Alain Badiou and Foreign Languages

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Let me open with a brief clarification: I wasn't the one who chose this subject. Rather, Alain Badiou himself reached out to propose it as a potential topic of inquiry, and, in such circumstances, what else can one do but accept. And yet, I must admit to facing the task with some trepidation, for if there is indeed a corpus of scholarship touching on the relation between Alain Badiou's works and the French language, there was no such exegetical support structure for me to rely upon when it came to that of foreign languages. Thus, my intervention will be comprised of the questions and queries that about this problematic that I initially pondered, as well as the hypothetical responses that I believe the latter allow us to arrive at. My very first question ran as follows: Why did the idea for *this* subject—Badiou and foreign, or other languages—occur to him at all? Potential answer: perhaps because the relation to other/foreign languages is not clear to, or for, Badiou himself.

Consider the answer that he gave me one day as I was asking him if there were things in life that he regretted not having done (or having been able to do). "I regret," he replied, "not having learned how to pilot a plane, I wish I had learned how to play the piano, I regret not having learned German." I of course want to linger with the last in this series of regrets so as to better take up and interrogate his relation not only to (other) languages that he has learned, but also those that he hasn't. There are four of them: Chinese, English, German, and Greek, listed not in the non-chronological order in which we will consider them below, with each allowing us to shed different light on the nature of the relation in question.

1. Chinese

All we can definitively say about Badiou and (Mandarin) Chinese is as follows: beginning sometime around 1964-1965, and over the course of approximately a year, Badiou began studying the language with the help of a Chinese friend. As he explained to me once, the reason had to do with his interest in the People's Republic of China. We will come back to this reply, which, at face value, may seem trivial but nevertheless merits further meditation.

2. English

The first foreign language that Badiou began to learn upon entering high school, the choice of English may strike one as surprising since, as everyone in France knows—although this tendency is perhaps beginning to fade nowadays—that all serious students normally prioritize the learning of German when it comes to foreign language study. However, up until he was in the tenth grade, Badiou attended a pilot-programme high school—a modern one in which the only other language studied was English. It's fair

to assume that he learned the language according to the bookish foreign language pedagogy which prevailed at the time. A noteworthy anecdotal fact, however: having been sent, like all proper high school students, to spend the holidays with a British family, Badiou astonished his hosts less for his proficiency in English at the time (about which I'm unable to say anything) than for his, already, enthused and lengthy lectures (in English) on Wagner!

Many years later, with his philosophical reputation growing ever more considerably, will find himself once more in Anglophone countries where, as French academic would, he refuses to speak any language other than French. Having witnessed it firsthand, however, I can attest that something finally clicks for him while in Australia in 1999. Although the first half of his lecture tour was conducted in French (with Alain relying on friends or on myself to reply to questions from the audience, or when encountering comprehension issues), at some point he simply and suddenly decided that, henceforth, he would deliver all of his lectures directly in English. It was, to my mind, a courageous decision, one, furthermore, with which he has stuck ever since—so much so that, for example, when he was invited to attend a big event at Humboldt University, in Berlin, he delivered his entire talk to an audience of several hundred students entirely in English!

But where it is a question of Badiou's relation to English, I suggest that this relationship unfolds along three sequences or stages:

– First, Alain has his works translated by an American friend, Thelma Sowley, who was teaching in France. Thelma, who passed away a little more than a year ago at the time of this writing, went so far as to personally look after the textual work of accentuation in Alain's texts, a subtle but crucial aspect of English if ever there were one.

– Second, he realized that it is ultimately more difficult to read someone else's prose (even if that same prose is also yours, in translation) than one's own, even if the latter might prove a bit more awkward than the former. He thus begins to write directly in English, occasionally asking friends and comrades for a helping stylistic hand when it came to textual nuance. Having been myself enlisted for this sort of task now and then, I've had more than one occasion to observe that, while his knowledge of written English is excellent, one nevertheless doesn't find there those everyday colloquialisms and expressions of which English speakers are so fond.

– The final stage or sequence occurs in October of 2010: in New York for a series of talks, Alain sent me two of the lectures that he had written for his American tour, asking me if I would be so kind as to translate them into French as he hoped to reuse them

on the occasion of the "Journées Badiou" conference (held at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, October 23-24, 2010). At the time, I couldn't help but feel a certain admiration before the enormity of the progress he had made in English since Australia. I simply couldn't find a fault in anything he had written.

