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Badiou/Lacan-Badiou: Beyond Anti-Philosophy¹

Keywords

Badiou, Lacan, anti-philosophy, philosophy, *foliesophie*

Abstract

For Badiou, Lacan is not a philosopher. He is instead a *sui generis* anti-philosopher. Anti-philosophy is, in a complex manner but eventually by definition, against philosophy. I intend to dispute this reading of Lacan while also profoundly sympathising with Badiou's understanding of philosophy and acknowledging his extensive engagement with Lacan.

Badiou/Lacan-Badiou: onkraj antifilozofije

Ključne besede

Badiou, Lacan, antifilozofija, filozofija, *foliesophie*

Povzetek

Za Badiouja Lacan ni filozof, temveč antifilozof *sui generis*. Antifilozofija je na kompleksen način, vendar po definiciji, proti filozofiji. To branje Lacana nameravam ovreči, hkrati pa upoštevam Badioujevo razumevanje filozofije in priznavam njegovo obsežno ukvarjanje z Lacanom.

¹ This article is part of a much wider book project tentatively titled *Lacan-Badiou. The Letter and the Event*. I wish to thank Moritz Herrmann for his acute comments on an early draft. I have only very recently (mid-August 2023) received insightful comments from Paul Livingston (especially on Badiou's and Lacan's Wittgenstein) and Paris Lavidis (especially on Badiou's meta-ontological reading of Lacan), which I plan to incorporate and discuss in the book, and for which I warmly thank them.

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Philosophical Anti-Philosophy or the Destruction of Philosophy?

For Badiou, Lacan is not a philosopher. He is instead a *sui generis* anti-philosopher. Anti-philosophy is, in a complex manner but eventually by definition, against philosophy. I intend to dispute this reading of Lacan while also profoundly sympathising with Badiou's understanding of philosophy and acknowledging his extensive engagement with Lacan.

Badiou's general stance on the matter, especially as conveyed in the 1994–95 Seminar *Lacan: Anti-philosophy 3*, could be summarised as follows: Lacan is an anti-philosopher, because he sees philosophy as a “pretension of thought to dispense with the real.”² Save for the fact that he is not just like any other anti-philosopher, because he “restored and, in a certain sense re-established, the category of truth.”³ Save for the fact that he eventually falls back into an anti-philosophical position, because he misses “the being of truths” or, in a complementary fashion, “the truth of the real.”⁴ Save for the fact that philosophy should be relaunched on the basis of these passages and an overcoming of their final deadlock, because that is precisely what Badiou's philosophy does . . .

Let us patiently disentangle Badiou's line of reasoning. First, like other anti-philosophers, Lacan denounces philosophy's claim to be a self-sufficient discourse or, which is the same, that there is a meta-language—of Being as One.⁵ To this avoidance of the real, and in resonance with anti-philosophers such as Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, he would oppose:

1. A strong “*subjective* trait” whereby what I say, against philosophy's pseudo-truth as avoidance of the real, is conclusively true. And it is so pre-

² Alain Badiou, *Lacan: Anti-philosophy 3*, trans. Kenneth Reinhard and Susan Spitzer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), xxxix.

³ Badiou, 23.

⁴ Badiou, xl, 148.

⁵ See Badiou, 138.

cisely by eclipsing my own self for the sake of the non-self-sufficient discourse I serve.⁶ “I, the truth, speak,” or better, “I, the truth, speaks.”

2. The dimension of the *act* as necessitated by this saying the truth in vanishing, which, as an act, is itself vanishing and can only be apprehended retrospectively from the standpoint of its effects.⁷ The act happens when “there emerges a saying that does not always go so far as to be able to ‘exist’ [meta-linguistically] with respect to what is being said,”⁸ that is to say, a saying that fleetingly carries over with it a truthful un-said attached to what is being said.

According to Badiou, Lacan supplements these tenets—already debatable when applied to his work—with two additional—and textually far less defensible—leit-motifs shared by anti-philosophers:

3. The *prevalence* of the act over the truth it conveys, which unwittingly and contradictorily reiterates the—philosophical for the anti-philosopher—destitution of truth.⁹ Truth can at best only be half-said. Or also, in the act, (half-)saying the truth is favoured to the detriment of (half-)saying *the truth*.¹⁰
4. The final change of focus from truth to *knowledge*, which is in turn made possible by the emphasis on the act and reinforces the destitution of truth. The psychoanalytic act ultimately resolves itself into a “passing,” as transmission, of knowledge.¹¹

Yet, secondly, unlike other anti-philosophers, for Badiou, Lacan positively complicates this otherwise abortive scenario to such a degree that he also ends up

⁶ Badiou, 3–4.

⁷ See Badiou, 5–6.

⁸ Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge: Encore, 1972–73*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 22; quoted in Badiou, *Lacan*, 60; translation modified.

⁹ See Badiou, *Lacan*, 22–23, 144, 7–8.

¹⁰ See Badiou, 19–20.

¹¹ See Badiou, 6–7, 23–26.

assuming an “anti-philosophical relation to *anti-philosophy* itself.”¹² This is the case insofar as:

1. Despite truth eventually giving way to knowledge, truth remains a “hole in knowledge”¹³ that knowledge can never fill in. More precisely, the kernel of truth is “stripped of all *meaning*”¹⁴—the meaning of knowledge. Truth can therefore *subtractively* be thought as the *truth* of the meaninglessness of knowledge. Knowledge becomes transmissible only on these presuppositions. Such a move challenges both Wittgenstein’s and Nietzsche’s anti-philosophical subsumption of truth under meaning: for the former, meaning as the silent-unsayable sense of the world outclasses truth as reduced to an exact linguistic description of existing states of affairs; for the latter, meaning as a differential evaluation of vital forces exceeds truth as an evaluation of forces carried out by the reactive force.¹⁵
2. Despite its prevalence over truth, the act that tears a truthful hole in knowledge is an *immanent* act.¹⁶ This means that it has its own place—in the practice of psychoanalysis, on and behind the couch . . . —since it has already taken place—starting with Freud. The psychoanalytic act ceases to be merely programmatic. In not presuming to reveal a meaning, it no longer precludes an “ineffable” elsewhere to-come,¹⁷ whether in the guise of a “mystical element, the silent principle of salvation” (Wittgenstein) or of a fateful super-human transvaluation of all values (Nietzsche).¹⁸
3. Despite its undeniably subjective dimension, immanently half-saying the truth, in the act, does *not* demonise *science*. On the contrary, the psychoanalytic act is “archi-scientific.”¹⁹ As Jean-Claude Milner spells it out in dialogue with Badiou, this means that what first and foremost matters in

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¹² Badiou, 2–3; emphasis added.

¹³ Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005), 511.

¹⁴ Badiou, *Lacan*, 95; emphasis added.

¹⁵ See Badiou, 74–75.

¹⁶ See Badiou, 88.

¹⁷ See Badiou, 81, 83, 151.

¹⁸ Badiou, 6.

¹⁹ Badiou, 2.

the psychoanalytic act with regard to modern science is the latter's mathematisation rather than its experimentations.²⁰ In Lacanese, the only access to the real is provided by the *matheme* and, as Badiou puts it, there is a "reciprocity" between the matheme and the non-transcendent act.²¹ However, crucially, the matheme is located at a "point of the real" precisely to the extent that this point coincides with an "*impasse* of the mathematizable"²²—which can as such be demonstrated by means of inscription/formalisation and thereby initiate the possibility of the transmission of knowledge. It is in this specific mathematical sense that the kernel of truth is stripped of the meaning of knowledge. At bottom, mathematics amounts to a "meaning-less saying" that renews what is being said (or known).²³ While mathematical (*matheme*-atical) meaning-less saying should not strictly speaking be associated with an "event," it nonetheless indicates an "appearing."²⁴ Such an appreciative assessment of mathematics diametrically opposes Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's identification of it with logic and its subsequent denigration as an alleged guarantee for the consistency of philosophy.²⁵

4. Despite his vehement attacks on philosophy, Lacan's discrediting of it is not "frontal" but "oblique."²⁶ He very much appreciates that philosophy is and has always been inherently *split*.²⁷ In tension with what Badiou says in *Being and Event* (Lacan would relegate philosophy as a whole to speculative totalisation and hence to the imaginary),²⁸ and pace Heidegger, for Lacan, "there is no single history of philosophy's diversion of thought."²⁹ There is bad and good philosophy, even in the specific sense of metaphysics. Bad philosophy leads us to the One as Being, since it always presupposes that being as such thinks.³⁰ Good philosophy instead treats the

²⁰ See Badiou, 212–14.

²¹ Badiou, 94, 34.

²² Badiou, 33–34, 95; emphasis added.

²³ Badiou, 97.

²⁴ Badiou, 96.

²⁵ See Badiou, 93–94, 30.

²⁶ Badiou, 68; translation modified.

²⁷ See Badiou, 64 (translation modified), 59.

²⁸ See Badiou, *Being and Event*, 2.

²⁹ Badiou, *Lacan*, 59.

³⁰ See Badiou, 55, 63, 140.

One as an operation without being—*il y a de l'Un*, there is something like/ of the One, but the One is not.³¹ Good philosophy thus thinks being as a multiple without One and “it must be acknowledged that this distinction is a Lacanian one”: “Badiou could be said to have developed his ontology” on this basis, Badiou admits in passing.³² Lacan’s questioning of philosophy is “totally new” since, while anti-philosophy can obviously not do without philosophy as an object of scorn, he alone sees that ever since Plato, and in Plato himself, philosophy has *itself* been an “avant-garde of anti-philosophy” against the temptation of the One.³³ Here Lacan could not be further away from Nietzsche’s ambition to cure humanity of the Plato-disease or Wittgenstein’s aspiration to unveil once and for all the harmfulness of the senseless propositions of philosophy.³⁴

By relating anti-philosophically to anti-philosophy in various ways, Lacan would thus dialectically “close”—a period of—anti-philosophy and “open up” something unprecedented *for philosophy*.³⁵ Or better, I would add, his anti-philosophical relation to anti-philosophy would result into an *anti-anti-philosophy*, a *philosophical* anti-philosophy that would resume, reinvigorate, and finally put at centre-stage an anti-philosophical *philosophy* (namely a philosophy *anti-Being-One*) that has for the most part been latent or marginalised in the history of philosophy.

Still, for Badiou, Lacan somehow clings to anti-philosophy tout-court. What is at stake in this third major swerve in Badiou’s overall argument is, again, as a purported threshold dividing his project from Lacan’s, a residual yet resilient underestimation and misplacement of truth with respect to the act and knowledge.

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In terms of the act’s alleged overshadowing of truth, Badiou could not be more adamant: “The analytic act is anything but a search for truth.”³⁶ Strangely enough, the immanence of the act that tears a truthful hole in knowledge and thus accesses the real, where the latter is for Lacan always translatable into the absence of

³¹ See Badiou, 65.

³² Badiou, 56.

³³ Badiou, 57.

³⁴ See Badiou, 21.

³⁵ Badiou, 2–3.

³⁶ Badiou, 144.

the sexual relationship (in brief, the fact that there is no meaningful measure or mathematizable ratio between the two sexes; that truth is the not-One of sexual incompleteness), would end up installing the act itself as “the real of the real”³⁷—and hence, we are left to infer, as ultimately transcendent to the real.

Following from this, in terms of knowledge’s supposed replacement of truth, what the act as thus understood would instead search for is a “correlation” *between truth and sense/meaning* on which to then establish a “connection” *between sense/meaning and knowledge*.³⁸ Any “essential” link *between knowledge and truth* would therefore be ruled out.³⁹ To begin with, *sense* would be extracted out of the absence of the sexual relationship. As dubiously evidenced by some phrases from Lacan’s article *L’Étourdit*, the truth of the *non-rapport*, of the absence of sense (“ab-sense”) of the absence of the sexual relationship would be reduced to a “*sense as ab-sense*,” or “*ab-sex sense*.”⁴⁰ Subsequently, the mathemes that inscribe such an ab-sex sense could be arranged in a fully transmissible knowledge, albeit impersonal as purely formalised. Returning to the point we made earlier, where Badiou praised Lacan against the other anti-philosophers, the kernel of truth now turns out to be stripped of the meaning of knowledge only at the cost, exorbitant for Badiou, of re-founding knowledge on a—however paradoxical—meaning, *not on truth*.

To sum up, notwithstanding the convolutedness of his argumentative trajectory, Badiou’s conclusion on why Lacan would anti-philosophically abide by a destitution of truth is very clear: insofar as “the analytic act consists in a production of transmissible knowledge with regard to ab-sex sense,” “truth is [. . .] in a position of eclipse between supposed knowledge”—as truthfully holed by the act—“and transmissible knowledge.”⁴¹ All in all, the key outcome of the act amounts to a *registration* of sense (as ab-sense),⁴² for the benefit of both the end of the

³⁷ Badiou, 31–32.

³⁸ Badiou, 79; translation modified.

³⁹ Badiou, 78.

⁴⁰ Badiou, 76–78, 84. As Badiou puts it even more unequivocally in “Formules de ‘L’Étourdit,’” “absence of sense *positively* means ab-sex sense”; the latter would be a “*non-negative formula*.” Alain Badiou, “Formules de ‘L’Étourdit,’” in Alain Badiou and Barbara Cassin, *Il n’y a pas de rapport sexuel: Deux leçons sur “L’Étourdit” de Lacan* (Paris: Fayard, 2010), 111–12; emphasis added. All translations of references in French are my own.

