TOWARDS EXPERIMENTATION AS PRAXIS: PRODUCING NOVELTY WITHOUT THE EVENT

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ABSTRACT**:** In this article I explore the possibilities of experimentation as a non-foundational praxis for introducing novel ways of being into existence. Beginning with a discussion, following Bataille, of the excess of any thought, I argue that any action in the world is necessarily uncertain. Using the insights of Derridean deconstruction combined with Badiousian truth procedure I argue that experimentation offers a means for acting from this uncertain position. Experimentation takes advantage of the play and uncertainty of our understanding of the world as a means of moving towards more progressive political positions.

KEYWORDS**:** Experiment, Bataille, Derrida, Badiou, sequence, general economy, restricted economy, general complexity.

INTRODUCTION

In previous papers (Human, n.d, Human and Cilliers 2013, Preiser 2013) I have argued that our thinking about the world can be seen to exist within a particular economy of thought. Following the notion of a general economy as developed by Georges Bataille (1998, 1991, 1985) and read by Jacques Derrida (1978) alongside a reading of general or critical complexity as developed by Edgar Morin (1992, 2007) and Paul Cilliers (1998,2000,2002,2005; see also Human et al n.d, Preiser et al. 2013) I argue that there is always an excess of possibilities to any thinking about the world. In a later article (Human n.d) I explored the possibilities of general economies of thought for approaching novel ways of living, different from the demands of current neo-liberal capitalism. Here I argued that a general economy of thought allowed us to develop processes for realizing novelty which do not depend upon an event, typical of Marxist approaches to radical change and everyday understandings of novelty alike. Rather than simple reform, I argued that the excessivesness of thought makes possible an *akairological* politics (Boer 2013) which allows us to enact processes in the present against that which is reprehensible. This process I labelled 'experimentation.'

Experimentation is made possible because we are always forced to work with a 'restricted economy' (Human n.d). In order for our models or thoughts of the world to hold any meaning means that we must constrain and exclude. However, what we exclude always haunts our thinking in the present. This outside or excessiveness of current thought Bataille (1985,1991) labelled the general economy. The implication of general economies of thought is that there is always a wealth of potentialities and possibilities at play which remain unrealized both 'inside' and 'outside' our economies of thought (Human and Cilliers 2013). This excessiveness means that a politics based on a general economy of thought cannot abide by the distinctions of reform/revolt and the certainties of a politics based on the distinction between the inside and the outside. Rather, the politics of general economies of thought are by their very nature uncertain. An appropriate form of politics for this style of thinking then is one which harvests the possibilities of this uncertainty, reaps the potentialities of their play. The praxis of this politics is experimental in its very nature.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) have offered 'experimentation on ourselves' as a means of revealing lines of flight. Taking cue from a different set of philosophers, George Bataille, Jacques Derrida and Alain Badiou (2001, 2003, 2007, 2008) I wish to further expand on the notion of experimentation and the possibilities it holds for emancipatory politics. In this paper I adopt and adapt the work of Bataille, Derrida and Badiou, despite perhaps the difference between Derridean deconstruction and Badiousian militant action, in order to give further flesh to the possibility of experimentation as a form of praxis. In contrast to Badiou's dependence upon an event and the necessity for hypothesizing some 'truth', by borrowing from the praxis of deconstruction, I try to develop a means for realizing alternative futures which does not depend upon the notions of truth and event and the concomitant *kairological* or religious connotations such terms hold (Boer 2013). At the same time, I seek to escape the conservatism or restriction of liberal reform. My aim is to use the possibilities inherent in the idea of truth procedure (Badiou 2008) without the notion of truth as part of the description of experimentation I aim to develop.

