

## PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPT OF THE XXTH CENTURY BY ALAIN BADIOU

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**Summary**

The article highlights the views of the famous, somewhat controversial French philosopher A. Badiou on the past century. In the context of current events, in particular, the current Russian-Ukrainian war, this understanding is relevant, since the past directly affects the present. This analysis provides an opportunity to better understand what the present century is and can be. The thinker explores the 20th century using the method of interiorization, looking at the subject of study from within itself, examining it through the prism of its own art, poetry, literature, documents, etc., rather than just dry facts.

A. Badiou emphasizes that the past century constantly sought to implement the project of creating a new man, proposed by F. Nietzsche, who was to appear as a negation of the old, imperfect man. It was an unsuccessful project, the new man was never created. But its creation was paid for with tens of millions of human lives.

This project was a project of rupture and foundation. The century emerged as openly voluntarist, contradictory, since the ontology of Life and the voluntarist rupture of its continuity turned out to be incommensurable. The means of creating a new man was terror in the Soviet era, in China, Nazi Germany, Cambodia, etc., and at the same time, the beginning of something qualitatively different was proclaimed. The philosopher concludes that the past century was a passionate fascination with the real, even in its most horrific forms.

The century constantly sought to achieve final victory by means of absolute war, supposedly the most just, and not local, unjust ones. Obsessed with the heroic, it did not think about the cost of this victory. The twentieth century emerged as a century of total division. Destruction as a method of creating something new has been used in all spheres of life. A. Badiou proposes a method of subtractive thinking to minimize differences and overcome total division. Since the division is not overcome, the 21st century will be a century of war – this is the disturbing conclusion the philosopher came to.

**Key words:** voluntarism, human project, new man, subjectivity of the century, destruction, split, passion of the real, subtractive thinking.

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**1. Introduction**

Understanding the past and the present is necessary because it allows us to see in which direction human progress is being made, how it is being made, to see this progress from the inside, to see where and how individual nations and humanity as a whole are heading, to draw appropriate conclusions and to a large extent to predict the future. A. Badiou, as a result of his research of the last century, came to the conclusion that the 21st century will be a century of war (*Badiou, A., 2019*).

The current Russian-Ukrainian war, which has already become a planetary phenomenon, confirms his conclusion and further exacerbates the problem of knowing the past and the present. How did it happen that in the 21st century, before the eyes of the civilized world, in particular the European one, a 140-million Nazi state was formed, which started this bloody tragedy? How will the world live after this war, how will it change? Will it draw the right conclusions from this bitter experience?

And what should be done so that the 21st century does not repeat this tragedy again? – these and other questions require deep philosophical reflection. The past is connected with the present by thousands of threads, visible and invisible. And since this is so, the study of the relationship between the past and the present will undoubtedly always be a relevant problem.

**The purpose of the article is** to highlight the philosophical views of Alain Badiou on the peculiarities of the development of the 20th century, his considerations regarding the avoidance of past mistakes by humanity for the sake of peace and security.

## 2. Analysis of recent research and publications

Separate aspects, facets, fragments of the mentioned problem were carried out by both Ukrainian and foreign authors. Among the Ukrainian authors, this problem was studied by: *Artyukh, V. (2010)*, *Lypynsky, V. (2010; 2013)*, *Hrushevsky, M. (1993)*, *Dontsov, D. (2005)*, *Pavlenko, Yu. (1996)*, *Proleev, S. (2017)*, *Sabadukha, V. (2019)*, *Syrotova, A. (2005)*, *Potulnyzky, V. (2002)* *Franko, I. (1986)*. This problem was the subject of reflection by such foreign authors as: *Nietzsche, F. (2016)*, *Jaspers, K. (2015)*, *Aleksievich, S. (2017)*, *Applebaum, E. (2023)*, *Toffler, O. (2000)*, *Spengler, A. (2005)*, *Harari, Y. (2018)*, *Fukuyama, F. (2020)* *Snayder, T. (2023)* etc. The interrelationships of the past and the present, the new and the old, the meaning of history and nonsense, the factors of historical development, determinism and voluntarism, humanism and totalitarianism, man and the era, the influence of the spirit of the era on man and vice versa, the stages of historical progress, the globalization of the modern world, etc. were analyzed. What is happening to us today has already matured to a large extent in the last century. A. Badiou analyzes the last century, looking at it from the middle of it.