⁴¹ Badiou, *Lacan*, 81 (translation modified), 76.

⁴² Badiou, 77; translation modified.

treatment and the knowledge of the psychoanalyst. On the one hand, the matheme is *integrally* transmissible; on the other, truth can only be *half-said*.⁴³ To cut a long story short, truth recoils into a predictable function of unveiling-veiling and Lacan reverts to Heidegger.⁴⁴

Adopting the terminology of *Being and Event* we could thus suggest that, for Badiou, while Lacan is one of the few thinkers in the history of philosophy who initially thinks truth as a hole in knowledge, he subsequently does not raise this thinking to the level of a “generic thought” that sees “the place of truth” (however unnameable and indiscernible it is in Badiou’s meta-ontology) in “parts” of being.⁴⁵ As seen, unlike in other anti-philosophies, in Lacan, an act that tears a truthful hole in knowledge has its—at first sight immanent—place, but the fact that the act has indeed taken place “must be confirmed in knowledge,”⁴⁶ through the latter’s transmissibility, not in truth. Juxtaposing *Being and Event* with the Seminar on Lacan, at the risk of some oversimplification, I would suggest that, in Lacan, for Badiou, truth does not really have a place—to be—through the act’s taking place as attested by knowledge. *This* would be his quintessential limit. To put it even more simply, thinking truth as a hole in knowledge would, again, not pave the way for thinking an “essential”⁴⁷—the words Badiou uses are never random—link between knowledge and truth, through which a renovation of knowledge could not but depend on a truth *procedure*. Generic thought would be occluded by, again, the correlation between truth and sense and the ensuing connection between sense and knowledge.

This highly abstract pattern has wider implications for the status of Lacan’s anti-philosophy in general, which can no longer be considered as just having an anti-philosophical relation to anti-philosophy itself. It is still a full-blown anti-philosophy, according to Badiou, not an anti-anti-philosophy or philosophical anti-philosophy. Lacan would definitively be consigned to *anti*-philosophy, despite all the oscillations I described and Badiou hardly manages to keep under control. Another way to phrase the point above about the placelessness and

⁴³ See Badiou, 78.

⁴⁴ See Badiou, 78–79.

⁴⁵ Badiou, *Being and Event*, 510–11. A discussion of indiscernibility and unnameability regarding truth is beyond my remit here.

⁴⁶ Badiou, *Lacan*, 88.

⁴⁷ Badiou, 78.

lack of being of truth from a slightly different perspective is to say that—as Badiou says in his Seminar—in Lacan, there would only be the “triad” truth, real, knowledge “which cannot be divided into parts” and as such coalesces exclusively into *knowledge*.⁴⁸ In other words, there allegedly would be no knowledge of the real, no knowledge of truth, and no truth of the real.⁴⁹ These pairs instead determine the field of philosophy (“good” philosophy, of course): under the aegis of a search for truth, philosophy “assumes that there is a truth of the real” and thereby conveys it as a “knowledge of this truth.”⁵⁰ After all, Lacan’s apparently philosophical anti-philosophy is not philosophy because while the latter “claims to arrange a truth of the real as knowledge,”⁵¹ for him, there is only a “function of the real *within knowledge* that enables a *situation* of truth.”⁵²

For a reader unfamiliar with Badiou’s jargon in *Being and Event*, this could seem a minor, almost sophistic, distinction, but it is not. Again, Badiou always chooses his words very carefully. To put it simply, a *situation* of truth is not what truth is about, for Badiou. Or also, constraining truth to a situation of truth denotes precisely the fact that truth does not really have a place to be—again, there is no “being of truths” in Lacan. In more technical terms, a situation of truth confines truth to a presentation of being as “consistent multiplicity,” namely, to the “regime of the count-as-one,” namely, to *structure* (in passing, on the contrary, for Badiou, truth *will have been*—as a, now indiscernible, infinite part of the situation—the truth *of* the entire situation, of the being of the situation, following a truth procedure).⁵³ All in all, in Lacan, *truth has no place to be because it is too structurally placed*.

We are thus back to square one, or quite literally, ground zero *as square One*. Badiou’s last take on Lacan in the—at first sight largely sympathetic—Seminar is the same as and as critical as in his major works: in Lacan truth is simply a structural truth, a truth *of knowledge* (which Lacan constantly and most em-

⁴⁸ Badiou, 148.

⁴⁹ See Badiou, 148. See also Badiou, “Formules de ‘L’Étourdit,’” 121–22.

⁵⁰ Badiou, *Lacan*, 149.

⁵¹ Badiou, 144; translation modified.

⁵² Badiou, 148; translation modified, emphasis added.

⁵³ See Badiou, *Being and Event*, 522, 525.

phatically rejects).⁵⁴ Unsurprisingly at this stage, according to the Seminar, his very discernment of a “good” philosophy that subtractively tears a truthful hole in the presumed Oneness of Being and concomitantly understands the One as an operation without Being—*il y a de l’Un*—ultimately only serves the identification of “the One as an empty place”⁵⁵—*il y a de l’Un*—to which being as such is wrongly restricted. That is to say, all things considered, for the Seminar, Lacan’s *il y a de l’Un* means nothing other than that there is the void yet truthful subject, attacked in *Being and Event* since the subject cannot be reduced to the void according to Badiou (and to Lacan), as contained within the “circular closure” of structure, castigated in *Theory of the Subject*, and as such unable to respond to the event.⁵⁶ Lacan’s subtractive ontology is merely an ontology of “dis-being”⁵⁷ that contradictorily leads us to the Being of the One as an empty place, the Being-One of the empty place, and therefore back to “bad” philosophy, at best. Or, at worst and however unintentionally, as Badiou seems to insinuate at one point, precisely due to this relapse the “ultimate aim” of Lacan’s seemingly non-frontal attack on philosophy is, beyond any kind of dialogue, “to *destroy* [good] philosophy.”⁵⁸ According to Badiou, and leaving aside his unfailingly respectful tributes to Lacan, he finally stands out as the most effective and intractable anti-philosopher.

I think this final round of twists in Badiou’s reading of Lacan, as eventually falling back into utter anti-philosophy, is incorrect and can textually be disproved. They all fundamentally derive from and revolve around a presumed detection of “sense as ab-sense” and then *sense* as ab-sense—both of which Lacan never speaks about—in “ab-sense”—on which he insists.⁵⁹ In *L’Étourdit*, Lacan even

⁵⁴ See, for instance, Jacques Lacan, . . . *or Worse*, trans. A. R. Price (Cambridge: Polity, 2018), 171.

⁵⁵ Badiou, *Lacan*, 56; emphasis added. Strangely, Badiou does not openly criticise Lacan on this point in the Seminar but he vehemently does so in *Being and Event*: Lacan would thus “concede a point of being to the one.” Badiou, *Being and Event*, 24.

⁵⁶ See, for instance, Badiou, *Being and Event*, 432–33; Alain Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, trans. Bruno Bosteels (London: Continuum, 2009), 54. A detailed unravelling of why Badiou is mistaken on this series of points, and why Lacan’s stance on them is far more similar to Badiou’s than Badiou acknowledges, is one of the leitmotifs of my current project.

⁵⁷ Badiou, *Lacan*, 55.

⁵⁸ Badiou, 149.

⁵⁹ Jacques Lacan, “L’Étourdit,” in *Autres écrits*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 2001), 452, 458–59, 463, 469, 477.

warns the reader not to “force” the “ab-sense”⁶⁰—in the direction of sense, I would add. Lacan does mention, once, “ab-sex sense” (*sens-absexe*) yet clearly refers it to a “swelling,” an abscess of the “ab-sense [that] designates sex,”⁶¹ or, in other words, and moving quickly, to the (phylo- and ontogenetic) emergence of the phallic function as a transcendental species-specific invariant which indeed produces sense/meaning by “warding off the absence of the sexual relationship.”⁶² *But* there is here absolutely no “correlation” whatsoever between truth and sense, no sense of the absence of the sexual relationship. The absence of the sexual relationship remains an unredeemable ab-sense. A fortiori, the phallic function’s production of (imaginary and always precariously patched-up) sense has nothing or very little to do with the question concerning the transmissibility of knowledge following an act that tears a truthful hole in knowledge, which instead aims at, at least transiently, draining the abscess of everyday sense in a formalised fashion.

More in general, and from a slightly different angle, Badiou’s basic mistake with “ab-sex sense” is to assume (like other, even refined, commentators do) that, in Lacan, “there is no sexual relationship”—which for Lacan *is*—can be reversed into and domesticated as “the sexual non-relationship is”—which for Lacan is *not* really, for all the pertinent meta-ontological reasons adduced by Badiou himself.⁶³ Including in the Seminar, which otherwise excels in exegetical acumen, when taking some distance from Lacan becomes mandatory, Badiou thus fabricates a threshold that can be upheld only through very selected, decontextualised, and often extremely circumstantial statements made by Lacan, which are altogether coerced from him.

Furthermore, the fabricated threshold also receives and inconsistent treatment across Badiou’s works. This already begins to transpire by comparing the Seminar with *Being and the Event*. While the former ends up embracing the latter’s condemnation, whereby in the end it is entirely up to *Badiou* to rejuvenate phi-

⁶⁰ Lacan, 463.

⁶¹ Lacan, 452.

⁶² Lacan, 458.

⁶³ Although Lacan is at times very ambiguous on this in his late and latest Seminars, after a renewed and closer scrutiny of them, I here retract my previous claim that, after Seminar XX, he would privilege “there is a nonrelationship.” Lorenzo Chiesa, *The Not-Two: Logic and God in Lacan* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), xx.

osophy *through* Lacan yet *against* Lacan (Badiou's final change of course), it does so only after adopting a much more appreciating stance towards Lacan and thus—temporarily—moving the threshold. To recapitulate, in Badiou's Seminar, for Lacan, philosophy is inherently split, namely, not wholly devoted to the Being of the One; Lacan's anti-philosophy can relate anti-philosophically to anti-philosophy itself; and, thanks to Lacan, this at least potentially philosophical character of anti-philosophy, mirrored by a positively anti-philosophical character of philosophy, opens something new for philosophy—thanks to Badiou.

Lacan the Philosopher: The Torsion of Anti-Philosophy

In opposition to Badiou, we can initiate a dismantling of his threshold as set up in the Seminar precisely by means of the notions he uses to erect it in the same work. According to Lacan, most definitely, there is a *knowledge of the real*; there is a *knowledge of truth*; and, albeit in a more complex manner, there is also a *truth of the real*. The sources speak for themselves. I will here only outline these three issues.

1. Modern *science* is a knowledge of the real: “There is a knowledge in the real. [. . .] [It is] the scientist who has to accommodate it.”⁶⁴

Science seizes or at least “bites” the real.⁶⁵ In suspending the alleged correspondence between thinking and what is being thought, and hence the fantasy of a Oneness of being, the real remains a meaningless impasse of formalisation that, however, as such *promotes* further formalisations (knowledge). Although scientific knowledge inherently tends to reduce these formalisations to the level of meaning, its tangible—technological—effectiveness necessarily rests on repeated encounters with the meaningless real. Since his early Seminars Lacan insists on how the real should not only be located “at the limits of our experience” for it is precisely as an impasse of formalisation that it “involves in itself any possibility of effect.”⁶⁶ Through scientific knowledge the real as what “does not

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⁶⁴ Jacques Lacan, “Lettre de Jacques Lacan à trois psychanalystes italiens,” *Spirales* 9 (1981): 60. I acknowledge that this is not exactly the same as a “knowledge of the real,” but I think the two phrases can quite easily be reconciled via Lacan's treatment of science. I will address this in the near future.

⁶⁵ Jacques Lacan, *D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant*, 1971 (Paris: Seuil, 2007), 43.

⁶⁶ Jacques Lacan, *La relation d'objet, 1956–1957* (Paris: Seuil, 1994), 31.

work”⁶⁷ in everyday reality also becomes what is eminently effective and actual in it. Through scientific knowledge the real is *in Wirklichkeit*, namely—playing along Lacan on the polysemy of the German phrase—it “really” is as an “in fact” only insofar as it is “in effect.”⁶⁸

2. *Psychoanalysis* is a knowledge of truth: “If analysis rests on a presumption, it is that knowledge of truth can be constituted on the basis of its experience.”⁶⁹

Lacan indeed inscribes this *savoir sur la vérité* in his matrix of the discourse of the psychoanalyst as a knowledge in the position of truth.⁷⁰ Revolving around the absence of the sexual relationship, the psychoanalytic knowledge of truth should diametrically be opposed to any “truth of knowledge” (*vérité sur le savoir*) as a final truth, including and most insidiously the truth about (the knowledge of) truth we might be tempted to derive in extremis from the very absence of the sexual relationship—whereupon the absence of the sexual relationship turns into the sexual non-relationship as *One*. The knowledge of truth is thus strictly connected with the *Il y a de l’Un*, or better *Yad’lun*, Lacan says, as a mere operation “. . . and nothing more” that refutes the Oneness of being (“The knowledge of truth is articulated from the tip of what I advance [. . .] about *Yad’lun*. [. . .] It’s an altogether particular One [. . .] and it’s an abyss”).⁷¹ For the same reason, the knowledge of truth is equally a development on and a rectification of science as a knowledge of the real that ultimately does *not* want to know what it already knows about the real. What both science and psychoanalysis know of the real

⁶⁷ Jacques Lacan, “The Triumph of Religion,” in *The Triumph of Religion, Preceded by Discourse to Catholics*, trans. Bruce Fink (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 61.

