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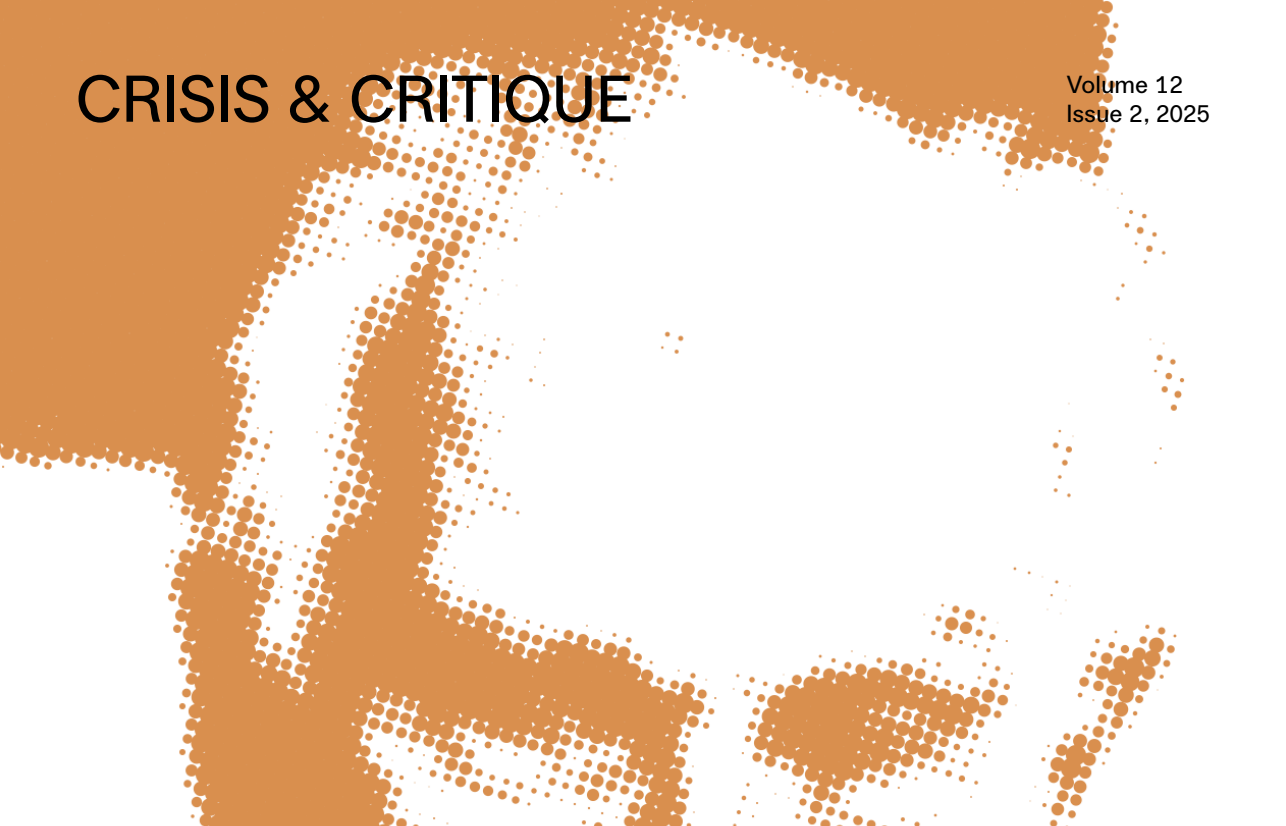

Alain Badiou

Philosophy, History, and the Transformations of the Dialectic

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Alain Badiou: Philosophy, History and the Transformations of the Dialectic

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Alain Badiou: Philosophy, History, and the Transformations of the Dialectic

Frank Ruda & Agon Hamza

Once it was once contended that "*dialectic* is one of those ancient sciences that have been the most misjudged in the metaphysics of the moderns, and in general also by popular philosophy, both ancient and recent." It was, for example, frequently "been regarded as an *art*, as if it rested on a subjective *talent* and did not belong to the objectivity of the concept."[1] With this conceptual complaint, Hegel asserts that dialectic is not just gimmickry, not just a bag of tricks, even though modern man is prone to assume so. It is just too detached from our every-day experience and at the same too difficult to be systematized. What is it then? It must be something like art, a form of practice that ultimately amounts to subjects performing some tricks well. In short, the modern seem to think that dialectic is sophistry, at best.

