolutionary Culture* (Duke University Press; 2020) if not precisely examining the revolutionary culture capable of accounting for the Cultural Revolution?

45 Badiou speaks (p. 8) of mobilizing “*all the classic attributes of revolutions*” to describe the sequence of the GRCP.

46 Badiou classically focuses the category of *revolution* on the question of power (rather than on the social relations that need to be revolutionized): “*By ‘revolution’ we can only mean the articulation of antagonistic political forces on the question of power. The question of revolution is ultimately that of power*” (p. 52).

47 Hence, the book hardly agrees to call a seizure of power that follows a civil war (rather than, *classically*, preceding it) a *revolution*: “*The seizure of power by the CCP just after the end of World War II [...] is not adequately described by the word ‘revolution.’ Admittedly, Russia also experienced a long (at least four years) and fierce civil war. But this civil war followed, rather than preceded, the Bolsheviks’ seizure of central power, so that this seizure of power can, at least approximately, be described as a ‘revolution’*” (p. 7).

48 Alain Badiou makes it clear (p. 95) that “*Mao in no way makes the determination of the enemy the essence of politics (as Carl Schmitt does). Its essence is to resolve contradictions within the people.*” (p. 95) But it must be noted that the concrete contradictions at stake here are absent, for a specific reason that I will explain: in 1966, the contradictions within the people that needed to be resolved were inherited from the *People’s Communes* event that had occurred nearly ten years earlier and had since been politically mistreated.

49 p. 71

50 What was true of the bourgeois state (it is better to take it than to build another) still holds true, at least in part, of the socialist state (as the Chinese example amply demonstrates, taking the lead is by no means sufficient to implement communist policy on a mass scale!)

51 The Red Guards were “*armed with the single slogan of ‘the struggle of the new against the old’*” (p. 63).

52 The right wing of the CCP skillfully took advantage of the limitations and dead ends of this voluntarist leftism...

53 We dare not entertain the disastrous

hypothesis that the workers of Shanghai thus displayed a class contempt for the peasants, similar to that which isolated the Paris Commune from the French countryside...

54 The political oddity, unresolved and therefore a sign of unnoticed obstruction, is that Chinese workers seem to have remained on the sidelines of the People’s Communes, and that peasants did the same during the Cultural Revolution.

55 For which Fabio Lanza’s work is absolutely decisive...

56 p. 71

57 p. 77

58 Let us recall this point, as improbable as it is ignored: **socialist planning**, the cornerstone of any construction of socialism, was simply interrupted from 1963 to 1965, so that the Third Five-Year Plan, succeeding the second (1958-1962), was not implemented until 1966. The Chinese socialist economy thus wandered without centralized planning for three years in a row!

59 In the book *Petrograd, Shanghai*, this motif is central to understanding the failure of the Cultural Revolution (see pp. 49-50, 85-86):

“*The word ‘revolution’ itself is at the heart of saturation*” (p. 49).

It must be noted that this motif of saturation, with its inevitable liquidationist destiny (a saturated situation cannot be desaturated: it must be abandoned), is explicitly borrowed from Lazarus, who made it a centerpiece of his *Anthropology of the Name* in the late 1980s...

60 The circular of May 16, 1966, launched the Cultural Revolution under the banner of a *classical* revolution: “*This circular clearly states that it must be maintained that ‘without destruction, there can be no construction’*” (p. 63). Hence, throughout the Cultural Revolution, there was a constant political discrepancy between *modern* discourse and *classical* discourse.

61 In doing so, I shift the focus of Badiou’s book in two ways:

1) the decisive singularity is less the obvious one of *Mao’s* name (p. 83) than the more essential but ignored one of *the proletariat*;

2) *singularity* refers less to a doubling (that of a “*representation of representation*” – p. 82) than to an indiscernibility of two global opposites at a specific point, which is then marked by a completely unique phenomenological property (the tip of the cone is its only non-smooth place).

62 It should be noted that the Cultural Revolution was able to dialecticize three different types of negativity. Thus, the *16-point Decision* of August 1966 declared: “*At present, our goal is to crush those who are engaged in the capitalist road, to criticize the reactionaries, and to reform all branches of the superstructure.*” (p. 90). In other words, **classical** negation with regard to capitalists, **intuitionist** negation with regard

to reactionaries, and **paraconsistent** negation with regard to reform and contradictions within the people. This implicitly opens a breach in an overly *classical* conception of revolution...

63 I prefer to maintain the plurality of modernities, leaving it to philosophy (if necessary) to subsume them under a single concept of *Modernity*, just as I cautiously maintain the plurality of the arts, sciences, politics, and loves, leaving it to philosophy (if necessary) to produce its own concepts of *Art*, *Science*, *Politics*, and *Love* (concepts that the various specific intellectualities have little need for in reality).

64 Thus, a **musical** theory of music differs radically from any philosophical (Adorno), mathematical (Euler), historical, sociological, psychoanalytical, or musicological theory of music.

65 Just as there were **three sources** of Marxism (French utopian socialism, English political economy, and German dialectical philosophy), the communist pole *Longues Marches* argues that 21st-century communism has three intellectual **resources**: the Chinese Communist Revolution (1958-1976), modern and contemporary mathematics, and French philosophies of truth subjects (from Bachelard and Lautman to Badiou, via Sartre and Lacan). For more details, see its website <https://longues-marches.fr>