GENERAL/RESTRICTED ECONOMY/COMPLEXITY

Elsewhere, following both the work of George Bataille and General complexity theorists, I have described how any approach or understanding of the wold is subject to a set of errors (Human and Cilliers 2013). These errors are a result of the fact that we are forced to act on models of the world which are necessarily incomplete. In order for our models to have meaning means that we must constrain and exclude (Cilliers 1998, 2005b). Peter Allen (2001: 24) provides a brief overview of some of the

assumptions we make in order to make these exclusions possible. The first of these assumptions is that we can draw a distinction between the system and its environment, we create a boundary. Secondly, we reduce the heterogeneity of the parts of a system into a typology by assuming (thirdly) that all individuals are of some average type. Finally, we assume that processes run at average rates. A result of these assumptions is that we exclude that which does not fit within the parameters of the model we have created. Although we need to keep these assumptions in mind we cannot escape them (see also Cilliers 1998). They are constitutive and essential to our understanding of any complex phenomenon. What this does mean however is that we need to exclude that which does not fit into the taxonomy or reason of the model we are trying to understand (Human and Cilliers 2013). George Bataille (1985, 1991) explained these exclusions by making a distinction between what he termed 'restricted economies', which only take into consideration that which retains use value, and 'general economies' which aim to take into consideration the excess of any experience in the world (see also Derrida 1978). However, we are never able to include excess into our thoughts about the world. Excess by definition exceeds reason (Derrida 1978: 255 quoting Bataille). When we aim to understand or think something it implies that we exclude. Hence Bataille aimed to escape these limits through notions such as 'sovereignty' and 'inner experience' and in the undertakings of the radical group Acephale (Bataille 1985, 1988, 1993). However, another view on these limitations is held by the general complexity philosophers Peter Allen (2001), Paul Cilliers (1998,2001,2005a) and Edgar Morin (1992, 2008) who argue that these limitations are important because they make thought possible. What needs to be engaged with, according to Cilliers (1998), are the implications of acknowledging always incomplete frameworks. It is this more productive thinking about these limitations which I adopt here and attempt to think through in order to give some flesh to the notion of 'experimentation.'

It is important to note that what Bataille labels a 'restricted economy' or Edgar Morin (1992) labels a 'restricted' approach to complexity only acknowledges a certain range of possibilities. By excluding that which is seen as superficial, as non-utilitarian, restricted complexity only acknowledges as possible the range of latencies which sit coherently inside this economy of thought. In contrast, in what Morin (1992) has labelled 'general' approaches to complexity a certain range of possibilities is granted. However, by acknowledging that our models are always incomplete, and subject to forces we cannot account for, either from the outside or from play, these economies acknowledge that sets of potentialities exist which we can never pre-determine (Human and Cilliers 2013, Human 2011). From a general economy or complexity perspective then we are forced to work with a restricted economy whilst acknowledging the limits to this economy. As Plotnitsky (2001:21-22) notes:

> It is crucial that general economy entails a deployment of restricted economy. These relationships are irreducible insofar as general economy is the science of the relationships between what is accessible by restricted-economic means and what is inaccessible by any means, whether those of restricted or those of general economy. The inaccessible itself can only manifest itself by means of particular configurations of effects, each of which effects is manifest within a restricted economic regime, without allowing itself to be comprehended by restricted-economic means, and thus establishing the relation to the incomprehensible, the unknowable, the inaccessible.

The unknown can only be described from the position of the known, from the restricted economy under which we operate due to effects it may be having on a system which we cannot explain. We can obviously say nothing about the unknown, except that an unknown exists. What we can know, according to Bataille (1986a:89) requires a certain stability in the things known. This stability is reflected in the limitations of reason which create a restricted economy.

WHAT IS AN EXPERIMENT?

With the distinction between a restricted and a general economy in mind we can begin to define the rough contours of experimentation[1]. An initial definition would be: an experiment is a procedure which allows one to intrude into the general economy by means of working with or playing with the resources of the restricted economy at hand. In other words, an experiment allows us to move beyond our current knowledge by using the resources we have. The process of experimentation means that one will constantly 'push away' from what we have whilst increasing the stock of available resources (and of course forsaking another possible stock of resources). Venturing 'into' the general economy implies that we establish a limit, a limit that must be transgressed but which cannot be comprehended by the terms inside the economy we are currently deploying (Bennington 1995:48). This is because we can only operate from a restricted economy and thereby only understand phenomena which sit in some way within that economy.