But, this was Hegel's position, dialectic is not sophistry – even though it might take something from sophistry and make it work differently – and it is also not merely subjective. Rather it is a form of objective and conceptual thought, it is a form in which the concept as such operates that after its Greek period needed a proper modern reinvention. To reinvent and transform the dialectic – within and against modernity's problematic initial reception of it – did not only mean to profoundly rethink negativity – that which is not. It also meant to on the one hand historicize dialectics itself by historicizing how that which is not is a determining factor for the very form of thought; and it meant, on the other hand, to dialectically formalize the very concept of history or historicity, even of that of dialectics.

Philosophy therefore was inherently linked to dialectics. This is what not only allowed to formulate a concept of history or historicity – and thus the concept of transformation or change – , but to even historicize dialectics itself. "How to dialectically account for the historical transformations of the dialectic?", now started to become a philosophically pressing question. For what is it that is not in the dialectic if the dialectic is a formal system of that which is not? How to formalize that which escapes dialectical formalization?

Alain Badiou, by far one of the best known French philosophers alive today, has made one of the most monumental proposals of how to reply to these questions. His reinvention of philosophy in times of its apparent uselessness, self-imposed weakness or outright demise has been dedicated, courageous and principled throughout. But Badiou did not place philosophy's renewal simply within the framework of the university discourse. Only in 2025, Badiou ended his seminar of over forty years, which included reflections on current events and their ideological pertinence, discussions of new types of subject-formation as well as dense systematic and philosophical elaborations or logical analyses of symptoms of contemporary capitalism that sought to grasp the present time in the form of thought. Badiou has also not only attempted – probably successfully (in our view) – to reinvent dialectics

and its account of historicity, but also to rearticulate what is philosophy. Already in 2009, with the publication of *Being and Event 3*[2], he completed the book-appearance of his philosophical system. In stark difference to the mass of thinkers who cannot stop continuing until something, usually death, forces them to, or who insist on philosophy being the discipline of the – ultimately unanswerable – question, he has proven that to think philosophically not only means to think systematically, but also to think with the aim of conceptual completion. Completion here does not at all imply that things have come to an end, rather Badiou's system is one that even reinvents the very understanding of what it means to end and what it is to to think things through to the end and to make an end. This led Badiou to formulate a novel concept of the absolute.

This is not only to say that Badiou does not leave things unresolved[3] – even though this is true and it marks a difference to many of his predecessors or contemporaries (just recall the names of Althusser, Derrida, Lacan, Lyotard, Lacoue-Labarthe, Nancy and many others). The reason for this particular difference can certainly be linked to Badiou's unashamed reaffirmation of the idea of the philosophical system, which seemed and seems monstrous and outdated to many. But it is that very systematicity that enables specific forms of knotting concepts together, be they being, non-being and thought; or being, subject, truth to produce elaborate conceptual consequences.

That Badiou reinvented not only dialectics and thereby historicity – by periodizing dialectical thought itself – but also the very form of philosophy is, obviously, proof enough that he is a thinker that needs to be appreciated and evaluated on his own terms. Neither a Hegelian, Sartreian or Lacanian – but a peculiar self-declared Platonist, a proponent of a Platonism that he first had to invent so that he could affirm it.

However, Badiou does not start from scratch – he is a historically attuned thinker. Which is why he takes another step from where we seemed to previously have encountered an impasse. An impasse of philosophy – thus of forms of dialectics and their account of historicity – needs to be understood and formalized properly to then be tackled. This is why Badiou, from the very beginning of his conceptual labour, was astutely aware of the historical – and philosophical – conjuncture his thought was placed in and of the impasses which his system-aspiration had to pass through.

This is not to say that Badiou is a historicist or just a historical materialist. Already in the late 1980s, he formulated harsh critiques of the obsession with historical contexts and of the prevalent identification of philosophy with its own history that led many postmodernists, Marxists, deconstructivists, natural scientists and psychoanalytically inspired thinkers to align themselves with a problematic form of asserting an end, the end of philosophy.

Against such willing and self-incurred acceptance of conceptual defeat, Badiou endorsed a form of affirmative forgetting of philosophy's apparent deadlocks and its historical limitations and dared to begin again: by directly addressing the impasses of the historical conjuncture and by transforming the very ontology of these impasses. It meant to take another step in a direction that seemed to lead nowhere and to force an opening where there seemed to be nothing but a wall or piles of ruins.

