

NOTES ON *MANIFESTO FOR PHILOSOPHY*

CH 1: POSSIBILITY

Has philosophy reached its end? Many say yes and many cite the “after Auschwitz” argument. B notes that among the disciplines only philosophy has taken responsibility onto itself for Nazism and Holocaust. B notes the “conceit” of this view, that philosophy is the principle of capture for the *Zeitgeist* that produced Nazism. But what if Nazism is not a proper object of philosophical thought? Everyone agrees that philosophy cannot think Nazism. But does mean philosophy is at an end, or just that “it is neither its duty nor w/in its power” to do so? What if Nazism was thinkable politically and historically, but not philosophically? So B proposes to study the conditions under which philosophy is possible. Otherwise, you’re giving Hitler a terrible victory by letting him kill off philosophy. This is a sort of second murder of the Jews who have figured so prominently in philosophy and revolutionary politics. Rather than give the Nazis this victory, we have to continue those endeavors that made the Jews targets of the Nazis.

CH 2: CONDITIONS

The conditions of philosophy are “transversal”; they are truth procedures: science, politics, art, love. But not all societies have all these conditions together at the same time, as did the Greeks. What philosophy does is to think the “compossibility” of truth conditions for its time. The first to do this was Plato, who established math as a prerequisite of philosophical study, who measured the poets against the break with myth by means of math, who studied love in the *Symposium*, and who posited politics as a condition of thought in the *Republic*.

The four generic conditions produce truths, but philosophy does not. Truths have evental origins; events are supplements to situations; they are inscribed by a singular naming, an “additional signifier.” The effects on the situation of this naming suspend the veridicality of the situation (we can have some fun and call this “truthiness”).

So what philosophy does is propose the unified conceptual space in which this naming of events takes place; it gathers together all the additional names. It thinks the “epochal disposition” of the generic procedures: *matheme*, poem, political invention, love. This is not the encyclopedia totalization of knowledge (which is only due to the ruling “count as one” of the situations), but the “thinkable conjunction of truths,” which punch holes in knowledge.

This means philosophy operates at the margins of situations / knowledges, in the crises, revolutions, etc of established social order. In other words, philosophy “compounds problems” rather than solves them, thereby constructing the “space of thoughts of the time” (remember that “thought” is not knowledge, but the pursuing of truth procedures following what might have been an event).

CH 3: MODERNITY

Plato posed the question: how are mathematics and politics ontologically compossible? The answer, the Forms, allowed him to think poetry and love as well. So a “period” of philosophy is that in which a certain configuration of the common space of thinking in the four truth procedures persists. What is the configuration of the modern period? In fact there is a sequence of dominant configurations: a) mathematics (Descartes and Leibniz); b) political revolution (Rousseau, Hegel); c) poetry (from Nietzsche through Heidegger). But even with this temporal change we can see the theme of the Subject as an invariant, as witnessed by its targeting for critique by all the “post-modernists.” So, are we still modern?

CH 4: HEIDEGGER VIEWED AS COMMONPLACE

This seems fine to me as a résumé of Heideggerian clichés of the late 1980s.

CH 5: NIHILISM

Two parts to this chapter, treating Heideggerian equation of contemporary global technology as nihilism.

First, B trashes the “reactionary nostalgia” of H’s technology discourse. Then B as provocateur: we don’t have enough technology; Capital holds it back. Besides, science has nothing to do with technology, as a comparison of the majesty of Cohen’s demonstration of the independence of the CH from w/in the ZF axioms to a toaster will show. Science qua science is in fact useless, and saying the Greeks were slaveholders won’t do as a counter.

Second, regarding nihilism: yes, it’s true that the sacredness of the bond (that which orders society) has been dissolved by capital. The lesson to be learned is that all bonds are the temporary results of operations binding together elements on a “neutral surface of computation” (cf. DG’s capital as BwO / socius). So that which is bound together to produce bonds is not in itself bonded, and “the reign of the multiple is the unfathomable depths of what is presented w/o exception” (55). B cites the justly famous passage from Communist Manifesto on the “icy waters of egotistical calculation.” [There’s a lot to think about here regarding capital as an “objective” social / historical condition for the thought of the multiple. See Hallward, 9-10; 237.] The key is that desacralization needn’t entail nihilism; it is in fact a liberating condition, enabling the truth procedures revealing being as multiple: “capital exposes the pure multiple as the foundation of presentation; it denounces every effect of the One as a simple, precarious configuration” (56).

So our epoch is neither technological nor nihilistic. Our problems have to do with the temptations of poets to erect local enclaves of the sacred and with negative images or counter-procedures to the other three truth procedures, which refuse the truth of the multiplicity of being: “archaic reactions” of fundamentalisms, messianic politics (including Marxism), occult sciences (instead of real science), and pseudo-bonds of sentimentality (instead of love).

