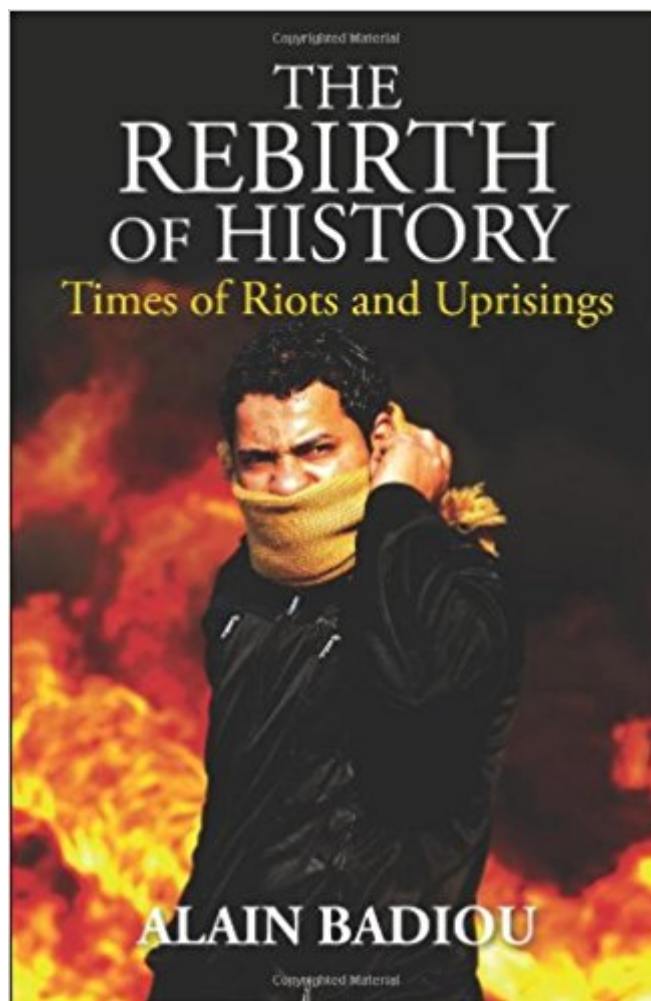


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The Rebirth Of History: Times Of Riots And Uprisings



Synopsis

In the uprisings of the Arab world, Alain Badiou discerns echoes of the European revolutions of 1848. In both cases, the object was to overthrow despotic regimes maintained by the great powers—regimes designed to impose the will of financial oligarchies. Both events occurred after what was commonly thought to be the end of a revolutionary epoch: in 1815, the final defeat of Napoleon; and in 1989, the fall of the Soviet Union. But the revolutions of 1848 proclaimed for a century and a half the return of revolutionary thought and action. Likewise, the uprisings underway today herald a worldwide resurgence in the liberating force of the masses—despite the attempts of the international community to neutralize its power. Badiou's book salutes this reawakening of history, weaving examples from the Arab Spring and elsewhere into a global analysis of the return of emancipatory universalism.

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Customer Reviews

“A figure like Plato or Hegel walks here among us!” —Slavoj Žižek
“An heir to Jean-Paul Sartre and Louis Althusser.” —New Statesman
“One of the most important philosophers writing today.” —Joan Copjec
“Scarcely any other moral thinker of our day is as politically clear-sighted and courageously polemical, so prepared to put notions of truth and universality back on the agenda.” —Terry Eagleton
“Shaking the foundations of Western liberal democracy.” —Times Higher Education Supplement

Alain Badiou teaches philosophy at the *École normale supérieure* and the *Collège international de philosophie* in Paris. In addition to several novels, plays and political essays, he has published a number of major philosophical works, including *Theory of the Subject*, *Being and Event*, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, and *Gilles Deleuze*. His recent books include *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, *Ethics*, *Metapolitics*, *Polemics*, *The Communist Hypothesis*, *Five Lessons on Wagner*, and *Wittgenstein's Anti-Philosophy*. Gregory Elliott is a member of the editorial collective of *Radical Philosophy* and author of *Althusser: The Detour of Theory and Labourism* and *The English Genius: The Strange Decay of Labour England?*.