Experimentation is a double handed movement, at the same time as pushing into the instability and uncertainty of the general economy, we depend upon the restricted economies upon which we build platforms of resources (material and epistemological) which make this exploration possible. It is the uncertainty of knowledge, created by the

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[1] My interest is in developing a definition of experimentation which is broadly applicable to a range of fields. In this regard I consider the artist who pushes the boundaries of their art into another form, the activist who creates a new means of engaging with the world or the community that establishes new means of relating to one another all modes of experimentation. I am using the term in its broadest sense then, not limited to scientific experimentation.

limited frameworks we deploy, which makes experimentation possible. If knowledge were certain or complete, we would not be able to experiment as we would be forced to follow the programme, the 'pattern' established by the certainty of this knowledge. Experimentation depends upon us being able to manipulate our current stock of resources. It depends upon there being play and uncertainty in the relationships between both epistemological and material resources. Yet, play between resources does not mean we can do *anything*, this amounts to the same as saying we can do nothing. Play depends upon constraints; it depends upon limits, as it is these limits which not only inspire the experiment in the first place but also that which makes it possible. We can only conceive of alternative means of using existing tools because we are limited by these tools, because we have used these tools in all possible ways and have reached their limits, we are forced into creatively using them differently. If we had all the tools available, we would not be able to come up with new means. For example, post-structuralist social science arose out of the well-worn path of structuralism. It was because the limits of structuralist ideas and theories had been reached that a new reading of these ideas became possible in the form of post-structuralism.

Yet, play does not only 'open' an economy up, it is not the case that if we 'played' enough we would have a completely free economy. Play makes possible new experimental procedures or inspires new ideas only by at the same time, contingently, closing other possibilities off. Furthermore, as I will come to illustrate, play does not contribute towards new knowledge unless we pursue, and thereby constrain, the consequences of this play. Therefore (Hans 1979:823),

> [i]f freeplay is literally pure chance, then anything is possible, if freeplay has rules of its own, anything may be possible, but some things are more possible than others. And this, I suppose, is but another way of saying that it seems to be as fatuous to argue for a totally indeterminate freeplay as it is to argue for a totally centred freeplay. Freeplay is precisely the continual working out of the relationship between various "non-centres" and complete randomness. However nostalgic it may be, it seems irrefragable that freeplay limits itself through its own play, that the very process of freeplay confirms some things and denies others.

Play is dependent upon constraints as much as freedom. When we experiment it is not simply that anything can happen, that we can conduct *any* experiment. Experimentation is constrained by the tools we have at hand. Experimentation is contingent upon the context under which we experiment.

Experimentation then simultaneously disrupts while it affirms. It 'discovers' new territory whilst at the same time making that territory possible through existing resources. The process of experimentation, as Derrida (1989:33) argues with the

process of invention, 'distributes its two essential values between these two poles: the constative – discovering or unveiling, pointing out, saying what is – and the performative – producing, instituting, transforming.' This distribution does not lead to a higher synthesis, does not lead to some deeper knowledge in the sense that there could be some bottom to experimentation. Rather (34-35),

> [t]he infinitely rapid oscillation between the performative and the constative, between language and metalanguage, fiction and nonfiction, autoreference and heteroreference, etc. does not just produce an essential instability. This instability constitutes that very event – let us say, the work – whose invention disturbs normally, as it were, the norms, the statutes, and the rules. It calls for a new theory and the constitution of new statutes and conventions that, capable of recording the possibility of such events, would be able to account for them.

The constative and performative, the oscillation between exploration and refinement in experimentation, creates a fundamental instability. This instability forces one to establish new means of dealing with knowledge so that it can be reincorporated into a restricted economy. However, the effects that experimental knowledge carries, along with the fact that when we experiment, we intervene in the world in some way, implies that there is no a priori place for this knowledge[2]. We cannot determine beforehand what these statutes will look like, nor do we have control over the effects that this knowledge may carry. In this sense, the interventions of experiment enter into what Edgar Morin has labelled an 'ecology of action'. As Morin (2007:25) states:

> from the moment an action enters a given environment, it escapes from the will and intention of that which created it, it enters a set of interactions and multiple feedbacks and then it will find itself derived from its finalities, and sometimes to even go in the opposite sense.