⁶⁸ “When one speaks of the real, one may intend several things. It is a question first of the set of what effectively happens. That is the concept implied by the German term *Wirklichkeit*, which has the advantage of distinguishing in reality a function which the French language does not easily allow us to isolate. It is what implies in and of itself every possibility of effect, of *Wirkung*.” Lacan, *La relation d’objet*, 31.

⁶⁹ Lacan, *Encore*, 91; translation modified.

⁷⁰ It is very strange that Badiou ignores this basic and well-known, even often abused, Lacanian mantra, which is moreover contemporary to *L’Étourdit* and pervasive in Lacan’s work of the early 1970s. “The Knowledge of Truth” also features as one of the titles appropriately given by Miller to one of the sessions of Seminar XIX.

⁷¹ Jacques Lacan, . . . or *Worse*, trans. A. R. Price (Cambridge: Polity, 2018), 171; translation modified.

“cannot but be attained by demonstrating that the real is that which does not have any kind of meaning.”⁷² But, on the one hand, the productivity of scientific knowledge, its promotion of new formalisations starting from the formalisation of a previous impasse of formalisation antinomically advances hand in hand with a presumed accumulation of meaning (ideally aimed at absolute knowledge). Science embraces *sense* as ab-sense, which is now blatantly epitomised by chaosmotic yet all the more totalising paradigms of the universe. On the other hand, psychoanalysis’s knowledge of truth—as a specification of the knowledge of the real indebted to modern science—deliberately dwells on the very level of the formalisation of the impasse of formalisation. What the knowledge of truth aims at *actively* transmitting is the irreducibility of ab-sense as such. This basically amounts to Lacan’s so-called formulas of sexuation, namely, a mathematical formalisation of how the phallic function functions only against the background of the enduring truth of the absence of the sexual relationship⁷³—there is no other knowledge of the psychoanalyst outside of the formulas that is not a supposition of knowledge. The formulas are then in turn singularised by each analysand at the end of the treatment (terminable analysis as, so to speak, pre- or proto-procedural) who thereby sustains a truth-procedure in Badiou’s specific sense of the term (interminable analysis as the field of a discourse of psychoanalysis, initiated by Freud, that surpasses that of the psychoanalyst and the psychoanalytic clinic).

3. The psychoanalytic *subject*, the subject of science betrayed by science as far from contained by and even less so identifiable with a structural void, embodies the truth of the real.

This is a subtle and difficult point. For Lacan, “there is no truth of the real, since the real is delineated as ruling out meaning. This is already saying too much because to say this one nonetheless supposes a meaning”⁷⁴—which is another way of saying that truth can only be *half*-said. *Yet*, without contradiction and very explicitly, “there are truths that are of the order of the real.”⁷⁵ On the one hand,

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⁷² Jacques Lacan, “De James Joyce comme symptôme,” *Le croquant* 28 (November 2000).

⁷³ For an in-depth reading of this, see Chiesa, *Not-Two*, especially chap. 4.

⁷⁴ Jacques Lacan, “L’insu que sait de l’une-bévue s’aile a mourre: Séminaire 24, 1976–1977” (unpublished typescript, March 15, 1977), PDF document.

⁷⁵ Jacques Lacan, “Conférences et Entretiens dans des universités nord-américaines,” *Scilicet* 6/7 (1975): 35.

there is no ultimate Truth of the real. If, in a certain sense, the truth of the real is quite plainly that the real of the ab-sense of the sexual relationship is what remains meaningless,⁷⁶ then one can turn this into the Truth only by downgrading truth to a final meaning of meaninglessness—or, again, by misunderstanding the not-One of “there is no sexual relationship” with the *One* (not-One) of “the sexual non-relationship is,” like Badiou does with his sense as ab-sense. On the other hand, according to Lacan, it is not just that, famously, “the truth holds onto the real,”⁷⁷ precisely because of the impossibility of saying it all, of only being able to half-say it by always meaningfully saying too much of it, but that, less famously, this logical impossibility, which cannot be separated from the impossibility given as the ab-sense of the sexual relationship, stands as the starting point of a *subjectivized* truth of the real.

It is not enough to simply claim that the real is the impossible and hence truth can only be half-said. In order to really “introduce” the real as the impossible in the world, the subject of psychoanalysis needs to supplement this mere “enunciation” with “the most extreme tightening of saying,” namely, formalisation.⁷⁸ In other words, following the same temporality we have seen at work in science as a knowledge of the real that nonetheless avoids its truth, the real as cause—and as such always relatable to the ab-sense of the sexual relationship—retroactively becomes such when it passes through the subject’s formalising the real as the impossible. Conversely, it is only on this level, where the subject formalises the real as the impossible, that the subject really becomes a subject. At least initially, this formalisation first and foremost cannot but have to do with the subject’s formalisation at the end of analysis of how the ab-sense of the sexual relationship will have at that moment caused him/her (his/her sexuation) in a singular way. Lacan indeed speaks of truths of the real in the plural.

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Anticipating Badiou’s own distinction between the human animal and the subject in the strict sense of the term, as a subject-to-truth, Lacan thus insists on the fact that, however much the “being that speaks” is an “effect of language”—or a void subtractively effected by the structural recurrence of language—“this pa-

⁷⁶ See Jacques Lacan, *The Sinthome*, trans. A. R. Price (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), 97.

⁷⁷ Jacques Lacan, *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, trans. Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson, ed. Joan Copjec (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 3.

⁷⁸ Jacques Lacan, *D’un Autre à l’autre, 1968–1969* (Paris: Seuil, 2006), 66.

thos does not make, by itself, a subject.”⁷⁹ Not coincidentally, in the same context, in Seminar XVI, Lacan speaks of “the event of discourse,”⁸⁰ which here I am tempted to provisionally conceive of in terms of the subject’s retrospective *entrance* into analysis.

Lacan also contends that while truth, the truth of the real I would add, can still generally be considered with regard to the subject that actively embodies it as just a designation within saying of what cannot be said, as something lacking that merely “insinuates itself” (as what cannot be said in “truth can only be half-said”), thanks to formalisation, it can equally “be inscribed in a perfectly calculated manner.”⁸¹ Against Badiou, in Lacan there is not only a symbolic truth that always speaks the truth of structure—on close inspection always eventually in the guise of a totalising imaginary fiction as a by-product of the very fact that truth can only be half-said. Quite bluntly, “if I distinguish real, symbolic, and imaginary, it is clearly the case that there are real, symbolic, and imaginary truths.”⁸²

If these three overlapping points hold, and I think they do—based on textual evidence it is far easier to uphold them and unfold them than to refute them—then Lacan has a *philosophy* according to Badiou’s *own* standards.

In short, as we saw, for Badiou philosophy needs to assume a knowledge of the real, a knowledge of truth, and a truth of the real and thereby “arrange a truth of the real as knowledge,” that is, as a “knowledge of this truth.” In summarising what I have just covered, at the very minimum we can advance that Lacan assumes scientific knowledge as knowledge of the real, psychoanalytic knowledge as knowledge of truth, and the ab-sense of the sexual relationship as truth of the real and thereby arranges the latter as a formalised knowledge of this truth as embodied into a subject-*to-truth*. Or also, assuming that my reading is correct, Lacan does *not* constrict the real to a “function of the real *within knowledge* that enables a *situation* of truth,” namely, he does *not* situate the ab-sense of the sex-

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⁷⁹ Lacan, *D’un Autre*, 67, 160, 66.

⁸⁰ Lacan, 83.

⁸¹ Lacan, 67.

⁸² Lacan, “Conférences et Entretiens,” 35.

ual relationship precisely because, on the contrary, its inscription turns *knowledge* into a *function* of knowledge *within the real*.

With respect to Badiou's *Being and Event*, very roughly speaking, we are here already at the level of what he calls a post-evental "enquiry" as opposed to an "encyclopaedia of a situation."⁸³ Like for Badiou, the huge and open question for Lacan is then, of course: What is the status of—newly nascent—knowledge within a truth-procedure? And, in my view, this is a question Badiou himself never fully answers.

Another contiguous way to exegetically challenge Badiou's anti-Lacanian threshold as expressed in his Seminar is to question his claim that, in Lacan, the act overshadows truth, ultimately for the sake of the connection knowledge-meaning. Albeit perhaps less conclusively, on this front the sources seem again to contradict Badiou (recall that, for Badiou, "the analytical act is anything but a search for truth" because "an apparatus of transmissible knowledge must exist for the act to be confirmed").⁸⁴ For instance, in Seminar XV, devoted to the act as primarily the psychoanalyst's act—of subtracting himself from the position of subject-supposed-to-know—Lacan states that "in order to introduce what constitutes the psychoanalytic act as such," in psychoanalysis, on the side of the analysand, "there is only that which resists the operation of knowledge-making-a-subject, namely, this residue we call truth."⁸⁵ Truth has chronological precedence over the act. I acknowledge that, with some twisting, this could still be accommodated by Badiou's interpretative framework. But Lacan then goes on to specify that, far more importantly, "the evocation of truth" as residual at play at the end of (the analysand's) analysis does not stop there: it continues as an "effect of loss"—synonymous with a "point of being" unconfined to a mere unicum of dis-being—"beyond the operation [of] the analytic act."⁸⁶ To cut a long story short, it continues through the analysand now turned into an analyst; it continues each time this analyst acts at the end of the analysis of another will-be analyst; and hence it continues both with regard to this analyst and the will-be analyst. Here truth clearly overshadows the act, in

⁸³ See Badiou, *Being and Event*, especially 234–36, 328–38, 394–96, 406–9, 499, 506, 510, 513.

⁸⁴ Badiou, *Lacan*, 164–65.

⁸⁵ Jacques Lacan, "L'acte psychanalytique: Séminaire 15, 1967–1968" (unpublished typescript, November 29, 1967), PDF document.

⁸⁶ Lacan, "L'acte psychanalytique," December 6, 1967.

spite of its strict entwinement with it. In other words, quite explicitly, there are truthful “stumbling block[s]” (*achoppement*) “beyond an act supposed to put an end” (*faire fin*).⁸⁷ Most crucially, I would add, these constructive *achoppements* need to be thought *procedurally*, not in isolation, as following the pre- or pro-to-procedural—yet post-evental—course of the treatment.

Here I will leave this complex and thus far unexplored set of issues aside. Let us instead dwell on the fact that Lacan’s thought would appear to comply with Badiou’s definition of philosophy and draw some broad conclusions out of it. After all, what does this tell us about his use of Lacan as an anti-philosopher and the alleged distinction between philosophy and anti-philosophy at large?

1. Lacan’s philosophical *anti-philosophy* and the tradition of anti-philosophical *philosophy* in general are one and the same.

That is, Lacan’s *anti-anti-philosophy*, his assumption of an anti-philosophical stance on anti-philosophy itself—because the latter makes the same mistakes it criticises in what it considers as philosophy, namely, it ends up proposing itself as a self-sufficient discourse—corresponds to anti-philosophical philosophy’s *internal* critique of any philosophy that presupposes and leads us to the One as Being.

2. Anti-philosophical philosophy, including Lacan’s, amounts to just (good) *philosophy* tout-court, anti-Being-One philosophy, as understood by Badiou.
3. *Badiou’s* own philosophy is as philosophical *and* as anti-philosophical as Lacan’s.

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Obviously, Badiou’s philosophy vividly portrays itself as an insurrection against the philosophy of the One as Being. His very *Manifesto for Philosophy* cannot be separated from a call *against* philosophy.

More interestingly, note that even if we were to agree with Badiou that Lacan remains at bottom an anti-philosopher and even a “destroyer” of philosophy by

⁸⁷ Lacan, December 6, 1967.

Badiou's standards of philosophy, this would paradoxically turn Badiou's denunciation of Lacan as an anti-philosopher into a supremely *anti*-philosophical operation by the standards of anti-philosophy (as understood by Badiou). Lacan's eventual relapse into the One as Being—the Being-One of the empty place obtained via the subject as void—would need to be opposed by a critique of the spurious self-sufficiency of Lacan's discourse. Not only is Badiou's philosophy in a sense anti-philosophical insofar as it counters the philosophy of the One as Being, but also and especially, given that the future of philosophy must pass through Lacan,⁸⁸ it is such exclusively by means of an anti-philosophical denunciation of Lacan as, in the end, a *bad philosopher*. Badiou's philosophical denunciation of Lacan as an anti-philosopher cannot do without positing Lacan as a (bad) philosopher and Badiou as a (good) anti-philosopher.

4. Perhaps Badiou's very notion of anti-philosophy is *tautological* and *contradictory*—even when applied to anti-philosophies preceding Lacan's.

It is tautological because it seems to merely duplicate the distinction between “good” and “bad” philosophy. It is contradictory because *both* “good” and “bad” philosophy can be anti-philosophical. Perhaps there is instead just “good” (anti-Being-One) philosophy and “bad” (pro-Being-One) philosophy—with Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, the allegedly opposite epitomes of twentieth century philosophy, ultimately sucked into “bad” philosophy, as Badiou would fully concur. Or, perhaps, in a less dichotomic way, there structurally is “good” and “bad” philosophy in every philosophy worthy of this name. And, perhaps, as we will soon see, this is Lacan's final word about philosophy as such.