What kind of problem, then, does the English language pose for Badiou? To answer this question we need to ask ourselves why, despite his relative ease when it came to writing in English (which we've already evoked above in the context of the aforementioned New York talks), and despite repeated attempts to work on his accent with the help of language-learning CDs, Alain Badiou's French accent was always, undiminished and unmistakably, discernable. I can't help but see how this particularity touches upon a wholly different set of circumstances that I would like to now explore.

Antoine Vitez, who greatly admired Alain and who had put together a production of Alain's *L'Echarpe rouge* (*The Red Scarf*) for the Avignon theatre festival, gave a public performance of Badiou's *Ahmed the Subtle* (*Ahmed le subtil*) shortly before leaving the Chaillot theatre company. It was nothing if not a festival. But what was probably less known was that, prior to the official production of the play in 1993 by Christian Schiaretti at the Reims municipal theatre, Alain had also given a one-man reading of the play itself in Reims which, according to those who happened to be in the audience, left nothing to be desired when compared to Vitez's performance. Now, in the Madame Pompestan car scene in this play, we see successively arrive on stage an Arab and a Chinese character. Listening to Alain inhabit their accents in French was a real treat. Those of you who know him will also know how much he sometimes similarly delights in parodying the mannerisms of Jean Hyppolite or Georges Canguilhem when they come up in conversation. I'd go so far as to say as he can't help himself on that score, but this nevertheless leaves me with a question: why is there both a kind of easy touch in English on the one hand and an awkward, if not turgid, approach to the language on the other?

To begin to account for this problem, I can only appeal to personal experience: for some reason, whether in English or German, and despite the fact that I'm perfectly incapable of intentionally reproducing the accents of those languages, my accent in nevertheless them creates a kind of illusory impression that I might know more than I do.

Perhaps we might here draw a general distinction between those who *speak* a language, and those who act (out) a language. Between speakers and actors/imitators, as it were. When one can speak an other, or foreign, language, doing so tends to constitute a kind of game of passing unnoticed in the language of the other. You take the (linguistic) plunge, so to speak. But for actors-imitators, things are of a different nature: the actor-imitator in (other) language(s) insists on the stylistic

singularity of their speech-thought, on continuing to have the final word, laying claim to a mastery (*rester toujours maître*), over what they say. Alain Badiou, of course, falls into this latter category.

Just for the sake of anecdote, I'll note that the only occasion on which he ever let himself give in to the pull of an accent was in conversation with a neighbor in his native south-west (a neighbor whose marked regional accent made it quite difficult for me to understand him). On this occasion, and as though despite himself, Alain took on the accent of the south-west of France—which, for those listening, sounded like a bit of pandering, and seemed to make him almost foreign himself—an accent which, incidentally, he claims to have never actually had, the only trace of which would be in the way he pronounces the verb "to suggest" à la toulousaine (that is, *sujérer* and not, as indicated phonetically in the dictionary, *sugjérer*).

In a word, I think it fair to say that Alain Badiou's relationship to the English language has to do with a certain way of taking one's fate in hand. Badiou would prefer, in sum, to say less well what he means to say, with his words, rather than conferring the latter to a linguistic intermediary. There's no immersion in the other language here, but, rather, an unmistakable French accent that can only convey to his audience that it is, just as unmistakably, Alain Badiou, the French philosopher, who is speaking.[1]

3. German

Alain Badiou has often spoken of his first contact with Germany in 1952—it took place via performances of Wagner in Bayreuth. He held the German language—that of great philosophers, poets, and musicians—in high esteem, but a first attempt at learning the language by reading Hölderlin (was this *really* the most prudent choice?) while in the last year of his post-bac (*Khâgne*) failed rather swiftly.

And one would think that Alain, who has always shown the greatest interest in learning anything he can about languages he does not speak (e.g., Russian, Arabic, German), would of course logically be drawn to a language such as German, which is nothing if not a language in which the part of contingency or arbitrariness in the linguistic system—whether phonetic, semantic, or syntactical—is extremely low.

What problem does it pose, then? By way of response, I'll offer two hypotheses:

1. Alain's respect for the German language is such that he refuses to misuse or mistreat the language by speaking it poorly. (Certainly not a problem where English was concerned.) That respect in mind, it's worth noting that, in his own words, his greatest satisfaction as a writer (who has been translated into some twenty-odd different languages) was seeing his works appear in German.