Experimentation exists within an ecology of action because the resources we use in an experiment exist in relationship with a broader environment. This principle forces the discipline of pursuing experiments to that point at which new statutes are made in order to deal with the effects of our knowledge. If we do not 'follow through' on the knowledge we create, it is entirely possible that this knowledge be co-opted for the system we are labouring to undermine. Experimentation, then, is not pure play, it is disciplined and dedicated play. We have a responsibility in the process of experimentation to account for the possible effects of what we produce. This responsibility is shared by the community around which experiments are established, but it is still the concern of the individual producing the knowledge as to whether he or

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[2] In certain ways this agrees with Badiou's assertion that the 'subtractive' nature of truth forces one to establish new forms of knowledge (see Badiou 2008 117-118).

she agrees with the ethic of the particular community which validates the claims made. In fact, this is essential: dissent is an important resource for maintaining the excessive possibilities of experimentation. Once the sequence of experiments becomes too rigid for the exploration made possible by dissent, it stops being experimentation as it begins to abide by the restrictions of a single possibility (see also Feyerabend 2002:31).

This implies that the experimental sequence can never be perfect; one can never comprehensively determine the results of an experiment. An experimental sequence will of course produce a result but there will always be excess to that result, there will always be another set of sequences one may follow. In fact the listing of further possible experiments is the mainstay of conclusions to scientific papers. There is always some other experiment we could have made, some other line of research which we could have followed, which once again produces new excess.

This does not mean that an experiment is only excess, that the production of excess is the 'end' of an experiment. This is not a Bataillean heterological 'process' in which excess is the end or the purpose. A sequence produces a particular rationality and discipline, constraints which make an experiment possible. However, these constraints also imply that an experiment must be able to fail. In a certain sense, of course, an experiment cannot fail. One can only get results which could not have been predicted from the restricted economy one is operating from. However, when we experiment we have a certain intention in mind, there is a project towards which we are working (see below). If we grant this, then we have to acknowledge that our experimental procedure is always open to a certain pervertibilty, whether it be in a good sense (the results lead us in a new fruitful direction) or in a bad sense (in which our project seems further away and less possible). Thus, the pervertibility of the promises of experimentation is the ground for its very existence (Derrida 2007:459). If it were not pervertible, it would simply be the following through of a possibility already in existence; it would produce nothing new in the world.

In this way experimentation resembles deconstruction. The results of a deconstruction, being the product of that which it deconstructs give it an uneasy status. It is not 'the other', or 'the outside' which maintains a certain status in its relationship to 'us' or the 'inside.' The process of deconstruction challenges such simple appropriations of dissent. 'In that respect it remains very gentle, foreign to threats and wars. But for that it is felt as something all the more dangerous' (Derrida 1989:61). Like experimentation, 'Derridean deconstruction … effects a disjuncture in the given conceptual order of the present that opens it up to novelty, to the future' (Skempton 2010:5). But the novelty produced by deconstruction is not the product of radical breaks, it is not post-evental novelty (Human n.d). Evental thinking can often lead to

an unacknowledged complicity drawn along the lines of the previous order. As Derrida (1981:24) argued:

> Doubtless it is more necessary, from within semiology, to transform concepts, to displace them, to turn them against their presuppositions, to reinscribe them in other chains, and little by little to modify the terrain of our work and thereby produce new configurations; I do not believe in decisive ruptures, in an unequivocal "epistemological break," as it is called today. Breaks are always, and fatally, reinscribed in an old cloth that must continually, interminably be undone. This interminability is not an accident or contingency; it is essential, systematic, and theoretical. And this in no way minimizes the necessity and relative importance of certain breaks, of the appearance and definition of new structures.

The fact that we always operate from a restricted economy, implies that we exclude. The ever changing conditions under which we work means that we need to constantly reveal the new possibilities for action as they appear and this process can never end. Experimentation reveals what Gibson labelled affordances, the possibilities available in an entity if one were skilled enough to use them (Harré 2003:37). More importantly, as with deconstruction, experimentation illustrates to us the possible affordances which already exist within our economies, those we already have the skills to use. It is important to reiterate at this point that sequences of experimentation can occur in any domain which seeks to subvert current conservatism. The type of knowledge which can be produced by experimentation is not limited to the formulas, axioms or results classically associated with science. Therefore, when I argue that experimentation reveals certain possibilities to be pursued, I do not imply that this type of knowledge is necessarily written knowledge.