And he will see in it reality and cruelty, hysteresis and avant-garde, finite and infinite, humanism and anti-humanism (*Repa, A. 2019*). Based on his research, the philosopher will conclude that the twentieth century, like no other, demonstrated the "passion of the real." In view of the above, it is interesting and relevant to analyze A. Badiou's views on the peculiarities of the historical development of the last century

### 3. A. Badiou on the origins of the tragedies of the 20th century

A. Badiou is a writer and philosopher. He belongs to the direction of French philosophy, whose representatives strive to create so that philosophy and literature do not exist each by itself, but are intertwined, because the concept and life cannot be separated, since the invention of writing ultimately consists in giving the concept a literary life. Thanks to this invention, the thinker believes, "a new figure of the subject is created", a new subject appears, a new battle for the subject is carried out (*Badiou, A. 2019, p.240*). This "new battle" is necessary because the subject created by Descartes on the basis of ratiocentrism is far from life, because it is rationally and technically imperfect, because there are dark sides to life, something hidden, unclear – that's why French philosophers made efforts to discover such a subject. A. Badiou also made his contribution to this creative work.

In order to better see the subject of his understanding, the philosopher gives this century the opportunity to express itself, feeling it, listening to it, feeling it from within itself, "in interiorization" (A. Repa). "I strive to think it (i.e., the century – M.B.) and to show how conceivable it is," notes A. Badiou (*Badiou, A. 2019, p. 29*). For him, it is very important to get as close as possible to the subjectivity of the time under study. He wants to know how the century thought, what it thought about itself, so he turns to the documents of that era, works of literature, poetry, art and seeks to capture in them the spirit of the time, its feeling of itself. This method worked effectively. The century suffered from cruelty, in some periods it was beyond measure. Politics at some stage became tragic, so it is important to understand why this happened? Where are the origins of the tragedies of the twentieth century? And he comes to the conclusion that "from some point the century was carried away by the idea of changing man, creating a new man" (*Badiou, A. 2019, p.31*).

The "new man" was created by the Bolsheviks, Maoists and German Nazis. But in order to create a new man, it was necessary to destroy the old, previous man. And he was really destroyed without pity. In parallel, they discussed the old man as he is. The project to create a new man was so radical, writes A. Badiou, that in implementing it, no one took into account the uniqueness, unity, and unrepeatability of human life. "The project of a new man in this sense was a project of rupture and foundation," it was implemented, maintaining the same subjective tone at the level of history and the state (*Badiou, A. 2019*).

According to the philosopher, this project was particularly unsuccessful, because a new person was never created, except, perhaps, the Soviet one, and tens of millions of people were destroyed by the project. Nowadays, there is no project to create a new person, everyone, on the contrary, is trying to preserve a natural, organic person, especially often lawyers write and talk about this in connection with the practical application of the theory of natural human rights. But people are being "improved", work on modifying the species is being carried out at the genetic and technical level without any project, notes A. Badiou. He warns that this work is driven by the automatism of profit, benefit, which is very characteristic of the century under study with its such active "calculating" thinking (M. Heidegger) (*Heidegger, M. 1998*) and this is alarming, because the consequences can be very negative. A radical change in humanity is taking place and in this sense, loyalty to the mental gaps of the beginning of the century has been preserved. This technical automatism also works against man.

In the thinking of the last century, man is thought of as a very imperfect, human animal, a partial being transcended by life, who is not in accordance with either Life or History. Therefore, the century thinks in categories that rise above man: class, party, nation, proletariat, race, etc. And this is something more than an individual, therefore it is fair to sacrifice him, so imperfect, for the sake of the prosperity of this greater. The twentieth century is a century of violence against man, life, history, in contrast to the nineteenth century, which wanted to agree with them. The twentieth century opposes itself to history, tries to forcefully push or push it into certain directions and frameworks. It is enough to turn to the theory and practice of Soviet Bolshevism to be convinced of this. This century, according to A. Badiou, is frankly voluntarist, since its subjects apply violence to history in order to force it to serve them. The century is permeated with questions of the relationship between life and voluntarism, and how can one not see here a direct connection of this voluntarist thinking with the ideas of F. Nietzsche, in particular, his will to life and to power (*Nietzsche, F., 1993*), the idea of the Superman, who does not accept generally accepted rules, neglects universal human values (*Nietzsche, F. 1993*), which did not contribute to the harmonious coexistence of subjects and history. The incommensurability between the ontology of life and the theory of voluntarism, their distinct imbalance,