5. At the very least, Badiou's supposed philosophical “torsion” of the anti-philosophical schema,⁸⁹ built upon Lacan's own (anti-)philosophical torsion of previous anti-philosophy, becomes *redundant*, for Lacan already accomplishes it.

Rather, Badiou operates within the outcomes of Lacan's torsion and systematically elaborates on them beyond Lacan.

⁸⁸ See, for instance, Alain Badiou, *Conditions*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2008), 129.

⁸⁹ Badiou, “Anti-Philosophy: Plato and Lacan,” in *Conditions*, 246.

In addition, regarding this last matter, it also remains unclear to me how, on close inspection, Badiou *himself* precisely conceives of what the required philosophical torsion applies to and who or what carries it out. Is it Badiou's philosophy with respect to Lacan's psychoanalysis as an anti-philosophy, a philosophy that would be needed notwithstanding Lacan's necessary but insufficient previous torsion of previous anti-philosophy, as suggested in the Seminar? Or, more sympathetically towards Lacan, is it Lacan's psychoanalysis with respect to *philosophy tout-court*, and *not* anti-philosophy, *yet* only by means of philosophy *itself*, as instead evinced in "Anti-Philosophy: Plato and Lacan" (a hypothesis I would favour)? Or is it again Badiou's philosophy but now with respect to what a torsioned philosophy can do with itself only with respect to what Lacan does with philosophy, as also arguably insinuated in "Anti-Philosophy: Plato and Lacan" (a hypothesis I am far from disdaining as I fully appreciate the brilliance of Badiou's appropriation of psychoanalysis, until it relegates Lacan to anti-philosophy)?

In *Theory of the Subject*, where the notion of torsion features prominently, it loosely indicates "the way in which a subject works upon the structure that determines it in the first place."⁹⁰ In *Being and Event*, in which "torsion" occurs very rarely, we are nonetheless accordingly told that a truth, a subject-to-truth, is a "torsion of being [. . .] within the perpetually total web of knowledges."⁹¹ Evidently, all this lies at the core of Badiou's relaunching of philosophy. To brutally simplify, and skipping several logical passages, a torsion is nothing less than *what* philosophy in the strict sense of the term thinks, as a meta-ontology of the subject-to-truth (in the same paragraph, Badiou indeed specifies that mathematical ontology only "sets off" the thinking of the torsion).⁹² But what happens to this complex yet linear scenario when the distinction philosophy/anti-philosophy is *in turn* understood as a torsion, a torsion whereupon philosophy proper *begins* to think the torsion, the subject-to-truth?

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I think Badiou provides us with conflictual answers to this question when dealing with Lacan. I also think this is primarily due to his a priori intention to preserve a threshold that would contain Lacan, separate him from Badiou's project

⁹⁰ Bruno Bosteels, "Translator's Introduction," in Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, xxxvi.

⁹¹ Badiou, *Being and Event*, 18.

⁹² Badiou, 18.

(“I agree almost entirely . . . Except that”),⁹³ and instead proves increasingly fragile.

In a first sense, as discussed in the Seminar, the torsion concerns Lacan’s “anti-philosophical relationship to anti-philosophy itself,”⁹⁴ namely, what makes him differ from other anti-philosophers, namely, the fact that he does not subscribe to their subsumption of truth under meaning and, concomitantly, their positioning of the act as transcendent to truth and thus open to an ineffable meaning. But, as we saw, Lacan would then *mutatis mutandis* fall into the same anti-philosophical trap. Hence, the torsion ultimately concerns Badiou’s rectification of Lacan’s mistakes.

However, in a second sense, as treated in the very dense conclusion of “Anti-Philosophy: Plato and Lacan,” the needed torsion has unexpectedly to do with Lacan’s anti-philosophical relation to *philosophy* itself. Moreover, this is the case not simply in terms of some (good) philosophy constituting “an *avant-garde* of [good] anti-philosophy,”⁹⁵ as per Lacan’s maxim “Plato was [already] Lacanian”⁹⁶—which in Badiou’s Seminar could itself be taken as a sort of torsion—but also, and on the contrary, in terms of philosophy “*continuing* [Lacanian psycho-]analysis or fulfilling it.”⁹⁷ If we wish to be exegetically pedantic, it is actually only here that Badiou explicitly uses the phrase “torsion of the anti-philosophical schema.”⁹⁸ Let us look into such a juncture more closely.

In “Anti-Philosophy: Plato and Lacan,” and especially in its conclusion, *like* in the Seminar, Badiou spells out the “duplicity” of Lacan’s stance on philosophy, that is, his acknowledgement of philosophy’s internally split status, now condensed by Plato himself. On the one hand, for Lacan, Plato’s theory of ideas would be a botched attempt at mastering “real being [. . .] at the level [. . .] of knowledge” (bad, pro-Being-One philosophy).⁹⁹ On the other hand, “Lacan is well aware that [. . .] Plato’s One fragments itself,” “is [. . .] incompatible with

⁹³ Badiou, *Lacan*, xl.

⁹⁴ Badiou, 2.

⁹⁵ Badiou, 57.

⁹⁶ See Badiou, “Plato and Lacan,” 236, and Lacan, . . . *or Worse*, 113.

⁹⁷ Badiou, “Plato and Lacan,” 246; translation modified, emphasis added.

⁹⁸ Badiou, 246.

⁹⁹ Badiou, 241; translation modified.

being,” and there is an “affinity with regard to [Plato’s and Lacan’s] doctrine of the One” (good, anti-Being-One philosophy).¹⁰⁰ Yet, *unlike* in the Seminar, for Badiou, the next step in such an alignment of (Plato’s) philosophy and (Lacan’s) anti-philosophy, which would accomplish the philosophical torsion of the anti-philosophical schema, is to follow *Lacan* in his exhortation to “push the [psycho-]analytic intervention” into Plato’s dialogues—and by extension philosophy at large. In other words, the task of the contemporary philosopher would not only be to work through Lacan’s anti-philosophy, singling out its fallbacks, and restarting from there, but also—or even instead—to reread and develop intra-philosophically the great history of philosophy with a, so to speak, Lacanian eye, *regardless* of Lacan’s anti-philosophy. Lacan’s (anti-)philosophical torsion of philosophy is a precondition for the philosophical future of philosophy, whereby *Lacanian philosophy* continues and fulfils psychoanalysis (although Badiou does not explain what this fulfilment would amount to). In passing, Badiou goes even as far as stating that, in this context, “Lacan identifies himself with [. . .] the very site of the philosopher.”¹⁰¹

The further specification—which is not as such in tension with the previous point while it reinforces the tension with the Seminar—is that, in the last two paragraphs of “Anti-Philosophy: Plato and Lacan,” Lacan’s torsion of philosophy to be continued and fulfilled by Lacanian philosophy becomes Badiou’s *own* Lacanian torsion of philosophy. Badiou appoints himself in charge of pushing Lacan into philosophy. The language he adopts, which amalgamates his jargon from *Being and Event* with Lacan’s from *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, transparently reflects it: the mission at stake relies on “a sole imperative [. . .]. Endeavour to abide by the point where at least one truth proceeds. You will emerge there as this subject of which this truth is the stuff of being.”¹⁰² Beyond the programmatic imperative to which “Anti-Philosophy: Plato and Lacan” limits itself, for me, *Being and Event* conclusively proves that the psychoanalytic/(anti-)philosophical Trojan horse Lacan drove into the philosophical city is by now, with Badiou, already in the process of capturing it. *Being and Event* stands out as a chef d’oeuvre of Lacanian philosophy.

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¹⁰⁰ Badiou, 235–36; translation modified.

¹⁰¹ Badiou, 239; translation modified.

¹⁰² Badiou, 247; translation modified.

Still, in a final twist—in tension with what Badiou has in my view been delineating so far in this conclusion and more in tune with the Seminar’s line of reasoning—the “crossing in torsion” between anti-philosophy and philosophy would *not* give rise to a “unity of plane” between the two.¹⁰³ However much we could try to account for this twist topologically, its analogical message is adamant: for Badiou, the torsion still maintains a negative threshold between Lacan and Badiou. For me, the torsion thus gratuitously remains a dividing line and does not do justice to Lacan.

Good and Bad Philosophy, Lacanian-Style

Returning to our main conclusion that Lacan has a philosophy (even by Badiou’s own standards) and further, I’d be tempted to seriously add, that if “Plato was already Lacanian,” then Lacan was already Badiouian just as much as Badiou is still Lacanian, we should tackle an apparently naïve but instead by all means crucial rejoinder: Does Lacan not proudly and insistently present himself as an *anti*-philosopher? In spite of his frequent pedagogical and critical—pedagogical as critical—recourse to the great names in the history of philosophy (Plato, Descartes, Kant, and Hegel, first of all), does he not neatly demarcate his psychoanalytic discourse from that of philosophy? The quick answer is: Not really—and Badiou correctly senses it, but only in part . . . As a preamble, consider for instance the following, apparently innocuous, statement from Seminar X, arguably one of Lacan’s *less* theoretical and more clinical Seminars:

One segment of psychoanalysis, the one that’s being pursued here, has a more philosophical character than any of the others [. . .]. It’s not my fault, as one says, that psychoanalysis puts into question, on the theoretical plane, the desire to know [. . .]. This would justify in and of itself the questioning that lends a certain philosophical nuance to our discourse.¹⁰⁴

Undoubtedly, Lacan *s’insurge* against philosophy, violently if not offensively, and this remains a constant throughout his oeuvre. His psychoanalysis is in

¹⁰³ Badiou, 246.

¹⁰⁴ Jacques Lacan, *Anxiety*, trans. A. R. Price (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 55; translation modified.

“rupture” instead than “in continuity” with philosophical interrogations.¹⁰⁵ He cannot see why he “would classify [himself] philosophically” since psychoanalytic discourse “is not philosophical discourse.”¹⁰⁶ Quite conclusively: “I am not at all a philosopher”; “I do not do any philosophy, on the contrary, I avoid it like the plague”; “I abhor philosophy.”¹⁰⁷ Philosophers are “people who are very much behind,”¹⁰⁸ even retarded, and there is more to be learnt from President Judge Schreber’s memoirs of his psychosis than in philosophical texts.¹⁰⁹ In short, the reason for such an abhorrence of philosophy and its identification with uninstrutive mental illness lies in the fact that “there is only one kind of philosophy and it is always theological,” namely devoted to the Being-One.¹¹⁰ Yet, at the same time—and not without numerous lexical contradictions—especially in his later and latest works Lacan also goes as far as understanding his psychoanalysis, and psychoanalysis tout-court, as containing a full-fledged philosophy, and not just as assuming a “philosophical nuance” or “character”: “What I am doing here is philosophy. [. . .] It’s a philosophy that I have handled the best way I could following the current that results from Freud’s philosophy.”¹¹¹ Not only that, but, apologising for his “complacency,” Lacan states that his Freudo-Lacanian philosophy “is nothing less than the first philosophy that seems to me to be standing on its feet.”¹¹² In the same context, squaring the dialectical circle with mental illness, or better, menacingly re-opening the circle itself, Lacan presents his *philosophie*—that finally stands on its feet—as a “*foliesophie*,” namely, a “fool-osophy.”¹¹³

¹⁰⁵ Jacques Lacan, “R.S.I.: Séminaire 22, 1974–1975” (unpublished typescript, February 18, 1975), PDF document. See also Lacan, *Encore*, 11.

¹⁰⁶ Lacan, . . . or Worse, 98.

¹⁰⁷ Jacques Lacan, “Conférence de presse du docteur Jacques Lacan,” *Lettres de l’École freudienne* 16 (1975): 26; Jacques Lacan, “Freud per sempre. Intervista con Jacques Lacan,” interview by Emilia Granzotto, *Panorama*, November 21, 1974.

¹⁰⁸ Jacques Lacan, *Talking to Brick Walls: A Series of Presentations in the Chapel at Sainte-Anne Hospital*, trans. A. R. Price (Cambridge: Polity, 2017), 39; translation modified.

¹⁰⁹ See Jacques Lacan, *The Psychoses, 1955–1956*, trans. Russell Grigg (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993), 55. The Staferla version of this passage is far more explicit on this point.

¹¹⁰ Jacques Lacan, “Réponses de Jacques Lacan à des questions sur les noeuds et l’inconscient,” *Lettres de l’École freudienne* 21 (1977): 473.

¹¹¹ Jacques Lacan, “Le moment de conclure: Séminaire 25, 1977–1978” (unpublished typescript, December 20, 1977), PDF document.

¹¹² Lacan, *Sinthome*, 125; translation modified.