INHABITING SEQUENCES

When we experiment we are always acting simultaneously on uncertain and certain grounds. Our experimental interventions always straddle, without overcoming, this paradox. This implies that we are not at a remove from our experiments, we do not exist at a distance from these experiments. We inhabit our experiments. This inhabitation is partly a result of the fact that we build current experiments on top of previous ones, we depend upon the knowledge and material resources left available from other experiments, which also left behind the excess of the choices they made. In other words, we always experiment in a context with a history and not in a vacuum. We cannot escape inhabitation (Derrida 1997:24). It is a product of the contingency of our knowledge. Contingency is constitutive of experimentation, a product of the exclusions we make (Cilliers 2005b).

However, we need a way to think through the transgressive dimension of experimentation. The term 'sequence', from the work of Alain Badiou (2008a), can be adopted in order to describe a particular direction or order of experimentation. As Badiou (2008a:162) argues:

> ... [E]mancipatory politics exists through sequences... It is never the incarnation or historical body of a trans-temporal philosophical category. It is not a descent of the Idea, nor a destinal figure of being. It is rather a singular pathing (*tracé*) ... But this pathing has no principle linking it to the traces that have preceded it.

Rather than stating that the pathing of a sequence has *no* principle linking it to the traces that have preceded it, I would rather argue that the links between sequences are always contingent and provisional. As we pursue a particular sequence of experiments and new knowledge is brought to light, we may find that what we thought was related was entirely unrelated and vice versa. As stated above then, we do not pursue a sequence as if by law, we cannot predetermine what future experiments we will make based on current knowledge (this does not mean that we cannot imagine a future towards which we work, see below). Also, this does not mean that an experimental sequence is itself lawless, that we can do anything and consider it an experiment.

As Badiou (2007b) argues concerning truth procedures, I argue concerning experimentation, the 'experimental ethic' does not deliver a hero, but a discipline. Experimentation does not deliver a hero because of the contingency of experimentation. It is always uncertain whether the particular discovery brought about was discovered by an individual or the product of propensities already existing in the history of ideas. The desire to mark the great 'men' of history and 'their' discoveries is the product of a romantic vision of individual genius existing in isolation and not as the product of social interactions or historical contingency (Montouri and Purser 1995). It is also the product of restricted economies which cannot see any excess to the possibilities they recognize. The genius then is the resort to the mythical to explain what was not considered by these economies. Experimental discoveries come about through the discipline of following through on a sequence of experiments. Therefore, from this discipline, we are able to determine what is considered a positive result, a worthwhile trace to follow, but this (Badiou 2007b:394),

> ... does not prescribe in any way whether such a term should be examined before, or rather than, any other. The procedure is thus ruled in its effects, but entirely aleatory in its trajectory... The rest is lawless. There is, therefore, a certain chance which is essential to the course of the procedure.

If we cannot pre-mark the end of a sequence, if the trajectory of the sequence is lawless, it implies that experimentation cannot simply be considered as a means to an end. The excess of a sequence, the results it produces, the opportunities it provides for

other diverging sequences, all imply that we cannot conceive of experimentation as coming to an end. The 'ends' of experimentation are the possibilities offered for alternative modes of life[3].

As the initial definition of a sequence I presented above illustrates, a sequence also produces a collective activity. This is because similarities are produced between what were different economies of thought. A sequence is not an isolating experience, rather it serves as a point of divergence and convergence in which relations are lost or made. It is this meeting of different economies in a sequence which establishes a different rationality, which gives cause to another economy as the different members participating within the experiment need to deal with both the certainties and uncertainties of the new sequence they are involved in. As Badiou (2001:117) notes concerning truth procedures:

> Every time a plurality of individuals, a plurality of human subjects, is engaged in a process of truth, the construction of this process induces the construction of a deliberative and collective figure of this production, which is itself variable.

However, it is important to note that this collectivity and the deliberative processes it produces are an ideal case. What one often finds, rather, is that the deliberative process makes dialogue possible but only because it needs to express differences amongst the participants. Collective action then, among participants in a sequence, is in a constant state of convergence and divergence as individuals find similarities and differences in the results of their experimentations. Yet this is a necessity for the continuation of experimentation in general, different strands could not be followed if the excess of the process were not differently valued, if different results were not emphasized. Were it not for such divergences, experimentation would have ended the first time the first sequence of experiments ended.