observed throughout the century, according to A. Badiou, is its effective subjectivity. The dialectic of will and life determines the constant dissonance, inconsistency, tension that permeates this entire century (*Badiou, A. 2019*).

Given this characteristic, the continuity of life can be realized only in a voluntarist rupture. And here again there is a connection with the work of F. Nietzsche, in whom the superman can appear only by overcoming the man who is the bridge from the animal to the superman. To realize the idea of the superman, it is necessary to "break the history of the world in half", that is, to make an absolute rupture, to change the civilization that has gone bankrupt (*Nietzsche, F. 1993*). The twentieth century imposes a heroic interruption on the continuity of life by means of terror, therefore the essence of the century-beast is life. But it pours out waves of blood, suffering, multiplies death. This century treats man with extraordinary ruthlessness. In the poetry of the first half of the 20th century, notes A. Badiou, the inseparability of life and death is affirmed.

#### 4. Characteristics of the 20th century in the philosophical visions of A. Badiou

The philosopher focuses on the contradictory nature of the last century, which, despite misanthropy, thinks of itself as the beginning of a new era, lives by the promises of a qualitatively new existence. The subjectivity of this time period claims to be a qualitatively new organization of the relationship between the beginning and the end. There is so much violence that it becomes almost the main means of solving pressing problems. A. Badiou emphasizes that the century is very ambitious and at the same time miserable, its chance is lost, despite all its claims and promises to implement a qualitatively new one. It doubts itself, loses its viability. Realizing the promises of the nineteenth century, it breaks ties, transforms into the barbarism of a bankrupt civilization. It multiplies the horrors of the real for the sake of a bright future, compromising this bright goal, because the means of achieving it, obviously, are very different from it. A. Badiou rightly notes that the revolutionaries

This century was most fascinated by the real. It was the maximum rapprochement with him up to the adoption of his most terrible forms (*Badiou, A. 2019*), (*Aleksiyevych, S. 2017*), (*Badiou, A. 2005*). A. Badiou concludes that this is an era that has lost its meaning, an era of meaninglessness. While the nineteenth century was the century of knowledge, the twentieth century became the era of denial of knowledge. In this century, M. Heidegger will write about "paths that lead nowhere" ("Holzwege"), that is, about the same loss of meaning of the epoch, will criticize the attitude of the rational-centric epoch to being, aimed at the maximum spread of power over this being, the model of man as a "lord of being" instead of a "shepherd of being" (*Heidegger, M. 1998*); (*Heidegger, M. 1997*). He will criticize the metaphysical tradition as "forgetting being", neglecting its sovereignty, the attempts of a person to rise, to dominate him, to frame him with a Procrustean bed of certain concepts and principles ("preconceptions"), etc. (*Heidegger, M. 2022*). In literature, for example., I. Bonnefoy presents an image of a path that is erased, and a feeling of a complete world is created. The era doubted the comprehension of real morality and scientific knowledge. This is a time of a kind of absurdity, in which the individual is only an "unstable sign of forces and conflicts" (A. Badiou) that dominate himself. This is an alarming image of a person of this century, because a person of a conflict type will create the same existence around him.