¹¹³ Lacan, 108; translation modified. Adrian Johnston has incisively commented on some of these passages in “This Philosophy Which Is Not One: Jean-Claude Milner, Alain Badiou,

Let us address these vertiginous oscillations step by step. Lacan's hostility towards philosophy indeed revolves around what, paraphrasing Badiou, we could refer to as its compulsive tendency towards imaginary totalisation. In this regard, Lacan continues and reinforces Freud's antipathy for philosophy. For Freud, philosophy "cling[s] to the illusion of being able to present a picture of the universe which is without gaps and is coherent"; specifically, in this way, even "the philosophy of today has retained some essential features of the animistic mode of thought—the overvaluation of the magic of words and the belief that the real events in the world take the course which our thinking seeks to impose on them."¹¹⁴ Unlike psychoanalysis, philosophy thus at bottom cannot be separated from a religious *Weltanschauung*, in the sense that the latter "leaves no question unanswered and [. . .] everything that interests us finds its fixed place."¹¹⁵

Here Lacan develops Freud's critique of philosophical animism ontologically, epistemologically, historically, and even biologically. In brief—summarising a series of complex issues I have detailed elsewhere¹¹⁶—*ontologically*, philosophy believes that the real events in the world follow our thinking in the sense that it assumes a correspondence between thought and what is being thought—the "world" in Freud's parlance. That is to say, ever since Parmenides, in different guises, "being is presumed to think"; "what is thought of is in the image of thought, in other words, [. . .] being thinks."¹¹⁷ What is more, philosophy thereby "speaks of ontology as if being [as such] held together all alone"—as Being-One, as onto-toto-logy.¹¹⁸

Epistemologically, according to Lacan, philosophy does indeed overvalue words—what Freud also called "omnipotence of thought"—in the sense that it does not realise that "language proves to be a field much vaster [. . .] than

and Lacanian Antiphilosophy," in "Jean-Claude Milner," ed. Justin Clemens and Sigi Jöttkandt, special issue, *S: Journal of the Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* 3 (Spring 2010): 137–58.

¹¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, "The Question of a *Weltanschauung*," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), 22:160, 165–66.

¹¹⁵ Freud, 158.

¹¹⁶ Especially in Chiesa, *Not-Two*, chap. 2.

¹¹⁷ Lacan, *Encore*, 114, 105.

¹¹⁸ Lacan, "De James Joyce."

[. . .] the field in which philosophical discourse has inscribed itself.”¹¹⁹ That is to say, purporting itself as a discourse about discourse as such, philosophical discourse rests instead on its obliviousness of the fact that discourse, any discourse for that matter, amounts only to a semblance, a precarious stabilisation of language as an incomplete and overall entropic structure. This institutes, on top of the fantasy of a being that is presumed to think, that of a subject who is supposed to know. The “false position” of philosophy, its basic epistemological mistake, is “to define the conditions of possibility of a subject in the face of [a] knowledge that can be accumulated.”¹²⁰ Instead of conceiving of the subject as an effect of structure that thereby dialectically gives rise to discourse and an impersonal discursive knowledge, philosophy thus treats the subject as a “superimposed ornament, a joker convenient to the theoretical game.”¹²¹ Ultimately, the game at stake cannot but converge on the “God of philosophers,” an Other in whom absolute being and absolute knowledge equate and who externally guarantees the truth of knowledge.¹²²

Historically—resuming yet also problematising the linear chronology with which Freud sequenced the discourses of religion, philosophy, science, and psychoanalysis (in this order) as an increasing albeit hesitant distancing from the animism of any *Weltanschauung*—for Lacan, philosophical discourse “inscribes itself [. . .] in the discourse of the master.”¹²³ This does not only mean that, in arousing the master’s desire to know, philosophy enabled the theft of the slave’s knowledge and its transformation into the master’s knowledge.¹²⁴ It also and more disturbingly entails that the philosophical subject supposed to know, coalescing into a “tyranny of knowledge” starting from early modernity, is directly responsible for the contemporary emergence of “the most absolute masters.”¹²⁵ The onto-epistemologically based “I-crazy” of the subject supposed to know now determines the very conditions of possibility for the politics of the

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¹¹⁹ Lacan, *Encore*, 30; translation modified and expanded following the Staferla version.

¹²⁰ Jacques Lacan, “Les problèmes cruciaux pour la psychanalyse: Séminaire 12, 1964–1965” (unpublished typescript, June 16, 1965), PDF document.

¹²¹ Juan-David Nasio in Jacques Lacan, “La topologie et le temps: Séminaire 26, 1978–1979” (unpublished typescript, May 15, 1979), PDF document.

¹²² See Lacan, *D’un Autre à l’autre*, 102.

¹²³ Lacan, “L’Étourdit,” 453.

¹²⁴ Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 20–24.

¹²⁵ Lacan, *Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 32; Lacan, *D’un Autre à l’autre*, 396.

capitalist as a modern master engaged in a “curious copulation” with science.¹²⁶ The only master psychoanalysis actually ever confronts is the capitalist master as derived from philosophical-university discourse.

Biologically, Lacan anchors the kernel of philosophy’s delusion, its belief in the *m’être*—in being the master (*maître*) of myself, in being-me-to-myself (*m’être à moi-même*), and, by extension, in mastering the uni-verse as One¹²⁷—to what Freud referred to as “helplessness,” which he deemed to lie at the phylogenetic and ontogenetic origins of our propensity to create *Weltanschauungen*.¹²⁸ Lacan embryologically and physiologically complicates Freud’s account, by considering *Homo sapiens*’ helplessness as due to a species-specific prematurity of birth that leads to a prematurity of sexual maturation and is then retained as sexual neoteny in adulthood, but abides by his main assumption. The natural helplessness of the human baby who cannot satisfy its most elementary needs is partly remedied by the maternal figure’s care-giving role; following a protracted period of extreme dependence on the maternal figure, weaning thereby triggers a retrospective “nostalgia of the Whole” (which was never there) that leaves its trace, in a more abstract manner, in “the metaphysical mirage of universal harmony” and of a “perfect assimilation of totality to being.”¹²⁹

I think that this pivotal biological grounding, as evolutionarily contingent yet as such contingently necessary, by itself already moderates Lacan’s invectives against philosophy and promotes less unilateral considerations on it that more and more part ways with Freud’s unconditional scientific trust in the—*sui generis* anti-philosophical—progress of reason. *Homo sapiens* cannot not philosophise. *Foliesophie* is a structural condition of the biologically premature and thus mentally retarded animal that happens to speak. Lacan is vocal on this point: if philosophical discourse has enunciated “certain reference points [. . .] that are difficult to completely eliminate from any use of language,” if, that is,

¹²⁶ Lacan, *Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 63, 80, 110.

¹²⁷ See Lacan, *Encore*, 31, 39; Lacan, *Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 152.

¹²⁸ “The last contribution to the criticism of the religious *Weltanschauung* was effected by psycho-analysis, by showing how religion originated from the helplessness of children and by tracing its contents to the survival into maturity of the wishes and needs of childhood.” Freud, “Question of a *Weltanschauung*,” 167.

¹²⁹ Jacques Lacan, “Les complexes familiaux dans la formation de l’individu: Essai d’analyse d’une fonction en psychologie,” in *Autres écrits*, 36.

“we always do more philosophy than we believe we do,” this is the case because “the systems of philosophers [. . .] rest on the system everyone has.”¹³⁰ We should therefore not be “ironic” with philosophy, like Freud’s “wild” psychoanalysis instead was when he claimed that “philosophy falls under paranoia.”¹³¹

But, conversely, *foliesophie* could potentially “stand on its feet” if it starts out from the assumption that promoting, in various ways, more or less direct, a belief in the *m’être* depends on an unsurpassable transcendental invariant of the speaking animal—what Lacan also calls “the God hypothesis”¹³²—through which it thinks, in a compensatory manner, the otherwise phenomenologically self-evident non-correspondence between thinking and being.

On the one hand, psychoanalysis takes its cue from an empirical “experience,” namely the real of the absence of the sexual relationship, of there is no two sexes as One, which cannot be taken for a “philosophical enlightenment” for it gives itself as an impossibility, or “cluttering up.”¹³³ Philosophy has always found it difficult to approach this real, and its “extravagant opposition of realism and idealism” witnesses to that.¹³⁴ This real can instead be grasped numerically, not in the sense that it is “measurable” or “countable,” but in the sense that what founds the count, the “final resource” through which language is knotted to the real by means of impossibility, is the fact that, mathematically, “the number two truly is a problem”; “it is from there that the real enters the scenes”—that it *really* enters the scene, we should add, following the empirical evidence of the absence of the sexual relationships.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Lacan, *Encore*, 30–31; Lacan, “L’insu que sait de l’une-bévue,” January 11, 1977; Lacan, *Talking to Brick Walls*, 44 (translation modified and expanded following the Staferla version).

¹³¹ Jacques Lacan, “Réponses à des étudiants en philosophie,” in *Autres écrits*, 210.

¹³² Lacan, *Encore*, 45. See also Chiesa, *Not-Two*, and Lorenzo Chiesa, “Psychoanalysis and Agnostic Atheism,” in Lorenzo Chiesa and Adrian Johnston, *God Is Undead: Psychoanalysis and the Case for Non-Belief* (London: Bloomsbury, forthcoming).

¹³³ Jacques Lacan, “Alla ‘Scuola Freudiana,’” in *Lacan in Italia, 1953–1978*, ed. Giacomo B. Contri (Milan: La Salamandra, 1978), 102.

¹³⁴ Lacan, 113.

¹³⁵ Lacan, 113. A thorough examination of this issue, countering Badiou’s claim that Lacan remains “pre-Cantorian” (Badiou, *Conditions*, 219), is central to my present project.

Yet, on the other hand, philosophy has and has always had something to say in this respect. No doubt, there is an allegedly enlightened *philosophy* centred on the idea that humankind is made for “wisdom,” which completely misses the dimension of “structure”¹³⁶—structure as the symbolic oscillation not-One/One (the God hypothesis), intrinsically giving rise to the imaginary semblance of the One (*m’être*), but actually resting on the not-One as real (the no-two-as-One of the absence of the sexual relationship). But, at the same time, there is also a *philosophy* friendly to psychoanalysis—and structure—that “can take charge,” and it can do so specifically in terms of truth, the real, and the non-correspondence between thinking—the One—and being.¹³⁷ Lacan here *defends* the philosophical tradition. In parallel, he scorns any presumed overcoming of its metaphysics as a disavowal of the latter’s structural presuppositions. Although it does not yet stand on its feet, *philosophy*’s *philia* as an incipiently cognizant *foliesophie* must be preserved: neither Plato, nor Descartes, nor Hegel, nor Marx, nor Freud—all labelled as “classical philosophers”—“can be ‘gone beyond,’ insofar as they carried out their research with the passion to unveil that has an object: truth.”¹³⁸ Insofar as, in the *Parmenides* and *The Sophist*, Plato already clearly perceives our predisposition “to turn the One into the supreme Being”¹³⁹ and tries to think the One differently through another kind of ontology (or even metaphysics), contemporary *philosophy*’s equally fashionable and moronic preaching about “the end of metaphysics”¹⁴⁰ can at best achieve an implicit and paradoxical metaphysics of the *m’être* in the guise of the *One* (not-One). All in all, however much philosophy tout-court goes round in—historical and logical—circles when it comes to thinking the being of the being that happens to speak, this failure nonetheless paradigmatically indicates that, for the speaking being, the real access to being is precisely nothing other than the fact that “he doesn’t come to [being], that he

¹³⁶ Jacques Lacan, “Conférences dans les universités nord-américaines,” *Scilicet* 6/7 (1975): 53.

¹³⁷ Lacan, *Sinthome*, 125 translation modified.

¹³⁸ Jacques Lacan, “Presentation on Psychical Causality,” in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 157. “One may find that I here deal a bit too much with what one calls—God-damned denomination—the great philosophers. The fact is that, not only them, but them especially articulate what we may well call a research [. . .] an unsurpassable research in the same sense I mean when I tell you that each of those we may call ‘great philosophers’ could never be surpassed on a certain point.” Jacques Lacan, “L’identification: Séminaire 9, 1961–1962” (unpublished typescript, February 28, 1962), PDF document.

¹³⁹ Jacques Lacan, *La logique du fantasme, 1966–1967* (Paris: Seuil, 2023), 303.

¹⁴⁰ Lacan, . . . or Worse, 18.

fails” to enter it.¹⁴¹ And *this* very predicament coincides with a “suddenly *open* dimension of *being*,”¹⁴² an ontological springboard so to speak.

Lacan does not stop here in his remarks in favour of philosophy, even and especially when at first sight he would appear to adopt a very antithetical stance to it. Specifically with regard to philosophy’s classical inscription in the discourse of the master and modern hijacking of it, philosophers at the same time “play the role of the fool,” the court jester who is the “place-holder of truth” without knowing it, and what they say as such is “more than usable.”¹⁴³ Hence, it is “not at all” the case that the question of philosophy can be solved as soon as we genealogically assume that philosophy has always amounted to discursive “ideology,” “the reflection of the superstructure of the dominant classes.”¹⁴⁴ Quite on the contrary, the history of philosophy has always also been a history of “devising the correct use of discourse,” or better, of understanding how “discourse [as an] operation” rests on “the difference there *is* between subject and substance”¹⁴⁵—the non-correspondence between thinking and being that philosophy contradictorily also masks.

If we carefully follow Lacan on this subtle dialectical point, we then grasp *his own torsion* (not Badiou’s) of psychoanalysis (as an initially anti-philosophical discourse, with Freud) not only into an anti-anti-philosophy but also into the future of philosophy. His converging comments in “Intervention sur l’exposé de J. Favez-Boutonier” (1955), “Psychoanalysis and Its Teaching” (1957), and a 1966 lecture given in Bordeaux in which he recalls a conversation he had just had with Derrida (“a very talented boy”)¹⁴⁶ are here very instructive. On a first level, Freudian anti-philosophical psychoanalysis already stands—*de facto* albeit retrospectively—as *anti-anti-philosophy*: Freud the anti-philosopher is in a sense equally “without doubt a philosopher” for the simple fact that his discovery that “the subject who speaks”—the barred subject of discourse—“is not the conscious

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¹⁴¹ Lacan, *Talking to Brick Walls*, 44; translation modified.

¹⁴² Lacan, 44.

¹⁴³ Lacan, “L’Étourdit,” 453.