2. The other side of this same respect, however, is a slightly provocative refusal to set German down as an hypostasized point of reference, a desire, especially where *this* language is concerned, to resist giving into 'linguistic fetishism'.

Now, what I call 'linguistic fetishism' is the tendency that so many intellectuals have to extoll a so-called 'originary language'; to claim that one can only ever truly understand Kant or Hegel if one has read them in 'the original German'. Once, while Alain and Barbara Cassin were in a bookstore giving a talk about their little book on Heidegger, we had to endure this sort of breathlessly self-righteous astonishment from a member of the audience: how dare you say a single word about Heidegger if you can't even read German! Then, of course, there are the countless articles and books on translation which only ever seem to recycle the same, tired clichés; and let us not forget philosophy's 'linguistic turn' with its disproportionate emphasis on language in the aftermath of Wittgenstein and Derrida.

(On this point, I'd note in passing that I've never observed that arguments around or challenges to a philosopher's body of work depend on the prescribed interpretation of this or that word in the oeuvre. Those are the sorts of phenomena one encounters in religion, or indeed in psychoanalysis, for which the signifier is a sacred thing.)

To my mind, Alain Badiou is convinced that that which is truly invaluable—in philosophy, of course, but also in poetry— transcends the limits of an original or source language. Just consider for instance the manner in which, in his seminar, he helped us discover Mandelstam, Pessoa, or Passolini. And I'll add one more name to that list which is linked to a personal memory.

Having taken up the study of Arabic for several years, I discovered in 1992 a book by André Miquel: *From the Arabian Desert to the Gardens of Spain* (Arles: Actes Sud). In it, Miquel offers up translations of several texts from the canon of classical Arabic poetry; the volume itself opens with a translation of a pre-Islamic ode. I found the book astonishing, and, so, rushed to get it to Alain who, in turn, confessed that he too felt the same sense of marvel—as sense of awe-struck marvel for which, for once, we have a trace. Indeed, in 1998, Alain would write in his preface to Salam Al-Kindy's *Traveler without Orient* that he 'remembered how astonishing it was [...] when, doubtless bedimmed by the mists and mirages of translation, yet nevertheless intact, those declarations managed to reach me, who as an old-Mallarméan, was able to recognize them instantaneously....'

Let me conclude these remarks on Badiou's relation to German by circling back to his link to Chinese. As I mentioned previously, Badiou was tempted to learn Chinese based on 'his interest in China,' which is something he might have—but, precisely, didn't—also said as regards England or Germany. Far be it from him to exalt any language; you won't find him ever saying, "but it's so much more beautiful in the original

X…"; likewise, you'll not find him giving into that manic heteroglossia which affects so many academics and which leads them to spatter their discourse with so many words taken from foreign languages. For Alain, everything can, and must, be said in French.

With one exception, however: the only instance of an 'original language' that he allows himself to deploy is that of mathematics. He willingly speaks of [himself as a] 'working mathematician' [*in English*] and just as willingly enlists certain expressions or terms used by Anglo-Saxon mathematicians ('locale', for instance).

4. Greek

As for the learning of Greek, it's worth mentioning that Alain obtained his baccalaureate in June of 1954 with honors in elementary mathematics. Having learned over the course of that year enough Greek (thanks to Plato, even then) and passing his philosophy baccalaureate in September of the same year, he finally set off for his post-bac (*khâgne*) and, thus, to studying philosophy.

We might also begin by pointing out that the Greek language represents something of an exception for Alain Badiou to the extent that it remains the only (foreign) language in which he has truly performed the work of close readings and exegesis. I have in mind, here, his book on Saint Paul, which required him to purchase a dictionary of late ancient Greek and to tarry with divergent interpretations of various words. It's also worth noting that, for this book, we're in the realm of religion and that, indeed, Alain was here trying to tackle in the strict sense of the term a "sacred text".

But we now need to turn to the massive undertaking that Alain Badiou has been devoted to for several years now and which is close [*at the time of this writing*] to being finished: namely, his work on Plato's Republic, a glimpse of which I'd now like to give you.

From a practical, or material standpoint, Alain has been drafting this manuscript in large-format sketch books. On the right-hand page in the sketch book, he jots down his translation of Plato's dialogue, which he then recopies on the left side of the manuscript before handing it over to me to be typed out—I limited my role here to typing out the text, not having the slightest bit of contact with the original text in Greek.