FORCING THE DREAMWORLD

The notion of experimentation endorses transgression as a principle. Experimentation pursues unacknowledged potentialities beyond the limits of the current system. However, this does not allow us to determine which transgressive acts are more worthwhile than others; it still does not guide us in deciding which excess of experimentation we should pursue. Indeed, if we state that a system is open, that its horizon of potentialities is indeterminate, how can we distinguish which is a worthwhile sequence and which not? We therefore need to establish some mechanism

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[3] I am not arguing that we do away with calculation. Rather, I am trying to develop a philosophy of experimentation that diverges away from the narrow confines of the calculated rationality of current capitalist society. The over-emphasis on ends, on expected and beneficent results, negatively constrains the possibilities which may arise in a more open and free conception of experimentation.

for determining which potentialities are worthy of pursuit and which would only lead us into further trouble. We need a measure to determine whether a particular sequence would be worthwhile or not.

For a sequence to be experimental implies that it is not determined by current economies which only pursue recognized possibilities. This is the only possibility of experimentation, that our action be distinguished from the *modus operandi* of the current system. Therefore, we need to *imagine*, not only to establish a goal, but also to create the possibility of examining the features of the world as we find it, away from the economy which dictates our current possibilities. As Feyerabend (2002:22) so eloquently puts it, 'we need a dreamworld in order to discover the features of the real world we think we inhabit.'

This was what we both lost and gained with the end of modernism. Modernism's drive towards the future created an imagination of utopia, created the possibility to conceive of a different world. Unfortunately, this drive was constructed around a very restricted economy, which was a State based and forced collective endeavour. What we gained with postmodernism, despite the dystopian critiques it made possible, was the possibility of imagining worlds free from the restricted economy of modernism, worlds built on models separated from restrictive science and economics. In one sense, this critique individuated the possibility of utopia, it moved away from utopia as the collective, restricted endeavour of bureaucratic or financial elites to the dreamworlds of individuals. A consequence of this was that postmodernism lost the possibility for collective action. This unfortunately makes real resistance to current conditions, where resistance is dependent upon a collective refusal of the market, impossible. Postmodernism then discarded the *telos* of modernism, it argued for the radical openness of the future, which is both optimistic and despairing. Its optimism lies in the radical openness which makes alternative modes of life possible. It is despairing because with the loss of this *telos* our future has, ironically, become determined by the lack of alternatives to the current market economy (Bauman 1992:53). The loss of a *telos*, in an artistic, scientific and political sense has forsaken us to current conditions and possibilities. We need a *telos*, not teleology. Not teleology because that implies a restricted economy, but a *telos* that can shift and change as the conditions we labour under while working towards it changes.

Badiou's notion of 'forcing' may help us in an initial attempt at conceiving of such a non-teleological *telos*. As Peter Hallward (2001:87-88) explains in a footnote to Badiou's (2001) *Ethics*:

> … Badiou explains that 'forcing' is the process imposed by the affirmation of a truth, whereby the order of knowledge in a situation is transformed such that this

> previously 'unrecognizable' affirmation can be made to *belong* to the situation…
> (Emphasis in original)

Or as Badiou (2007b: 403) states:

> A term forces a statement if its positive connection to the event forces the
> statement to be veridical in the new situation (the situation supplemented by an
> indiscernible truth). Forcing is a relation *verifiable by knowledge*, since it bears on a
> term of the situation (which is thus presented and named in the language of the
> situation) and a statement of the subject-language (whose names are 'cobbled-
> together' from multiples of the situation). What is not verifiable by knowledge is
> whether the term that forces a statement belongs or not to the indiscernible. Its
> belonging is uniquely down to the chance of the enquiries. (Emphasis in original)

What is important to note from the above quotation is that a forcing is verifiable
by knowledge; it is possible to empirically determine the validity of a statement which
forces a change in the encyclopaedia. Forcing is not a process of making unverifiable
statements and outlandish imaginings. The terms that force a change are verifiable.
Remember, that for Badiou, the post-evental subject stands radically outside the
encyclopaedia of the State; it is the realization of something the State can never
understand. Therefore forcing cannot be entirely verifiable by the knowledge and
encyclopaedia of the present; otherwise it would be another product of the State. It
would simply be a possibility which the State recognizes. This is due to the fact that a
forcing arises out of the generic which is infinite and thus, from the perspective of the
situation, we can never fully determine what a forcing is trying to establish. One can
understand the concept of the generic but it will always appear as if it could only exist
in another world. A forcing comes forth in the situation as a promise or the
'announcement of a new art to come' (Hallward 2003:135).