¹⁴⁴ Lacan, *D’un Autre à l’autre*, 242.

¹⁴⁵ Jacques Lacan, *My Teaching*, trans. David Macey (London: Verso, 2008), 72, 88; translation modified, emphasis added.

¹⁴⁶ Lacan, 87.

subject” belongs to “the order of truths.”¹⁴⁷ Yet, on a second and more important level, this first level should become the cornerstone of any (Lacanian) philosophy to come (not just Lacan’s). Philosophy is not dead. Philosophy is not surpassed. Lacan’s question to his philosophical audience at the Société française de Philosophie is: “What, in *their* view, does analysis teach us that is proper to analysis, or the most proper, truly proper, truly the most, the most truly?”¹⁴⁸ Adopting the philosopher’s perspective, his blunt answer is: “A certain relation between [hu]mankind and the signifier,”¹⁴⁹ namely, the fact that a subject is nothing but that which a signifier represents for another signifier in and for discourse and that this operation leaves an unassimilable real rest that renders discourse structurally incomplete while at the same time giving the subject access to the real only by means of an impossibility. Because of that, the most appropriate and concise reply Lacan can provide, in another instance, to Derrida’s partial perplexity—“All that’s very well, everything you say, I follow it [. . .] what you articulate as the unconscious structured like a language [a discourse], but why continuing to call that the subject?”—cannot but be “I preserve the subject . . . to get *you* talking” about it, to make you, a philosopher of the future, resume and complicate from the standpoint of the psychoanalytic unconscious what *philosophy* has always been putting forward by “separating in the most rigorous way the subject from substance”; it would be “sheer madness not to resume this term [the subject] [. . .] now that the time has finally come to turn/invert its use.”¹⁵⁰

I am of the opinion that such a turning should also potentially be understood in the specific framework of the “quarter turns” Lacan recurs to in his matrixes of the four discourses.¹⁵¹ Although in this context he never presents—any future—philosophy as an independent discourse, and it would be precipitous of me to attempt a matrixial algebraization of it, we are also clearly told that psychoanalysis “*extends*” philosophy, and it does so “very much beyond the point

¹⁴⁷ Jacques Lacan, “Intervention sur l’exposé de J. Favez-Boutonier,” *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie* 49, no. 1 (1955): 38–39.

¹⁴⁸ Jacques Lacan, “Psychoanalysis and Its Teaching,” in *Écrits*, 367; emphasis added.

¹⁴⁹ Jacques Lacan, “La psychanalyse et son enseignement,” *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie* 49, no. 2 (1957): 96. The discussion that followed Lacan’s lecture is not included in the *Écrits* version of “La psychanalyse et son enseignement.”

¹⁵⁰ Lacan, *My Teaching*, 87–89; emphasis added, translation modified and expanded following the version of the École lacanienne de psychanalyse.

¹⁵¹ See Lacan, *Other Side of Psychoanalysis*.

at which” philosophy, as the discourse of the *m’être*, has been seriously disrupted—if not, too optimistically, “effaced”—by the very emergence of psychoanalysis (and set-theoretical mathematical logic).¹⁵² I do not think that what is at stake here is the *post-mortem* survival of philosophy, in a zombified state, although the text could also be tweaked in that sense. On the contrary, what is at stake is the fact that psychoanalysis “is philosophically so problematic,” whereby its “currency” remains all the same philosophical, despite there being two distinct discourses, psychoanalysis and philosophy—hence, strictly speaking, *psychoanalysis* “does not transform” philosophy.¹⁵³ The message seems clear: there is as much philosophical psychoanalysis as there is, or should be, psychoanalytic philosophy. I admit this partly clashes with Lacan’s more peremptory claim that “what I am doing here is philosophy,” full stop, but, on close inspection, very little changes here in respect to refuting an alleged relapse of Lacan into anti-philosophy.

Lacan’s insistence on a future discourse of psychoanalytic philosophy—again, not necessarily Lacan’s own philosophical discourse but necessarily a Lacanian discourse of philosophy for which Lacan does not fall back into anti-philosophy—is protracted and amplified in his latest works. In Seminar XXIV, for instance, his back-and-forths on what should be done with philosophy may seem disorienting at first, yet in the end combine in an unequivocal, and quite astonishing, conclusion. Lacan does not believe he is doing philosophy. But the Derridean philosophers who by then (1977) speak of a “*philosophie en effet*”—a real philosophy of *Wirklichkeit*, for what we said previously—all in all proceed *from* “something I have inaugurated with my discourse.”¹⁵⁴ But we should not “push too quickly the door of philosophy.”¹⁵⁵ But the right way not to do that is by dwelling on the level of the theory of discourses. But this makes Lacan “hit a brick wall” (since his matrixes do not really sort out the status of philosophical discourse?).¹⁵⁶ But what we should certainly avoid is Freud’s position, who did not face the same problem only because his anti-philosophical stance paradoxically coincided with a “philosophical order [for which] there was no [philosophy]”¹⁵⁷—namely, the negative

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¹⁵² Lacan, *Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 146.

¹⁵³ Lacan, 146.

¹⁵⁴ Lacan, “L’insu que sait de l’une-bévue,” January 11, 1977.

¹⁵⁵ Lacan, January 11, 1977.

¹⁵⁶ Lacan, February 8, 1977.

¹⁵⁷ Lacan, February 8, 1977.

Weltanschauung according to which there is no *Weltanschauung*, and the not-One unintentionally turns into a weakly atheistic *One* (not-One).¹⁵⁸ Hence, eventually, the only way out of this impasse cannot but be not only a reconsideration of philosophy—as *foliesophie*—in spite of its going in circles but also more strongly a “preserv[ation]” of the notion of a “system of the world,” where the system is exclusively based on the fact that concerning this world “we can say nothing of man except that he fell from it”—yet accesses it by means of this very fall.¹⁵⁹

We are left to assume that this minimal presupposition—the empirically derived yet axiomatic decision about the co-implication between language and the absence of the sexual relationship—paves the way to *any* “philosophy standing on its feet.”

As already anticipated in Seminar XV, we are equally left to assume that such an axiomatic decision necessarily involves a “philosophical *act*,” which should not be isolated as Lacan’s act for it pertains to “posterity,” which should not forcedly always be “the same” in the history of philosophy, but which “each time a renewal” of it takes place—from Plato to Lacan and his “successors,” passing through Descartes, Kant, and Hegel—always requires a “suspension of the subject supposed to know.”¹⁶⁰

We are moreover left to assume that one can speak of Lacan’s philosophy as “the *first* philosophy standing on its feet” only to the extent that, for the first time, it openly sequences a series of anti-epistemic and thus philosophical acts as a theory of the subject-to-truth.

What Lacan Said About Anti-Philosophy

At this stage, we need to summon again our naïve interlocutor who could still very legitimately ask: What about Lacan’s own pronouncements in *direct* support of anti-philosophy? Leaving aside his claims against (bad) *philosophy* and how they are dialectically enmeshed with his claims in favour of (good) *philosophy*, are those pronouncements not indisputably partisan? The answer is again

¹⁵⁸ I develop this in Chiesa, “Psychoanalysis and Agnostic Atheism.”

¹⁵⁹ Lacan, “L’insu que sait de l’une bévue,” December 14, 1976.

¹⁶⁰ Lacan, “L’acte psychanalytique,” January 17, 1968.

negative. A close examination of the sources once more disproves both pro- and anti-Lacanian doxastic preconceptions on the matter.

There are only three short passages in which Lacan explicitly refers to anti-philosophy. The first is very well-known and unmistakably pro anti-philosophy, yet it does not add much to what Lacan already says in his critiques of *philosophy*. The second is less well-known, although quoted also by Badiou, and rather ambiguous if put into context. The third has so far, to the best of my knowledge, been ignored in discussions about Lacan and anti-philosophy and turns out to be patently opposed to anti-philosophy, to the point of ridiculing it. Let us scrutinise them.

In “Peut-être à Vincennes . . .” (1975)—note the conditional and the ellipsis—Lacan includes anti-philosophy among the disciplines that should be taught at the newly established Department of Psychoanalysis at Vincennes (the others being linguistics, logic, and topology). The entire text is two pages; the paragraph devoted to anti-philosophy is seven lines. We are just told that:

- a. Anti-philosophy refers to an investigation of what the university discourse owes to its “‘educational’ supposition.”
- b. This investigation could not be accomplished by a history of ideas, however critical the latter might be.
- c. This investigation will basically consist of a “patient collection of the imbecility” that characterises the university discourse.
- d. This investigation will hopefully highlight the “indestructible root,” which is also the “eternal dream,” of this imbecility.
- e. There are only “particular” awakenings from this dream.¹⁶¹

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What seems clearly under scrutiny here is *not* philosophy as such. The target of anti-philosophy is instead the university discourse and, specifically, its assumption that it can educate, namely, that it can transmit knowledge as *wisdom*. Even more specifically, the target of Lacanian anti-philosophy therefore amounts to nothing other than the *philosophy* of the *m'être* as taught at university (not only as part of the curriculum for will-be-philosophers but also and especially as the set of so-called “learning skills” imparted to all students). Against this back-

¹⁶¹ Jacques Lacan, “Peut-être à Vincennes . . .,” in *Autres écrits*, 314–15.

ground, the best Lacanian anti-philosophy can achieve as a discipline, beyond any genealogy of education, is an inventory of the imbecility of the university discourse—as a *discourse* far exceeding the boundaries of universities yet coalescing in an idiotic “‘educational’ supposition”—that also evidences the *structural* character of this imbecility. In spite of psychoanalysis, there is no universal remedy to the I-crazy of the fantasy of being-me-to-myself, of being a graduated subject-supposed-to-know.¹⁶²

Lacan stops here. He does not attempt to “destroy philosophy.” In the introduction to “Peut-être à Vincennes . . .” he even suggests that the disciplines he proposes to teach at Vincennes should make the disciplines they originate from “find in the [psychoanalytic] experience the opportunity to be renewed”¹⁶³—so however modest the actual aims of anti-philosophy at Vincennes turn out to be, they nonetheless contribute to building a new *philosophy*. And this is Lacan’s most extensive reference to anti-philosophy. One could only overlap it with Badiou’s definition of anti-philosophy—at bottom, a discourse against the pretence that discourse can be self-sufficient, that it can master itself by mastering the discourse of the *m’être*—in a roundabout way, by means of other isolated passages in Lacan’s oeuvre (in which, by the way, anti-philosophy is never literally mentioned, quite simply because what he is contrasting is, again, *bad* philosophy . . .). For instance, in Seminar XII, Lacan states that “I call ‘philosophy’ everything that tends to mask the radical character and originating function of [a] loss [. . .] that is produced every time that language tries in a discourse to account for itself.”¹⁶⁴ Interestingly though, he at the same time specifies that “every dialectic” that makes this mistake is a philosophy, which also implies that there are other dialectics which—potentially at least—do not make this mistake.¹⁶⁵

The second passage in which Lacan mentions anti-philosophy is in his last Seminar, *Dissolution* (1980) and is almost exclusively anecdotal but very telling. Badiou correctly reports that, recalling a Dadaist text by Tristan Tzara, “Monsieur Aa l’antiphilosophie,” Lacan adds “it is also my case,” that is, I am an anti-phi-

¹⁶² Hence, in this regard, “the subject is *not* wrong in identifying himself with consciousness [. . .] but, from there, in not being able not to miss the topology that tricks him in this identification.” Lacan, “Réponses à des étudiants,” 205; emphasis added.

¹⁶³ Lacan, “Peut-être à Vincennes . . .,” 313.

¹⁶⁴ Lacan, “Les problèmes cruciaux,” December 2, 1964.

¹⁶⁵ Lacan, December 2, 1964.

losopher too.¹⁶⁶ Lacan then states: “If I may say so, I rebel against philosophy. What is certain is that it’s something that’s finished, even if I expect some offshoots to sprout back from it.”¹⁶⁷ Badiou makes a lot out of this. However, what he strangely underplays is that, immediately after, Lacan relates this sprouting back precisely to his own *psychoanalytic* School, which he is about to dissolve, and adds “I am not at all intending to dissolve the École Normale Supérieure, where in the past I’ve been most welcome”¹⁶⁸—namely, the most authoritative establishment of academic philosophy in France . . .

If this were not enough to evidence the obvious ambivalence of Lacan’s “rebellion,” two further provisos can additionally challenge Badiou’s unilateral take on this passage. Badiou equally omits to specify that Lacan returns to Tzara’s “Monsieur Aa l’antiphilosophie” in response to a “Monsieur A., philosophe” who contested him a few days earlier. Put simply, here Lacan’s anti-philosophical stance limits itself to countering a philosopher’s, in his view, anti-psychoanalytic stance. This anti-psychoanalytic philosopher is, very surprisingly, none other than Louis Althusser, arguably one of the most pro-psychoanalysis and pro-Lacan philosophers up to that point, who, suffering from severe depression (another complication . . .), disrupted the meeting in which Lacan dissolved his School and, “in the name of analysands” (another complication . . .), accused Lacan of being a “pitiful Harlequin.”¹⁶⁹

Furthermore, and most significantly, we should not lose sight of the fact that, only two years earlier, it was precisely Althusser (“someone of good sense”) who, according to Lacan, told Lacan that what Lacan does is philosophy, which on the same occasion Lacan very gladly consents to (“What I am doing here is philosophy. [. . .] It’s a philosophy that I have handled the best way I could following the current that results from Freud’s philosophy”).¹⁷⁰ Again, we are here for the most part on the level of anecdotes but the negative bias that vitiates

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¹⁶⁶ Jacques Lacan, “Dissolution,” in *Aux confins du Séminaire*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Navarin, 2021), 60.