For this conference, however, I was keen on consulting the bilingual edition of the *Republic* published [in French] with the *Belles Lettres* collection, my six years of Greek having left me with just enough linguistic muscle-memory to be able to navigate the twists and turns of the text. I've included below a side-by-side comparison of the two translations, with Alain's version situated in the right-hand column (such as it was before being recopied onto the left folia of his sketch book) and, on the left, the *Belles Lettres* version.

– One sees all too well that those who indulge in philosophy, instead of amusing oneself with it during youth for the sake of education and then giving it up, those who linger too long with philosophy become truly bizarre, if not perverse, people [beings, *êtres*], and one also sees that those who seem to you the most reasonable derive no other fruit from their philosophical labors than uselessness to the State.	– [One can see] Anyone can see what happens, they said, to those [who are truly engaged in philosophical conviction/ the conviction of philosophy], whose philosophical commitment [engagement] is serious, those for whom philosophy is not some academic discipline that one gives up on after having dabbled in it a bit while young.
– Having listened to his objection, I continued: Well then, do you think that those who speak to you in this manner are not speaking [telling the] truth?	– Well what does happen to them?, asked Socrates with a [lively] glint in his eye.
– I haven't the slightest idea, he replied, I'd prefer to hear what you think of it.	– Your interlocutors claim behind your back that there are two possible outcomes. The majority of such 'philosophers' end up becoming very strange, if not perverted, people. A (tiny) minority of them who are capable of keeping thing in proportion only take away from this [occup] intellectual exercise that you so eloquently defend a manifest ineptitude when it comes to politics and an equally self-evident inability to occupy decision-making positions [executive positions, positions of power – fonctions dirigeantes] in the State.
– I think they are speaking [the] truth.	– Well then, dear Glaucon, Socrates continued with a grin, do you think they're wrong to tell you all that behind my back while they dwell on their defeats at chess, or are they right?

– But in that case, he said, on what basis can they claim that the State will only ever see the end of what ails it when they are governed by the same philosophers who, as we just established, are wholly incapable of serving in the State's employ/serving the interests of the City/the State?	– I've got no clue anymore. I'd rather hear what you think.
	No problemo: they're telling the truth and nothing but. The whole truth, [on the other hand – ça], maybe not.
	– Come one, you've got to be kidding me, Amantha suddenly erupted.[2] You just [told] proved like it was basic math [par a+b] that no country will ever sort their problems out unless everyone[3] in it becomes a philosopher. And now [you're saying] you drop this on us? That philosophers are all [incompetent] politically dumbasses? How do you figure your political system [votre cinquième politique] is going to work, exactly?
– To this question, I continued, I can only respond with an analogy.	– I can only answer your question, dear girl, in the form of an image [an allegory – *une image*].
– And yet, it seems to me rather unlike you to speak your mind by way of comparisons.	– Oh boy, look out guys, careful now!, Aman-tha groaned. – Let him talk for Christ's sake, Glaucon in-terjected.

– Fine [very well/Ok], I replied, you mock after having put to me a question [whose answer is] difficult to demonstrate. All the same, listen [first] to the comparison and you'll see just how difficult they are for me to formulate.

– Well how about that, Socrates said. *Now* that's my Amantha – not only does she give me a real head-scratcher, she makes fun of me to boot! That said, my dear, [listen to my comp], why don't you first listen to my little allegory [*mon discours image*] [you'll not only enjoy it, you can enjoy even more making fun of me afterwards]? You'll be all the better placed to [critique] make fun of my mediocrity as a poet/my poetic mediocrity.

– But I can imagine that whenever a man has a healthy and moderate relationship to his in-ner self [one's thoughts, son for intérieur]; and when one falls asleep only after having awakened the reasoning and calculating part of the self; only after having regaled that part of the self with a feast of fair discourses and sound arguments; only after having fi-nally come to concentrate his personal medi-tations on the self; having left the desiring part of the self neither in lack nor overly in-dulged so that it too can rest and not disturb the best parts of the self with the tumult of its pleasures or sorrows [;], but rather leave that [best] part in peace, in accord with itself alone, in the purity of its solitary considera-tions and aspirations for the perception of the unknown [of that which it does not know], of that which either was, is, or may be; only after he has similarly soothed that part of the self which is known for its ardent sentimentality, only then can he [one] fall asleep without the heart being troubled by anger against others; only then, when one has

> calmed these two states of the soul [forms d'âme] and set into motion the third part, the part in which the act of thought is car-ried out/performed/produced, do you not know that it is in such a state that one is the most in contact with the truth, and it is only then that it is the least likely that we should be troubled by those wild visions which ap-pear to us in dreams.