However, it seems important to acknowledge that at all times our knowledge of the
world is partial and contingent upon previous knowledge and the effects of memory
(Human n.d). We have no choice in this but to work from this uncertain ground. This
includes the possibility of our working towards the future. We can, based upon current
knowledge (indeed what else would inspire us to develop a means of moving beyond
the current condition?) state that we need another order, another way of behaving in
the world. An imagination helps us to ascertain which terms need to be forced and
which rejected (see also Newman 2010:7). In many ways, this was the role of the
manifesto in modernist art. The manifesto was there not only to declare that a new art
form is being born but also to make place for that new art form to take shape in. The
manifesto begins to imagine a future in which this art form will take place. However,
the manifesto often precedes the art and it cannot thereby dictate what the art would

be, indeed the eccentricity of the artist often defies such a programme (Badiou 2008b:138). As Badiou (139) argues:

> It is thus in the nature of declarations to invent a future for the present of art….But a programme is neither a contract nor a promise. It is a rhetorical device whose relation to what really takes place is only ever one of envelopment and protection.

The dreamworld we establish is not a programme for action and it is not a method. It is simply a tool for examining the present from the perspective of the ideal we have imagined. But this ideal itself transforms as we interact with the world – some aspects of it may be lost, others may be emphasized. This is because our imagination is always a product of the contingencies of the present (Montouri and Purser 1995). But it is important to have this imagination in order to create the space for the project to begin. Adhering too strongly to the manifesto is the failure of zealots, not having an imagination is the failure of conservatives.

So a forcing can be seen as the realization of a potentiality in a situation, however this realization, like the horizon of potentialities, can never be fully determined. Furthermore, as our *telos* of the future shifts with the conditions at hand, we can never fully state what the future will look like. In a sense this is a sort of *iterability* (Derrida 1977) orientated towards possible futures. Therefore, Badiou's notion of forcing is useful as it contains an anticipatory dimension. However, this dimension is not anticipation in the sense of a final product to be completed, a forcing is never completed, it is always partial.

> Forcing concerns the point at which, although incomplete, a truth authorizes anticipations of knowledge, not statements about what is, but about *what will have been if the truth reaches completion* (Badiou 2008a:138, emphasis in original).

In other words, a forcing allows us to pursue a particular sequence under the authority that this sequence will be rendered veridical in the new order brought forth. A forcing allows anticipations such as, under the new situation, such and such an art form/ mode of living/ statement will be acceptable. In other words, as Badiou (138) puts it, a forcing is 'a method that limits the correctness of statements to the anticipatory condition of the composition of an infinite generic subset.'

A forcing then is premised upon the *hypothesis* of what will have taken place (193) if this forcing were successful. The hypothetical future does privilege certain notions above others, it by definition excludes. Yet this is necessary for the possibility of action, in order for an action to be distinguishable it needs to exclude other possibilities. However, the type of forcing I am trying to conceive of here, in contrast to the foundationalist/universalist conception used by Badiou, is of a hypothesis which is fundamentally open. That is, it is a hypothesis which allows for an anticipation of a

result yet which is willing to modify itself based upon the feedback it receives from the result that actually materializes. This is a forcing based on the principle of the manifesto. Perhaps we would need to adapt the style of thinking we use or the concepts and resources we use to make possible the forcing. Due to the openness of the future and the ecology of action we enter into the hypothesis will always need to be adapted to the changing circumstances which the present imposes upon the future.

We can see that a complex system maintains a certain horizon of possibilities towards which it develops. A restricted economy will only recognize possibilities as constituting this horizon, whereas from the perspective of a general economy this horizon is fundamentally indeterminate, due to the possibility of events as well as the existence of latent and maturing potentialities. We anticipate the future of the current system based upon the possibilities which it, itself, matures towards. Based upon the present and past of this system we are able to anticipate what the future of this system may look like. The more we accept the horizon of a system as the teleological future, the more we exclude and close down the hidden and latent potentialities which may be available to us.

