"MIS-READING OF LEIBNIZ: DELEUZE AND WHITEHEAD AGAINST BADIOU" BY JAMES JUNIPER[1]

A critical article review: how can philosophers talk to politicians?
by Thierry de Gorguette d'Argoeuves[*]

Leibniz, Whitehead, Deleuze what a philosophical family reunion! And the rebel cousin, Badiou, is also invited. Attracted by the title and the abstract, the author must admit that this ambitious article shows remarkable scope and research, yet doesn't fully deliver what could have been expected.

James Juniper, a professor at Newcastle University, presented this paper in September 2009 at a conference organized by the Australian Political Studies Association[2]. As much as he is correct when he mentions a "genealogy" constructed by Deleuze, and when he pinpoints the convergence of thoughts which makes for the "modernity" of Leibniz, as such we see little of what is announced in the abstract about "the intention of highlighting the implications of these readings for political theory".

Among others, one ultimate goal of philosophy is to highlight potential individual and societal paths to give politicians a better vision for them to design new schemes, influence trends and better understand where their contemporaries are heading. A reader of the article with little initiation in philosophy would hardly find a clear path to political reality.

So what is James Juniper attempting? How can we try to translate it into tangible ideas for our politicians?

The article is a superb attempt at grasping the lineage of the Fathers of Process Philosophy. This school of philosophy has a heritage dating from Heraclitus, progressing through Leibniz and the actualization with modern mathematics summarized in the Monadology[3], and culminating in Bergson and Whitehead who was crowned "diadoche" ("*leader of the school*") by Gilles Deleuze in *The Fold*[4]. Whitehead published "*Process and Reality*"[5] (PR) in 1927. He developed a "philosophy of organism" based on the "*description of dynamic process*" (PR Part 1, chap 1, sect II, p7).

In a nutshell, in Process Philosophy, changes are permanent. Processes are the results of "*appetition or conatus*" (kind of desire) and "perception". From "potentialities", processes lead into "actualities". Whitehead re-uses the Lebnizian "appetition" to describe this internal force ("elan vital" or strive in Bergson) which tend to (ap)prehend, to anticipate, the next event, the next actuality. The process results in a

---

*Thierry de Gorguette d'Argoeuves is a PhD Candidate at the Assumption University Graduate School of Philosophy and Religion. He is a Lecturer at the Graduate School of Business, teaching Management of Information Systems. He is also the President of the International Association of Business Communicators - Thai Chapter.

change of status or decision. For Leibniz, we look at an inflexion point, for Whitehead we consider the merging of vectors representing as many internalized experiences or external influences. In mathematical vocabulary, it refers to differential. Differences can be tiny ones and perceived without self awareness, but can also represent complex multiplicities as seen in differential equations.

James Juniper makes a detour through Heidegger. One good thing about this is that he can introduce the word "intuition". Why is this critical to the article? The "being" is always "in between" multiplicities of potentialities and choices of actualization. How would we qualify this state of mind? The virtual. Considered as a "nearby reality", a virtuality extracts all resources from the self to gather what's required for the best decision by the self.

And this is where the author would like to insert Bergson[6] in this lineage of process philosophers. Also a mathematician like Leibniz and Whitehead, he calls eventually on Berkeley[7] that we could as well include in the heritage. "*Movement is reality itself*"[8]. Bergson is at the core of the "event" when he demonstrates that "*the transition is made by imperceptible steps from concrete duration, whose elements permeate each another, to symbolical duration*". Bergson reconciles the cold mathematical approaches with our daily experiences by suggesting the recollection of the whole of the self for the purpose of a free choice, resulting from a free will, from potentials onwards to actualization.

And here comes Deleuze with "*The Fold*"[9] as mentioned in the article. May the author add "*Bergsonism*"[10] (BERG) as a required reference when talking about event and process philosophy. What triggers the Deleuzian "unfolding" (a kind of unconcealment, an event) is now related to intuition, to intelligence and eventually instinct. The "*two floors of the baroque house*" construct are now better connected. Deleuze brings in with Bergson the missing ingredients to Process Philosophy: memory as "virtual co-existence", "differences in kinds" besides "differences in degree". It allows Deleuze to insert the virtual between the potential and the actual (BERG p42-43). And true enough, as James Juniper posits, Deleuze introduces a philosophy of differences. Modern life brings the virtual reality into our virtualities emphasizing again how important the virtual is for the building of the self and his identity.