So philosophy has not yet risen to the challenge of thinking “on level terms” with Capital (58). It hasn’t seized the occasion to think that man “has become irrevocably ‘master and possessor of nature.’” [We

will have to think about how B characterizes “natural situations.”] Instead, philosophy has clung to the resources of the linguistic turn as a priori structure of experience or as “House of Being.”

CH 6: SUTURES

Philosophy gets into trouble when it blocks the free play of thought needed to think the compossibility of truth procedures and instead “delegates” its function to one of its conditions, thus defining thought qua pursuit of truth AS science, politics, poetry or as love. This is a “suture” of philosophy to one of its conditions. [The point is that philosophy must freely relate to its conditions: it has to acknowledge that it doesn’t produce truths, but it can’t become the servant of one of those truth procedures – cf. “handmaiden of the sciences.”]

So, for instance, 19th C positivism is when philosophy gives over to science the job of producing “the completed system of truths of the time” (62). We still see this in strong “naturalism” in analytic philosophy. We also see politics and thought about politics reduced to liberal-parliamentarian management of capitalist society. Poetry becomes a cultural supplement, and love is eclipsed in favor of sex and sentimentality.

Marxism was also a suture, putting philosophy under the political condition, and putting the other truth procedures under politics as well. Hence the imbecilities of “socialist realism” and Stalinist art criticism – alive and well in some neocon circles: *Syriana* could not have been a good movie because of its message, whereas *Juno*, *Knocked Up*, *Waitress*, etc. are good movies BECAUSE they are signs of moral renewal.

Now of course Marxism and science is complicated, but if you reduce science to its techno-historical conditions, it’s still ultimately politicized. And ironically, politics itself cannot be thought by party Marxism qua guardian of the science of history, as witness the sad spectacle of the PCF during May 68. May 68 might have been an event: it certainly exceeded social scientific calculation of its condition.

A sure sign of suturing is claiming the end of systematic philosophy. Sure system as encyclopedia of knowledge backed by a supreme signifier (B mentions Aristotle and Hegel as attempts at such onto-theology) is impossible in the modern age of desacralization. [B as a thinking of the multiple is atheist.] But if you read “systematicity” as thinking compossibility of all four truth conditions, then of course B wants to be systematic. B sets out two conditions for systematic philosophy today: a) it must set the “evental naming of its conditions” and give a conceptually unified account of the four conditions; b) the space of thinking must be “exhibited from within.” IOW, philosophy has to be able to say what it does; it has to be fully self-transparent in its rationality.

Today what we see is philosophy sutured to poetry, so that’s the next chapter.

CH 7: THE AGE OF POETS

While philosophy was sutured to science and / or politics, poetry took over philosophy's function of thinking being and time, of thinking the common space of truth procedures. Philosophy doesn't become actively sutured to poetry until with Heidegger. Poetry in the Age of Poets was able to think "inconsistency and disorientation," the modern condition. B makes 5 numbered points.

1. Poetry thinks / performs the "destitution of the category of object," or better, the destitution of the object and objectivity as forms of presentation (and thus the subject is no longer the active partner of the object as providing necessary forms of objectivity [as in Kant]). So if being is subtracted from subject / object relation and the concomitant consistency of experience [again Kant], then poetry thinks the inconsistency of being.
2. Heidegger's move in suturing philosophy to poetry was to line up science / subject-object / knowledge vs poetry / destitution / truth. But now if it is the Age of Poets that is complete, rather than philosophy, then we have to de-suture philosophy from poetry. We can do this because now we can conceptualize disorientation, that which poetry could only perform during its Age.
3. Heidegger's falsification is to oppose poetry and the matheme. In fact, poets and mathematicians both think empty multiplicity. Poetry "blindly perceived" that the matheme was also questioning objectivity.
4. Each great poet has his own method of disobjectivation: by excess or by lack. And the subject is "terminated" by being absented or by "actual pluralization."
5. Celan is the completion of the Age of Poets (and hence of Heidegger).

CH 8: EVENTS

Crucial events allow us to continue the Cartesian strain of philosophy (rationalism / subjectivity).

Matheme: genericity in Paul Cohen: a discernable concept of the indiscernible as an unnamed, generic multiplicity delimited by no power of language. Thus truth makes a hole in knowledge: there is no way to quantify the relation of an infinite set and its power set (the CH is independent of the ZF axioms). At this point three great orientations of thought are established: a) nominalist thought: only admit constructible, nameable sets / objects; b) transcendent thought: admit the indiscernible, but only as mark of our finite inability to attain the standpoint of a "supreme" multiple; c) generic thought takes up the challenge. Generic thought is militant thought, since now truths are produced as subtracted from knowledge and sustained only by fidelity of subjects. The name of the matheme event is indiscernible or generic multiplicity, thus the being-in-truth of the pure multiple, thus the truth of being-qua-being.