This is why we need to constantly illustrate that there are more potentialities than the possibilities the dominant order recognizes in order to keep imagining what could be possible. This is so even with aspects of the system's development with which we may be agreeing. This is partly done by allowing for dissent within an experimental sequence. If we abide strictly by current possibilities, we may miss opportunities which could lead us into a better future.

Yet pursuing this excess also contains a strategic or subversive value. Excess is always that which is discarded from a restricted economy in order to maintain the coherence of that economy. It is that which is discarded because it upsets that economy (Stoekl 2007:21). We can see then that pursuing the excess or excluded of the possibilities towards which a horizon is developing may give us clues as to where a system's weaknesses lie. It may guide us in which strategies actively challenge the horizon of possibilities of the system and where we could 'poke' the system in order to produce alternatives.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have attempted to make an argument for the importance of experimentation as an emancipatory praxis. In contrast to restricted attempts, which seek only to reform the current system based upon the current horizon of possibilities, experimentation seeks to transgress this conservatism. At the same time, this transgression is not based upon foundationalist principles such as 'truth' or the
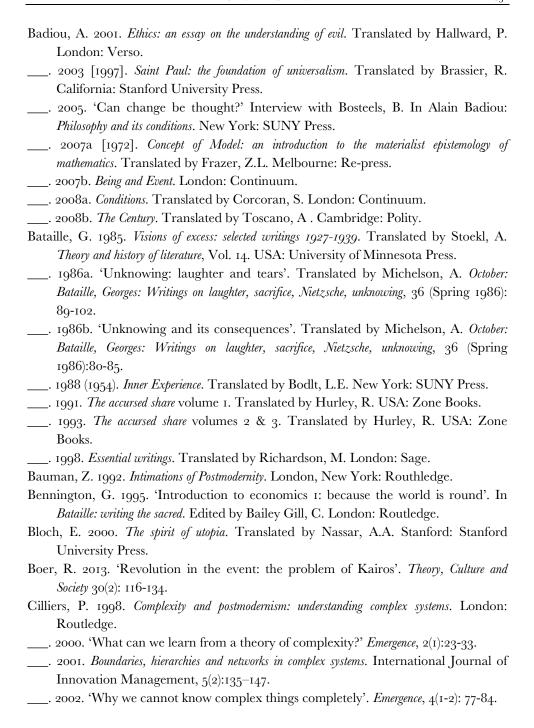
'generic' but is rather based upon the imaginative possibilities revealed by the discipline and play of imaginations made necessary by the uncertainty of knowledge. Experimentation then is an attempt to move beyond both the dystopian futures promised by 'high modernist' (Scott 1998) thought and the individuated utopias of post-modernism. Rather, through deploying the possibilities of post-structuralist thought, inspired by George Bataille, and the possibilities harboured by recent thinking of complex systems, I have tried to develop a mode of acting in the world which allows for contingency and change at the same time as pushing for transgression.

Experimentation is a means of imagining new worlds whilst working with the conditions of the present. Examples of these approaches can be seen in a recent documentary and academic research by Joana Conill, Manuell Castells and Alex Ruiz (2011) which explores the response of Catalonians to the 2008 economic collapse. This film illustrates the various small-scale projects in which people have attempted to develop alternative ways of living and relating to each other. All these projects are realized by means of using existing resources rather than by relying on grand-scale projects or events. These attempts at novel ways of living in the world reflect the potentialities which are unrealised under the current hegemony. This illustrates that through sequences of experimentation with existing resources we can reveal hidden potentialities which would have remained hidden if not for the pursuit of alternative means of engaging with others. None of these projects came about through the realization of the 'truth' but rather through small-scale attempts at changing present conditions and thereby revealed an alternative history of the present, which allows for a different sets of possibilities in the future and novel ways of relating to each other. What these empirical examples demonstrate is that there is enough in the world. We need not wait for an event to allow for change, nor is the end of history upon us. By engaging with the world we keep alternative possibilities alive. As Ernst Bloch (2000) once noted, 'I am. We are. That is enough. Now we have to start.'

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