¹⁶⁷ Lacan, 60.

¹⁶⁸ Lacan, 61.

¹⁶⁹ See Louis Althusser, *Writings on Psychoanalysis: Freud and Lacan*, ed. Olivier Corpet and François Matheron, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 125–43.

¹⁷⁰ Lacan, “Le moment de conclure,” December 20, 1977.

Badiou's reading—who I suppose is acquainted with them—seems to me incontrovertible.

As for the third direct reference to anti-philosophy in Lacan's oeuvre, it has to do with Wittgenstein and the tradition of analytic philosophy he commenced. In Seminar XVII, Lacan provides an interpretation of Wittgenstein that in many ways anticipates Badiou's singling the latter out as a quintessential anti-philosopher—hence it could be made to correspond to what Badiou designates as the *anti-anti-philosophical* moment in Lacan—but he refrains from using this term with respect to Wittgenstein. In Seminar XIV, he instead uses it, very disparagingly, with respect to the Wittgensteinians. We need to tackle these passages in quite some detail.

First of all, let us recall that, for Badiou, (at least the early) Wittgenstein is an anti-philosopher since, in spite and especially because of his crusade against the pseudo-truth of philosophy as a self-contained discourse that would thus have an overarching meta-linguistic meaning, whereas for him philosophical propositions are actually senseless, he ends up submitting truth to meaning nonetheless, which is what characterises anti-philosophy at large. According to Badiou, for Wittgenstein, truth can only correspond to an exact linguistic description of existing states of affairs; meaning as the mystically unsayable sense of the world instead anchors truth.¹⁷¹

Lacan's assessment of Wittgenstein in Seminar XVII—which focuses on the *Tractatus* and whose complexity I will have to simplify—is overall similar to Badiou's: Wittgenstein's operation is, positively, “the detection of philosophical knavery” yet as such it remains, negatively, “an extraordinary parade.”¹⁷² First, for Wittgenstein, there is no meta-language (“there is no other meta-language than all the forms of knavery”).¹⁷³ Second, truth can thus only be inscribed in a proposition and as such be articulated as transmissible knowledge.¹⁷⁴ Third, more specifically, truth means propositional conformity to a grammatical struc-

¹⁷¹ I acknowledge that assuming there is a mystically unsayable sense of the world in the *Tractatus* amounts to an old-fashioned and by now largely discredited interpretation of it. I will expand on this in the near future.

¹⁷² Lacan, *Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 61; translation modified.

¹⁷³ Lacan, 61.

¹⁷⁴ See Lacan, 62.

ture.¹⁷⁵ Fourth, the world amounts to the grammatical structure and “all that is true is [. . .] a composite proposition comprising the totality of the facts that constitute the world”¹⁷⁶—for Wittgenstein, in his words, “the world is the totality of facts, not of things,”¹⁷⁷ namely, facts are not objects but structural relations between objects that language, as denotative, can “picture” as true. *But* fifth and crucially, according to Wittgenstein, the set of true propositions is “tautological” or “stupid,” Lacan says: to the extent that “whatever you enunciate is either true or false” (“it is day” is either true or false), “enunciating that [whatever you enunciate] is either true or false is necessarily true” (it is necessarily true that “‘it is day’ is either true or false”).¹⁷⁸ That is to say, sixth, there is a performative annulment of sense via tautology—and of the sense of the *Tractatus* itself.

Given that Wittgenstein refuses to solve this impasse by means of Aristotle’s solution of the problem of future contingents, the latter’s infamous “it is necessary that a sea-fight either will or will not take place tomorrow,” that is, given that, for Wittgenstein, truth should be internal to the proposition and not lie outside the set of true propositions (the truth that the sea-fight will or will not take place tomorrow is external to the proposition; future contingents are not propositions for Wittgenstein), his conclusion—which Lacan much appreciates—is brutally honest: due to the tautology “everything that can be said is only senseless,” including and especially what Wittgenstein has just said so far concerning the propositional status of truth; “nothing else is sayable” about the world; and silence thereby imposes itself.¹⁷⁹

Yet, according to Lacan, this is not Wittgenstein’s whole story. Indeed, this very predicament posits the world of *things* as “inaccessible”¹⁸⁰ beyond what we have just senselessly said about the world of facts. Or better, Wittgenstein’s pushing the absence of a meta-language to its extreme consequences—for truth can only be inscribed in a proposition—paradoxically leads him on the contrary to a propositional treatment of truth for which, against all our empirical evidence in

¹⁷⁵ See Lacan, 59.

¹⁷⁶ Lacan, 59.

¹⁷⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge, 1995), 5.

¹⁷⁸ Lacan, *Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 59; translation modified.

¹⁷⁹ Lacan, 59.

¹⁸⁰ Lacan, 60.

everyday life, “we reject that the true [. . .] can have a false consequent”—a rejection that founds propositional logic—whereby “we end up with this curious fact that the true has a genealogy, that it always goes back to an initial truth, from which it is no longer able to fall.”¹⁸¹ As we just saw, this initial truth cannot but be the truth that stating that a proposition is either true or false is necessarily true. Thus, the fact that everything that can be said is senseless equates with the fact that everything that can be said is true as senseless *with respect to the ulterior transcendence of an ineffable “absolute sense.”*¹⁸²

Like for Badiou, for Lacan, Wittgenstein therefore sutures truth to sense. But pace Badiou (Lacan would consign truth to the “sense as ab-sense” of the sexual relationship on which the transmissibility of knowledge would itself depend; after all, Lacan would be a sui generis Wittgensteinian) what Lacan instead proposes about truth against Wittgenstein in the same passages of Seminar XVII is very different. For Wittgenstein, according to Lacan who now deconstructs Wittgenstein by also making him in part ventriloquise Lacan’s own stance, truth is already somehow not simply “internal” to the proposition—where only “the facticity of language” is announced.¹⁸³ Truth depends on my enunciation; it depends on whether my enunciation is appropriate; this appropriate enunciation does make it true that the facticity of language is a fact; but the fact that this is true “is not a fact, unless I explicitly add that, moreover, it’s true.”¹⁸⁴ As Wittgenstein would retort against this forced ventriloquising, such a step seems superfluous. But it is not. It is not superfluous, not even for Wittgenstein who affirms that “no sign of affirmation needs to be added to what is assertion pure and simple.”¹⁸⁵

Generally speaking, it is not superfluous because this addition invariably happens in everyday life (more or less explicitly); bluntly put, subjects always have a “reason” for saying what they are saying (even just “it is day”);¹⁸⁶ or better,

¹⁸¹ Lacan, 61.

¹⁸² Lacan, 62.

¹⁸³ Lacan, 60; translation modified.

¹⁸⁴ Lacan, 60.

¹⁸⁵ Lacan, 60.

¹⁸⁶ Explicitly: “Look, it’s day. It’s true. I told you it was late, let’s go home”; implicitly: “Come on, it’s day (I’ll never go out with her again, it’s so late).”

subjects of language are also subjects of desire and truth always has to do with what “desire hides of its lack.”¹⁸⁷

Reading between the lines of Lacan’s interpretation, with regard to Wittgenstein and his desire for a purely propositional truth, adding that “it’s true” to the fact that it is true is not superfluous because it is only by explicitly adding that it is true that we are “genealogically” taken back to the “initial truth,” the truth that, independently of whether a proposition I enunciate is true or false, it is always contained by the senseless truth that stating that a proposition is either true or false is necessarily true. The senseless truth that stating that a proposition is either true or false is necessarily true necessitates stating that a particular proposition is true and not false. Otherwise, without this—second-degree—performative dimension, we could not truly distinguish between true and false propositions (for they are both contained by the initial truth) and there would quite simply not be any propositional logic . . . Are the truth tables of propositional logic, which Wittgenstein invented, not a way of adding that “it’s true” to the fact that it is true? And, as such, are they not fragments of a genealogy of truth? Lacan claims that, unlike other philosophers, “Wittgenstein wasn’t interested in saving the truth” meta-linguistically:¹⁸⁸ he was not insofar as, for him, truth is ultimately senseless; but what he initiated in terms of the propagation of propositional logic into analytic philosophy certainly stands as a gigantic attempt at meta-linguistically saving the truth *within language* . . .

40 Finally, taking the perspective of Wittgenstein’s desire more comprehensively, the—first- and second-degree—performative dimension of truth—which Wittgenstein would like to expunge—is not superfluous because it is only through the *Tractatus* itself, as paradigmatically both an enunciation that it is true that whatever one enunciates is either true or false *and* a vade mecum for adding that “it’s true” that a given proposition is true, that the senseless truth negatively opens onto an ineffable absolute sense. Put simply, silence in the face of the latter requires an active detour by means of language. Indeed, for Wittgenstein’s desire, the impasse of the *Tractatus* has not been in vain.

¹⁸⁷ Lacan, *Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 61; translation modified.

¹⁸⁸ Lacan, 63.

If we now specifically turn to Lacan's own stance, for him, truth is unequivocally not internal to the proposition. Like for Wittgenstein, "truth [. . .] is certainly inseparable from the effects of language taken as such," which in turn cannot be separated from a subject of enunciation—presupposed albeit overshadowed by Wittgenstein.¹⁸⁹ Yet, for Lacan, unlike for Wittgenstein, there is no genealogy of truth that takes us back to an initial truth, however senseless it may be. In other words, on the one hand, as the logicians of the Middle Ages already realised, *ex falso sequitur quodlibet*—that is, from falsehood anything follows, that is, "the false sometimes also entails the true" and therefore "the true can be about anything."¹⁹⁰ But, on the other hand, "that there is no false without the true"—as ultimately entailed by an initial senselessness of truth that opens onto an absolute sense—"that is false."¹⁹¹ This is Wittgenstein's error, the error of the non-dupped who err the most (*les non-dupes errent*). This is also very similar to the error made by those psychoanalysts (including Lacanian ones like Laplanche, according to Lacan) who advance that "the unconscious is the condition of language," and not vice versa.¹⁹² The unconscious itself amounts to the effects of language taken as such, Lacan insists. And if psychoanalysis were to posit the opposite, it would inevitably also posit "an absolute sense [that] answers to the unconscious."¹⁹³ Given these premises, we should then think the non-interiority of truth to the proposition not as its priority to the set of propositions (whether true or false but ultimately always true—as per a wrong understanding of "I, the truth, speaks") but instead as its being "*beside*" it ("But is it certain that we should find [truth] *intus*, within? Why not *beside*?").¹⁹⁴

All in all, for Lacan, "we are *not without* a relationship with truth,"¹⁹⁵ but with the crucial specification that this is a *lateral* relationship, that truth is a *para*-truth with respect to (the effects of) language, which, I add, demands a *para-ontology*. Lacan already hints at this ontological dimension in the same pages of Seminar XVII we are scrutinising. In order not to capitulate to any, however paradoxical, "absolute sense" (*sens absolu*) and consequently also turn truth into an "*at-*

¹⁸⁹ Lacan, 62.

¹⁹⁰ Lacan, 61.

¹⁹¹ Lacan, 62.

¹⁹² Lacan, 62.

¹⁹³ Lacan, 62; translation modified.

¹⁹⁴ Lacan, 58; translation modified.

¹⁹⁵ Lacan, 58.

tribute” of knowledge;¹⁹⁶ in order, that is, not to repeat Wittgenstein error—and Badiou’s in his reading of Lacan as a quasi-Wittgensteinian—we need to put at centre stage the *not without* (*pas sans*) relationship with truth as a truth-beside. As Lacan already spelled out in Seminar V, sense (*sens*) does not go without a non-sense (*pas-de-sens*) that is also a step-of-sense (*pas-de-sens*).¹⁹⁷ Here Wittgenstein is, in a limited sense, not too distant. But Wittgenstein’s *non sequitur* is to still end up with a—ineffable—sense that is allegedly “being full sense” rather than search for “what of being there is in sense” starting from sense as “what escapes being” and, concomitantly, leaves truth *aside*.¹⁹⁸

What is now delineating itself on the horizon is not only the truth of the real in terms of subjectivized truths of the real but also, and without solution of continuity, a more daring para-ontological investigation into whether it is possible to approach a truth of the real tout-court that does not reabsorb the senselessness of truth into an absolute sense. This is a question—one of the key questions of the para-ontology I am pursuing, as, in my view, a prolongation of Badiou’s meta-ontology—with which Lacan flirts, repeatedly, but never thoroughly addresses.

For the time being, let us just stress that Lacan does *not* label Wittgenstein’s position as anti-philosophical but as that of “psychotic ferocity.”¹⁹⁹ In psychotic discourse, as “the most assured discourse,” there is indeed no false without the true.²⁰⁰ The psychotic position, Lacan says in the same pages of Seminar XVII, can briefly be defined as “not wanting to know anything about the spot where truth is in question.”²⁰¹ Senseless truth as initial truth does not really pose a problem to Wittgenstein: it instead marks the border of a, however much inaccessible, divine sense. At bottom, that border is where the truth of his desire lies. Like for President Judge Schreber, the Order of God turns against any alleged rational order of the world He has himself established, yet it remains an *Order*. (Badiou is thus right in highlighting a “*silent* principle of salvation” in Wittgen-

¹⁹⁶ Lacan, 62; emphasis added.