The century is permeated with "disjunctive synthesis" (J. Deleuze), disunity, non-dialectical connection between necessity and will, irreconcilability that guides all thoughts of this voluntary time. Voluntarism is becoming a subjective will, slowly transforming into a cult,

and it literally absorbs Europe in the first half of the twentieth century, and not only Europe. Violence is blessed with the creation of a new person. The use of the old man as a material is justified by the struggle for the new man. And so the century has been constantly at war, being a violent continuity, engulfed in the idea of an absolute war, some of the most important, the greatest, which will end all other wars, more local, less important. It is very effective century, writes A. Badiou. It did what it declared, and it was the passion of the real, which is the key to understanding the whole century (*Badiou, A. 2019*). But this efficiency, transformation is very aggressive, exhausting, murderous, through them the real "on the other side of good and evil" unfolds (F. Nietzsche). Liberalism and humanism become declarations, their content is emasculated. The subjects of the century do not care about the price paid for the implementation of a new person's project. And the correctness of this conclusion is difficult for A. Badiou to question. This indifference is sometimes simply outstanding, as in the case of the Soviet experiment. For the creation of the species *homo sovieticus* or "red man" (S. Alexievich), tens of millions of lives of others, people of the old type, were paid. The intensity of the action exceeded moralistic sentimentality. It was a century of absolute war as a way to establish a qualitatively new era, so they did not care about its cost. The expressive passion of the real went off scale (*Badiou, A. 2019*).

A characteristic feature of the last century, according to A. Badiou, was its obsession with achieving the final, and the century undertook to implement it by means of destruction. The destruction of the old imperfect person ensures the appearance of a new one. Through the total destruction of all sorts of local "wrong" wars, eternal peace is achieved. Science destroys old theories by means of destruction. Art also uses destruction, destroying the relative world of representation. However, the philosopher rightly notes, the destruction of the old and the creation of the new are different tasks. The century lives by implementing a model of conflict, mismatch, aggressiveness, imbalance, war, which will mark the beginning of a new historical and planetary order based on the ubiquitous schism at the interpersonal level, between the old and the new, between civilizations, peoples, cultures, etc. The model of irreconcilability is a fighting model of the real, so it appears as a split at all levels. Applying the philosophy of numbers, the philosopher argues that in the last century. The law of the world becomes not 1, but 2, which does not imply any harmony, correspondence, unity of the parties, their balance, etc. (*Badiou, A. 2019*). The subjectivity of the century, therefore, is in the paradigm of the final war and establishes a non-dialectical contradiction between foundation and destruction. These are alarming conclusions given the interdependence of the past and the present, old and new, subjective and objective, etc.

Twentieth century, according to A. Badiou, asserts the effect of ignorance, unknowability, at the same time like the nineteenth century asserted the effect of knowledge and cognition. Twentieth century is definitely demonstrated the passion of ignorance. It creates appearance, passing it off as reality, emphasizes the perception of appearance as art. For him, a mask, fiction – this is the real!. Thus, it demonstrates the gap between visibility and reality. That is, the twentieth century. appears far from harmony and alignment, orderliness and partnership, which means that the next XXI will be in many ways similar to the previous era.

In order to somehow overcome the model of splitting, A. Badiou proposes the idea of subtractive thinking and believes that the discussion of subtractive thinking and destruction is the central discussion of the century. While destruction is destruction, destruction, subtractive thinking about negativity is able to overcome the blind imperative of destruction (*Badiou, A. 2019*). It is more moderate, more careful, more caring, imbued with preservation, not destruction. It demonstrates a passion that seeks to find a minimum of differences as opposed to a maximum of destruction.

## 5. Conclusions

Summarizing the above, it should be stated that in the philosophy of the last century A. Badiu reflects a number of his characteristic features. In particular, it is emphasized that the basis of the entire last century is the project of creating a new man, the project of rupture and foundation, the project of destroying the old man as a prerequisite for the creation of a new one, so it turned out to be very unsuccessful.

It is noted that the twentieth century opposed to history, challenged it, wanted to conquer it and thus asserted itself as a voluntarist century. It demonstrated the incommensurability of life continuity and voluntarism. This century was at the same time the end, the decline and the beginning of a new one, the founding of a humanity reconciled to itself, which is also impossible to reconcile. The century was very effective, obsessed with achieving the final, developed according to the model of irreconcilability, so it appeared in various directions as a schism. The contradiction between destruction and foundation permeates the entire past century, so the next century, predicts A. Badiu, will be a century of war. His conclusion turned out to be prophetic, the current century, being a continuation of the past, is already experiencing the Russian-Ukrainian war, which has become a planetary phenomenon (Applebaum, En. 2023); (Bernard-Anri, Levie 2022); (Snyder, T. 2023); (Fukuyama, F. 2022).

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