Not very academic but really revealing about what's going on since 2008 crisis. Recommend every library, especially school library, has one copy at least.

This book is very short, and defiantly concise, which is good. Only 100 pages, 10 sections, very few footnotes - written straightforward and to-the-point. That is, the point in time which we all live in, as Hegel noted in his preface to the *philosophy of right*, "so philosophy also is its time apprehended in thoughts". Thus Badiou uses his philosophical tools and concepts to connect all points into a singular explanation of our time, in defense of Truth and Universalism. After putting aside some of the critique about the lack of political economy in his writings, Badiou describes the intertwining of today's capitalism and marxism. Then he outlines three forms of riots: immediate, latent and historical. Badiou uses the axes of first Localisation (weak, limited, or enduring and shared), then Temporality that enters by way of extension (imitative or qualitative). Non-uniform composition and accordance with an Idea are also crucial for a riot to become an event. Then he explains the dialectics of retaining fidelity to the event's idea, through organization of generic statements into strategy and tactics. While eradicating the states' naming and classification ("separating words") the movement installs some of its own, changing the symbolic values of the world. The event that is based on self-evident immanence, endures the states' obstacles, cutting through the identitarian imaginary average citizen put forward and marketed by the state (via opinion polls). This paves the way for a greater group-crossing sharing of an Idea, a way that is generic and universal, just as everyone acknowledged the Tahririan Event. Even though the protesters were statistically a minority, they still had a legitimacy to speak for the whole people. This legitimacy ought to be politically organized on the original basis of the historical pre-evental riot: the intensifying of the in-existent (i.e., those who are excluded, or included as excluded, from the previous formally held symbolic order),

so to replace representation with the purest presentation of a new political actor, who used not to exist. In the context of the Arab Spring Badiou suggests that (at least) the Egyptian and Tunisian events are in no way a simple call for democracy. This, for him, is the "Desire for the west" paradigm that must be and basically is deeply challenged, even transgressed. It is the opening of history following the event of our time (which takes place in the Arab World, the EU, USA, even Israel), and the potential novelty that it might bring into our world that Badiou is after. He systematically utilized his conceptualisation into a condensed version of a philosophical criticism against the fake liberal-leftist, and the right wing conservatives. Also, Badiou manages to combine the lowest reality and the highest theory into a beautiful melange of concrete description and abstract explanation. So overall, the book left me with a strange feeling. It is genuinely brilliant and simply stupid at once. Like non-euclidean geometry, if you see it, and (imagine) the depth in it, so it's a masterpiece. Otherwise, it's all an attack against everything which is liberal, or democratic, put simply - not or non-communist. Of-course, the depth to see is that in today's predicament, the true enemy of truth is democracy. So it is a revolutionary book for revolutionaries. Except that those revolutionaries that shall understand it, are probably pre-occupied reading all day and not engaged in too many revolutions. then, it's a pretty useless book.

its cool

This book truly explores the deep causes of recent riots with a shrewd eye on transcendental matters. This is not journalism, this is dissecting the truth.

I purchased this book because I was curious about this 'hot' french philosopher's take on the Arab Spring and related uprisings. I should have been wary based on the ridiculously extravagant blurb from Zizek: When a complete phony says someone is the new Plato or Hegel, that someone is likely as phony as Zizek himself. Anyway, Badiou's writing suffers from various compulsions that are characteristic of French intellectual fadism: the compulsion to introduce neologisms for what are, in the end, familiar ideas, the compulsion to use words as tools of obfuscation rather than discovery, and the compulsion toward abstraction, which tends to empty historical events of their human significance. The average two page article in Counterpunch contains more interesting and useful thoughts than this 110 page book.

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