Love: Lacan and the Two released from subservience to the One of fusion. Lacan is able to retain a thought of the subject, so a return to philosophy must pass through Lacan (must be compossible with Lacan). Lacan thinks the Two bcs he thinks the impossibility of sexual rapport, thus a generic multiplicity subtracted from knowledge.

Politics: the "obscure events" of 1965-1980: Chinese Cultural Revolution, May 68, Solidarity, Iranian Revolution. We haven't yet named these events; this shows how the event is "supernumerary" to our given language, our re-presentations (these events are against the state [of the situation]). Politics is the capacity to "faithfully stabilize" the naming of these events. Philosophy is conditioned by (but not sutured to) the political in that it must think how the politically invented naming of the obscure events is

compossible with the other events in math, love, and the poem. IOW, how are the obscure events to be named as attesting to the discerning of an indiscernible / generic multiplicity in the dimension of collective humanity?

Poetry: Celan asks that poetry be released from burden as that to which philosophy is sutured. The key here is to interpret the Celan / Heidegger meeting.

Philosophy's task is not to construct the encyclopedia of knowledge that would totalize the events; it needs to produce the "concepts and rules of thinking" so that we can "represent our time as that in which this event of thought has taken place."

CH 9: QUESTIONS

Three questions arise concerning the modern philosophy adequate to the time.

How to think the Two as independent of dialectics, especially in politics? Classical Marxism made antagonism part of representing the proletariat (class struggle), but it organized this in terms of capturing State power, thus setting up a global clash with insurrection and war as the only ways of severing the conflict of classes. But the obscure events show that this conception is outdated. Our task is now to think the Two outside any objective essence (i.e., class struggle); rather we have to see the Two as a political production, not as an objective / scientific presupposition. The Two is post-evental; which makes our most difficult task and our highest duty to be producing and thinking the Two at the same time. This is the "exercise" of the Two.

How to think truth without object and yet still hold to the category of subject? Thus the question is how to think the "subject without object." Only the generic procedure allows this, making the subject "appear as a simple finite fragment of a post-evental truth without object."

How to think the indiscernible? Only the matheme gets us free from the linguistic turn. Rather than thinking that the indiscernible, that which escapes language, is only accessible in an unbearable experience, we now have a concept of the indiscernible as generic multiplicity. We can discern the indiscernible *as* indiscernible.

B then finishes the chapter with a *tour de force*, thinking the bond of the three problems. This is done in a "complex space of thinking" tying together the objectless subject, genericity, event, and truth. The form of the gesture that thinks this is Platonic.

CH 10: PLATONIC GESTURE

Plato thought the relation of philosophy to its four conditions; he also battled sophistry. B sees "Great Modern Sophistry" (e.g. Wittgenstein) in the linguistic turn, especially the heterogeneity of language games (see also Lyotard), doubting pertinence of truth, rhetorical proximity to art, "pragmatic and open politics" or "democracy" (qua liberal parliamentarianism – B will have his own positive definition of democracy). It's no accident that the transition from sutured phil to the renewal of phil passes through sophistry; we have to pay attention to sophistry as symptomatic.

Contemporary anti-Platonism goes back to Nietzsche (e.g., truth as a lie told for the benefit of a certain form of life). Nietzsche is also anti-Platonic in the suturing of philosophy to the poem and the abandoning of the matheme; B's task is to cure Europe of anti-Platonism; the key here is the notion of truth.

CH 11: GENERIC

B proposes a "Platonism of the multiple." But what is a truth which is multiple in its being and (thus) subtracted from language? What is a truth that "will have been" indiscernible?

The key is "generic multiplicity" as thought by Paul Cohen. In BE we see that math is ontology (such that being qua being is inconsistent multiplicity as that which is presupposed by consistency produced by the counting as one in a situation) but that the event is "what is not being qua being." The generic is that which accounts for the effects an event has on a situation. A truth is that which, from w/in a situation, makes the presupposed inconsistent multiplicity (that which is counted) "come into the light of day."

There are three criteria for a truth with multiple as being:

1. A truth is an immanent production from within the situation.
2. But it is an event supplementary to the situation; anything named in the situation is only veridical, not true.
3. The truth of the being of a situation is generic multiplicity; a truth says only the inconsistency presupposed by any situation.

The four truth procedures are generic procedures. We can thus return to the "constitutive triad of modern philosophy" (being, subject, and truth). Being: math is ontology; truth is post-evental being of generic multiplicity; subject: the finite moment of a generic procedure. So there are only artistic, scientific, political, or amorous subjects; outside this there is only "existence, or individuality, but no subject."

So the events of our age are all generic; genericity is what founds the compossibility of the contemporary conditions of philosophy. Politics since 1793 is egalitarian and anti-Statist, tracing generic humanity and assuming "a communism of singularities." Poetry explores non-instrumental language, "offered to everyone." Math seizes the pure generic multiple w/o any presentative distinction. Love declares its fidelity to the pure Two founded beyond the chance encounter of persons and "makes generic truth of the fact that there are men and women."