¹⁹⁷ See Jacques Lacan, *The Formations of the Unconscious*, trans. Russell Grigg (Cambridge: Polity, 2017), 87–93.

¹⁹⁸ Lacan, *Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 57–58.

¹⁹⁹ Lacan, 62.

²⁰⁰ Lacan, 63.

²⁰¹ Lacan, 63.

stein's *Weltanschauung*, but he is wrong in referring to it as “mystical”;²⁰² while for the mystic the apparent disorder of the world can immanently give access to a transcendent order, for the psychotic the latter is given only as inaccessible.)²⁰³

Having said this, in a passage from Seminar XIV, which should be made to dialogue with Seminar XVII, Lacan instead refers to *Wittgensteinians* as anti-philosophers and resolutely opposes them to Wittgenstein himself: “Do not believe that since an entire school that is called logico-positivistic keeps harping onto us with a series of most insipid and mediocre anti-philosophical considerations that Wittgenstein’s step is nothing.”²⁰⁴ In other words, there is something to be learnt from Wittgenstein’s—psychotic and failed yet not anti-philosophical—attempt at reducing truth to the proposition and, more generally, promoting a logic that could do without the existence of the subject, since it goes together with an unprecedented upholding of senselessness. But there is nothing to be learnt from the Wittgensteinians who, as *anti-philosophers*, cannot even be considered as just ordinary bad *philosophers*.

Lacan does not name names nor explains further what the anti-philosophical position of the Wittgensteinians precisely amounts to, but we can try to unpack this briefly by profiting also from other occasions on which he attacks logico-positivism. In short, logico-positivists radicalise Wittgenstein’s treatment of truth as internal to the proposition in an effort to dispose of senselessness. Like for Wittgenstein, truth should be approached by means of an alternative between true and false propositions. But unlike for Wittgenstein, the enunciative truth that a proposition is either true or false should itself become internal to the proposition and thus no longer make truth senseless—for instance, and simplifying a lot, the senseless truth that it is necessarily true that “‘it is day’ is either true or false” turns into the sense of the proposition “it is necessarily true that ‘it is day’ is either true or false.”

From a certain perspective, there is here no meta-linguistic truth, yet concomitantly propositional logic becomes the true language of language that rules out senselessness. Hence, from another perspective, truth as the true language of

²⁰² Badiou, *Lacan*, 6; emphasis added.

²⁰³ See Chiesa, “Psychoanalysis and Agnostic Atheism.”

²⁰⁴ Lacan, *La logique du fantasme*, 140.

language also becomes the meta-linguistic referent of language. This leads to a “fabulous paradox,” Lacan says: if referring to truth presupposes a division between propositions that are in themselves true and propositions that are in themselves false with regard to state of affairs—since, unlike for Wittgenstein, for the Wittgensteinian anti-philosophers there is moreover no distinction between the world of facts and the world of things—then referring to truth unwittingly albeit necessarily also involves “positing an *absolute false*, namely a false to which one could refer oneself as such.”²⁰⁵ And, we could continue, perhaps this is the reason why Wittgensteinian logico-positivists are, strictly speaking, for Lacan, *anti*-philosophers: there where philosophers, as Badiou puts it, “assume that there is a truth of the real,” Wittgensteinian logico-positivists assume this only by not realising that, in parallel, they are also assuming a falsehood of the real . . . Lacan’s overall view does not leave room for doubt: “If we start from the principle that something that has no meaning cannot be essential in the development of discourse, we quite simply lose our bearings.”²⁰⁶

This is precisely what Wittgensteinian anti-philosophers start from. Senseless truth is dammed up, sense no longer hinges on an ineffable sense, but only at the cost of pretending to lose the subject (of enunciation)—including the subject-supposed-to-know of *bad* philosophers—which is instead preserved in Wittgenstein at least as awestruck silence. I would be tempted to add that the related cost to be paid here is also the relinquishment of the florid phase of psychosis; the question “What was Wittgenstein thinking of when he was keeping silent?” is very much worth asking . . .²⁰⁷ For Lacan, Wittgensteinian logico-positivism is an “insipid” and “mediocre” anti-philosophy also because, so to speak, it is a psychosis without psychosis.

The Future of *Foliesophie*

So, to conclude, where does this leave us regarding a—anti-psychotic and, especially, anti-psychosis-without-psychosis—*foliesophie* that as such refuses the very distinction Badiou draws between philosophy and anti-philosophy? Let us

²⁰⁵ Lacan, *D’un discours*, 84; emphasis added.

²⁰⁶ Lacan, 59.

²⁰⁷ Derek Jarman’s 1993 film *Wittgenstein* becomes a great film if it is taken as an attempt to answer this question.

recall that *foliesophie* has three inseparable aspects: the structural, that is transcendental, condition of the *Homo sapiens* species for which it cannot but *foliesophise*, namely, put forward the Being-One; Lacan's psychoanalytic theory as "the first philosophy that seems to be standing on its feet" precisely insofar as, by assuming this structural condition critically, it, like Badiou's philosophy, on the contrary revolves around the axiomatic decision that the One is not, it only exists as an operation, and, moreover, in doing so does not contradict itself; a future Lacanian philosophy (and Badiouian to the extent that Badiou is a Lacanian if and only if he no longer confines Lacan to anti-philosophy) that, by recuperating the anti-Being-One component of the (good) philosophical tradition, continues Lacan's philosophical psychoanalysis in the philosophical domain, up to the point of not falling short of proposing, as we saw, an alternative "system of the world" that is *not* a self-contained *Weltanschauung*.

Against doxastic interpretations, I wish to stress once again that this final aspect of *foliesophie* does not at all force Lacan's broad conclusions on the matter. Let me quickly further vindicate my assertion with some supplementary textual evidence and thus also highlight a series of key notions I will have to return to and delve into elsewhere—engaging and agreeing with Badiou yet also attempting to dismantle his anti-Lacanian threshold.

First, to clear the ground one more time, "psychoanalysis renews philosophy"; philosophy would demonstrate a "fundamental dishonesty" only if it ignored this.²⁰⁸

Second, on a related and still basic yet also massive level, in the future, "we have to begin to think up something that accounts for the fact that there are *unconscious thoughts*. The latter does not go without saying. Actually, no one has ever truly tackled this so far" as an "eminently philosophical question."²⁰⁹

Third, that there are unconscious thoughts cannot but lead to a philosophical appreciation of "substance as on the side of a shortage"; specifically, this

²⁰⁸ Jacques Lacan, "L'objet de la psychanalyse: Séminaire 13, 1965–1966" (unpublished typescript, March 30, 1966), PDF document.

²⁰⁹ Lacan, *My Teaching*, 8; translation modified, emphasis added.

is what “the *psychoanalytic act* could indicate.”²¹⁰ However, such an indication should not be unfolded in terms of psychoanalysis being aware of “the philosophical error”—not treating substance as on the side of a shortage—“as if, from there, philosophy should then be aware of it.”²¹¹ This naïve take on psychoanalytic discourse would turn it into a discourse of the *m’être about* the philosophical discourse of the *m’être*. Psychoanalytic discourse amounts to neither a conscious drainage of the unconscious that would allegedly make up for substance as a shortage (as per the infamous Freudian metaphor of the draining of the Zuider Zee) nor to a discourse of the Being-One veiled under an apparent discourse of the definitive *not*-oneness of Being, whereby substance as a shortage is meta-linguistically installed as a *One* (not-One). As Lacan glosses, imagining a superior awareness of psychoanalysis over philosophy “would be the philosophical error as such.”²¹² In other words, Lacan continues, psychoanalysis should absolutely not stand as a “hermeneutic”—a sense-provider—of philosophy, otherwise “it would take philosophy back to its ties to obscurantism”—and this is also the major risk for psychoanalysis’ own future.²¹³ To cut a long story short, the *philosophical act* that suspends not only the alleged self-sufficiency of substance but, together with it, also the subject-supposed-to-know needs to remain independent of the psychoanalytic act albeit indebted to it as the kernel of a practice of the unconscious.

Fourth, that the dimension of the act emerges as pivotal for a renewal of philosophy cannot but raise for philosophy itself the question of a *transmission* of knowledge that does not rely on the supposition of masterly teaching; “[Transmission] interests the philosopher in the sense that [. . .] a specific practice [psychoanalysis] raises radical problems” in this regard, but “the solutions that [psychoanalysts] provide to these problems” may well receive “singular applications at the level of other disciplines.”²¹⁴ Here philosophy should avoid founding the question of transmission on the wrong assumption that the fact that “there is no unity of the subject,” and hence no subject-supposed-to-know, could be

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²¹⁰ Lacan, “Réponses à des étudiants,” 205.

²¹¹ Lacan, 205.

²¹² Lacan, 205.

²¹³ Lacan, 210.

²¹⁴ Jacques Lacan, “Interview donnée par Jacques Lacan à François Wahl à propos de la parution des *Écrits*,” *Le Bulletin de l’Association Freudienne* 3 (May 1983): 7.

obviated by postulating that “there are two [unities],”²¹⁵ namely, that there is a unconscious subject-supposed-to-know. This move, “installing [in] the psyche a whole small population of unities,” Lacan says, “only redoubles the deadlock that the unconscious proposes to us.”²¹⁶

Fifth, and perhaps most importantly, what should nonetheless be involved in both psychoanalytic and philosophical solutions to the problem of transmissibility (with the former revolving around the formation of the psychoanalyst and the technique of the so-called *passe*) has to do with *formalisation*. As Badiou well sees, there is a strict connection for Lacan between the act that tears a hole in knowledge and the question of the transmission of knowledge, on the one hand, and the *matheme*, on the other (let us recall that, for Badiou, Lacan was the first in the twentieth century to put mathematics again at centre stage of *speculative* reasoning—against its anti-philosophical use in logico-positivism).²¹⁷ As Badiou equally well sees, for Lacan, transmissibility as formalisation is given only via the matheme as itself “the *impasse* of the mathematizable”/ formalizable—which *can* as such be formalised and thereby initiate transmission. Against this background, according to Lacan himself (who again does not refrain from openly speaking as a philosopher—“If you allow me to be a philosopher in my spare time”), the future of philosophy is adjudicated on whether it understands that “what [. . .] constitutes a concept is very precisely the function of a *limit*,” namely, of a matheme.²¹⁸ There will be philosophy as a philosophy that is “strictly speaking relating to the real” on condition that it constructs its concepts on an “indefinitely approachable limit.”²¹⁹

On the one hand, this might rightly give the impression that Lacan is here far too modestly limiting the future of philosophy to *this* side of the limit/matheme. On the other hand—and we have to admit that this remains a tension in Lacan’s arguments—he at the same time suggests that future philosophy can itself be a philosophy *of* the limit/matheme insofar as it can be—and in a sense has always been—a philosophy of mathematical *infinity* and the latter’s inherent impasses.

²¹⁵ Lacan, 7.

²¹⁶ Lacan, 7.

²¹⁷ See Badiou, *Being and Event*, 7.

²¹⁸ Jacques Lacan, “En guise de conclusion,” *Lettres de l’École freudienne* 8 (1971): 217; emphasis added.

²¹⁹ Lacan, 217.

Obviously, the tradition of *philosophy* rests on “the requirement of the One,” the Being-One.²²⁰ Yet *inasmuch as philosophy severs the link between the One and being in its ontological discourse, “where there is being, infinity is required.”*²²¹

We, Lacanian philosophers of the future, are therefore left with two—up to a point compatible—options: with Badiou, philosophy can turn into a meta-ontology of set-theoretical mathematics as ontology, where set-theory leads via—uncountable—infinity (as opposed to the bad infinity of an indefinitely approachable limit) precisely to the *matheme* as a productive formalisation—and then transmission—of the impasse of formalisation/mathematisation.²²² Better said, transmissibility as formalisation in *philosophy* is precisely what Badiou does *meta-ontologically* with regard to his use of ontological/set-theoretical formalisation as ultimately the latter’s formalizable impasse. With Badiou but also beyond Badiou, this very platform can subsequently promote a philosophical *para-ontology* for which the assumption that the One is not and only exists as an operation can be upheld practically—that is, ethically and politically—without contradiction only after contemplating the theoretically *undecidable* possibility of the One *as not-One as One as not-One* etcetera (what I have elsewhere called the self-deceiving God).²²³

In my view, this last passage is in the end mandatory, and the two options should merge into one, in order to prevent *Lacanian* philosophers of the future from themselves embracing a negative *Weltanschauung*. As Lacan lucidly warns us,

When one will make a course of philosophy . . . one will summarise my teaching and say: “What Lacan states is this—isn’t it?—he says that on the animal ladder [. . .] crack, eh! No more sexual relationship!” Which means the same thing as the origins of language—because philosophers are clearly not idiots. A speaking being has no sexual relationship! [. . .] It’s very funny as we will regain there the *totality of the world*.²²⁴

²²⁰ Lacan, *Encore*, 10.

²²¹ Lacan, 10.

²²² Of course, for Badiou—and for Lacan—the productivity of the impasse of mathematisation first and foremost concerns Cantor’s theorem, specifically when considering infinite sets.

²²³ See Chiesa, *Not-Two* and “Psychoanalysis and Agnostic Atheism.”

²²⁴ Lacan, *Lacan in Italia*, 75.

Clearly, for Lacan, it is far from granted that “good” Lacanian philosophers are exempted from surreptitiously endorsing bad philosophy.

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