A few remarks are necessary here:

1. In Plato's *Republic*, the narrator of the dialogue presents himself under the guise of the first-person "I" whilst his interlocutor appears in the third-person, as "he". The third-person plural here refers either to a collective audience or a set of other interlocutors.

2. As for formal concerns, between brackets you'll find passages that Alain struck. Between parentheses, however, one finds an addition to the text. Alain's manuscript, you'll note, only ever includes corrections made on-the-go, as it were, whilst writing/translating—that is to say, it includes variations which specialists of manuscript studies term 'immediate variants' in contrast to mediated variants which might figure above the line of a notebook/manuscript or in its margins. I haven't included here the final version of the text as it only offers up the three, minor variants that are evoked in the notes above. The elaboration of this text with practically no passages or renderings crossed out, a text, in other words, which immediately became definitive, attests, to my mind, not only to an astonishing overall familiarity with and understanding of the original work but also, or perhaps more so, to the fact that we're not really dealing with a translation. Rather, we've entered into the territory of an entirely other, wholly original work.

3. I chose the passages above to the degree that I think the work on/with the other language is still fairly detectable. When I asked Alain to hand over one of his manuscripts for this talk, for instance, he didn't hesitate to point towards the passages in it that might

prove the most productive or appropriate for what I had in mind. Yet another indication of his deep understanding of Plato's (and his) text. In effect, there are numerous occasions in his (French) version where he is not merely quite far from the original Greek, but in which he is simply being creative with the original, if not making things up. Consider the many little instances of what I would call of stage directions on this score, beginning with the following example:

> *In the bluish night bedazzled here and there by the lamplights which had spread everywhere, in this desert of slain shadows in which only a few attendees—Amantha, Glaucon, Polemarchus, and Thrasymachus snoringly sprawled out on the ground—carried on to bear lonely witness to the morose disappointments in which every party eventually slips, Socrates remain silent for a long while despite the persistent pestering of his interlocutors that the conversation not die down.*

4. If I use the terminology of "stage directions" here it's because, when one compares Plato's text to its 'translation', one can't help but notice a formal or generic transition taking place, on in which we pass from the dialogical to the truly theatrical. With Plato, one often has the impression that the dialogue is chosen as a form for its practicality: it allows the thinker/writer to avoid having to include or tack certain rhetorical restrictions or attenuations onto one's arguments (e.g., "one might object here that…", "we might also say…", etc.). Alain obviously takes this formal resource much farther. His disciples, a sister and brother (a recurrent couple in both his philosophical and his theatrical oeuvre) who vie for the attention of their mentor, are a real work of art. Having become actual theatrical characters, they manage to confer a kind of surplus depth to the character of Socrates.

5. I'd like to conclude by bringing up one more example of both Alain's virtuosity as a translator and the creativity of the work he does. Someone—I believe it might have been Barbara Cassin—once having pointed out to him that he had no problem taking liberties with his translations, and that certain sentences from Plato appeared in his rendering far longer or difficult to follow than they were in readerly reality, Alain decided to answer the challenge implicitly issued. In the side-by-side that follows, note that I relied – in French – upon the Pléiade edition of Plato's works:

I'll leave it to you to judge the merits and differences separating the two texts: on the one hand, there are the Pléiade's series of segments punctuated by semi-colons, which to my mind hardly help grasp the

text, and, on the other, Badiou's magisterial, infinitely more readerly, full stops. Which brings me to another noteworthy aspect of this work. Often enough, discovering it as I was typing, some passages from Plato/Badiou's text would strike me as lacking, questionable, or slightly overdone, as was the case for the passage I just cited. But, every time I felt this qualm, a statement, generally coming from Amantha, would pop up which would stake out a certain distance from the text, taking up the role of a kind of internally self-critical voice which is entirely absent in Plato whose interlocutors are, as Alain frequently and ironically points out in his own text, rarely anything other than insipid philosophical foils, little more than dull yes-men.