Juniper here introduces Badiou. Sure enough, Badiou[11] doesn't belong here. As a materialist philosopher, Badiou's reading of Leibniz has to be purely based on the logic[12] of the determinism contained in the "sufficient reason". What James Juniper says about the "schemas of torsion" shows precisely that Badiou has no illusion about Idealists. The event is a novelty and Idealists can't superimpose their schemas to resisting realities. Does this constitute a "misreading" of Leibniz? Yes, probably, when we consider how Leibniz has influenced modern philosophy. No, as the Leibnizian "harmony" and God defined "best of the possible worlds" leave little space for free will. If events are "presupposed", there is not much that philosophers can advice the politicians.

Charles Hartshorne translated well Whitehead's thinking in "Reality as a social process". When he states "*we do not say normally that events "exist", rather we*

say they occur or are actual"[13], he points at the continuous - and accelerating - changes in our societies. What then is the real meaning of Process Philosophy for Political Sciences?

Politicians can't be observers. They have to anticipate. They are therefore continuously between potential and actual. Preparing the society, the communities, the individuals, they should induce more potential for better decision making processes by the civil society stakeholders by referring to a philosophy of differences.

Politicians have to insert their proposals and decisions in multiple containers of shared knowledge. Those represent experiences aggregated in a common memory, a society's culture and history, made of multiplicities of possible and potential futures.

Politicians will have to take into account the continuity of social processes and instill novelties with the right timing for them to be included in the stock of "Collective Intelligence"[14].

Relations and associations are among the keywords of Process Philosophy. People have now common tools to share opinions. The "prehension" and the "appetite" are now enhanced through networks of monads who are now better equipped to actualize what they have collectively virtualized. The last US election for Presidency is eventually the best example the author can provide. Indeed, all main social networks as well as three million mobile phones[15] were being continuously fed by Barack Obama's team with fresh news (often before the media), thus creating potentialities that each voter would include in his or her thinking process. Moreover, it resulted in two types of actualities: the first

one is what is called "viral marketing", reflecting the dynamic construction of virtual communities and transforming potentialities into possibilities. The second one brings us back to Leibniz. Alone in the polling booth, aren't we like Monads in their room with no windows? On the verge of casting our ballots, we are virtualizing all accumulated potentials before making our decision actual.

This article is good news: process philosophy is back and Political Sciences are trying to make use of it.

Endnotes

[1]This article is available on-line at: http://www.pol.mq.edu.au/apsa/papers/Refereed%20papers/Juniper%20Misreadings%20of%20Leibniz.pdf accessed on July 21, 2010

[2]See references at the Macquarie University, Faculty of Arts site: http://www.pol.mq.edu.au/apsa/index.html accessed on August 28, 2010

[3]GEORGE WILHELM LEIBNIZ - he Monadology - 1714 - translated by Robert Latta - http://philosophy.eserver.org/Leibniz-monadology.txt accessed on 25th June 2008

[4]GILLES DELEUZE - The Fold - University of Minnesota Press - 1993 - chapter 6, p76

[5]ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD - Process and Reality - An Essay in Cosmology - The Free Press - 1978

[6]HENRI BERGSON - Essai sur les donnees immediates de la conscience (Time and Free Will) - PUF - 1927

[7]HENRI BERGSON - The creative Mind - Dover Publications, Inc - 2007 - chap IV, p93

[8]Ibid - p119

[9]GILLES DELEUZE - The Fold (Le Pli) - University Press of Minnesota - 1993

[10]GILLES DELEUZE - Bergsonism - Zone Books - New York - 1991

[11]ALAIN BADIOU - Being and Event - Continuum - 2005

[12]ALAIN BADIOU - The Logics of Worlds -

(Being and Event II) - Continuum - 2009

[13]CHARLES HARTSHORNE - Reality as a Social Process" - Hafner Publishing Company - preface p22

[14]PIERRE LEVY - L'Intelligence Collective - Pour une Anthropologie du Cyberspace - La Decouverte - 1997

[15]See in particular the articles in the Guardian and the Times: http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2008/nov/10/obama-online-strategy http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1640402,00.html accessed on August 28, 2010