So we might conclude by saying that, with his work on *The Republic*, Alain finally managed to really plunge uninhibitedly into a foreign language, to make it his own. Like François Wahl, I too think that it would be wrong to call or think of this work as a species of "hyper-translation". What it is, rather, is a "real translation".[4]

And this translation will itself be translated. Currently, part of it has already been published in English, and translation rights have already been secured for the Spanish language. It's a slightly different matter for German, however, as the following correspondence from Badiou's German editor suggests:

"I'm happy to do everything I can to get a German translation out with us. That said, I can foresee a certain number of challenges that we'll have to deal with. First off, we'll need further outside evaluation in order to compare the decisions you've made in your translation with existing translations on the market; we'll especially need to come up with German solutions for your translation that are comparable to German translations of The Republic. I'm certain, however, that we'll find an audience for the book."

I'll admit to being slightly less optimistic.[5] Will it be possible to overcome the German sense of seriousness with its sacrosanct philologico-academic tradition? Let us hope that such editors would find themselves persuaded by the following statement from Alain, to whom we give the final word.

In a mail dated from August 5 of last year, Alain once again was talking to me about his relationship to "that dear Plato, with whom I cannot help but identify, a bit as though all along it was I who was writing everything, the original Greek being one source amongst many others."

– But I can imagine that whenever a man has a healthy and moderate relationship to his inner self [one's thoughts, son for intérieur]; and when one falls asleep only after having awakened the reasoning and calculating part of the self; only after having regaled that part of the self with a feast of fair discourses and sound arguments; only after having finally come to concentrate his personal meditations on the self; having left the desiring part of the self neither in lack nor overly indulged so that it too can rest and not disturb the best parts of the self with the tumult of its pleasures or sorrows [;], but rather leave that [best] part in peace, in accord with itself alone, in the purity of its solitary considerations and aspirations for the perception of the unknown [of that which it does not know], of that which either was, is, or may be; only after he has similarly soothed that part of the self which is known for its ardent sentimentality, only then can he [one] fall asleep without the heart being troubled by anger against others; only then, when one has calmed these two states of the soul [forms d'âme] and set into motion the third part, the part in which the act of thought is carried out/performed/produced, do you not know that it is in such a state that one is the most in contact with the truth, and it is only then that it is the least likely that we should be troubled by those wild visions which appear to us in dreams.

– [After all, even if we haven't managed to find an ideal political constitution/form], having become more intellectually agile through conversation, more capable not only of af-firming but also better at creating, less likely to indulge in harmful, short-sighted pleasures [*jouissances*], we can go to sleep after having thus exercised ourselves in mental concentration, armed with a rational faculty that has been nourished by elegant demonstrations ac-companied by persuasive examples, while also having taken care not to let that desiring part of our being be consumed by either lack or the all-consuming and vain quest for total satisfaction, such that it can calm itself down, with neither its sorrows nor its delights troubling the instance of thought, thus also keep-ing intact the ability of thought alone to at-tempt, with only its resources at hand, to undertake the difficult inspec-tion/interrogation/examination of that which it does not yet know—that which has been erased by the past, scattered about by the present, or which the future obscures—all this within the same movement by which, on the cusp of slumber, we will have suffi-ciently appeased the instance of Affect so that we are irritated with no one, so much so that, in the end, having managed to restrain the dimension of the drive to which Affect and Desire are so exposed, having thus given vigorous impetus to the third instance, that of Thought, we can now give in to true re-pose, one in which dreams will finally cease

	to be little more than vehicles for forbidden desires dressed up as mysterious images, and we will now have the chance to traverse the night in direction of our truth.
– Yes indeed, he said: it is exactly in such a state [as you said]!	– I don't know about the night, Amantha blurted out, but we just traversed a hell of a long sentence! At the first "if even…" I'd held my breath I would have suffocated to death by the last "whereas"!

1 This desire to not immerse in a foreign language by trying to imitate the accent of a native speaker—something which Alain has confessed he'd feel perfectly capable of doing if, say, he were acting on stage in the role of an English speaker—reared its head during a minor incident which took place at the second conference on communism in Berlin. Trying to avoid too outwardly manifesting his—entirely justified—irritation with Antoni Negri, who had seized on the occasion in the hopes of stirring up an argument with him, Alain chose to respond with a brief intervention in English (whose translation I was sorry to see appear in the published proceedings from the conference!). This was his way of indicating that he, the real Alain Badiou, only ever expresses himself in French.
2 Amantha exclaimed in a sudden outburst.
3 Every denizen in a country.
4 Claude Durant, manager of Fayard publishing house, judiciously suggested that the book be published in January of 2012 with the following, simple title: *Alain Badiou: Plato's Republic*.
5 This note of pessimism ended up being unfounded. I've learned in the meantime that the "real translation" of *The Republic* is indeed going to appear in German.