Is Badiou thus a peculiar thinker of reinventing (also the concept and operation of) sublation? His system clearly – and from its beginning – reworks and reinvents the category of negation and with it the very concepts of dialectics. By unfolding the idea that negativity knows not only different forms but forms that cannot be derived from one another, Badiou sought to articulate the consequences of his creation, an affirmative dialectic. This never did – as a common misperception has it – simply give precedence to affirmation over negativity. Rather affirmation becomes a particular form of putting negativity to work. Applying this very idea to the attempt of systematizing (the forms of) negativity itself, Badiou once noted that Plato created the thought of negation that we call dialectics, Hegel systematized it and he, Badiou, transformed it.

What does this grandiose and systematic transformation and reinvention amount to? What do we have on our hands if we have a complete account of a novel – now properly materialist – dialectic? This last question is especially pressing, as a materialist dialectic is a dialectic of constitutive incompletion. Is there a finally found complete form of logically conceiving of historical incompletion? A matheme of historicity? Do we here encounter a relationship between Badiou and a peculiar form of (non-)sublation?

We invited a diverse array of thinkers to respond to these questions. In the following you will read what some of them replied.

With this issue of "Crisis and Critique" we bring together a group of well-known readers of Badiou and new voices, of those who have been skeptical at times and those who have been rather dogmatic. Our aim is to celebrate the achievement of a thinker whose extraordinary endeavor can hardly be underestimated. At a public talk – we believe in Belgium – Badiou once declared the success of his philosophical enterprise and stated "Philosophy is me (la philosophie, c'est moi)". This issue of "Crisis and Critique" seeks to celebrate philosophy by asking: what is "Badiou" the name of?

1 Hegel 2010, p. 742.
2 Badiou 2022.
3 But it is crucial that Badiou emphasized over and again that this does not mean that its system solved all problems; however it provides the means to do so. Therein his system can be seen to have another similarity to Hegel's.

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A Sketch of a Portrait of Alain Badiou's philosophy

Judith Balso / Judith Badiou

Let us first explain this title. This is a sketch because, at this point in my life, I did not have the time for a project of this magnitude. This is a portrait because it is an attempt to look at Alain Badiou's philosophy as one looks at the portrait of a living being, or as this portrait looks at you, from the point of view of what the painter has captured of him. Nietzsche wrote in *Beyond Good and Evil*: "Iti s not easy to learn what a philosopher is, because it cannot be taught: you have to 'know' it from experience-or else you should have enough pride *not* to know it. [...] – [and the conditions for philosophy, F.R.]: only very few people are familiar with them, can be familiar with them, and all popular opinions about them are false."[1] This is why the ambition of this sketch of a portrait is not to reconstruct or discuss the theses or hypotheses, but rather to make tangible what the philosophy of Alain Badiou traverses and what it carries for all of us, what some of its gestures and of its acts are. It is a portrait so that we can see another face than the grimacing, the painted ones that imagine themselves to be what we wish to see when we look in the mirror today. Instead of the hideously multiple faces of contemporary brutes and of their terror, a valiant and beautiful face of thought.

In the same book, Nietzsche also wrote: "Little by little I came to understand what every great philosophy to date has been: the personal confession of its author, a kind of unintended and unwitting memoir; and similarly, that the moral (or immoral) aims in every philosophy constituted the actual seed from which the whole plant invariably grew."[2] This discovery, initially destined to remove from the philosophers their claim to impersonality, to take from them this mask that is too often placed over their oeuvres by themselves as well as by their readers, will, over the course of the book and of time be turned around and become, in a way, a supreme praise, a decisive criterion of what is worthy of the name of philosophy.

Today, too many are such that they represent philosophy as an exercise far removed from life, as well as nourished by impassive and recondite questions, out of reach due to its language, in short, confined to another world. But any philosophy worthy of the name draws, on the contrary, its source from vivid, even agonizing questions. And he or she who asks and grapples with them does so because a point of obscurity weighs heavily on them, like a curtain that limits their view, or a wall with which they collide without being able to cross or destroy it. The truly philosophical work of thought in this case is a tireless endeavour that does not abandon the question; it always returns to it, deepens or circumvents it, because to elucidate it is the condition for continuing to breathe and to hold on to the world. Alain Badiou could therefore have written: "The philosopher comes in where a question is lacking. He attempts to contribute to the formulation of the question.... a philosopher is attracted by any field in which it's clear that a question is lacking."[3] Philosophy brings together two thinkings, two terms, initially foreign to each other, and whose relationship, or non-relation, raises questions.

Many people, who are neither scholars nor scientists, perceive that Alain Badiou's philosophy exists in this way. Hence, I believe, the gratitude they express towards him when they meet him by chance in the street, sometimes without ever having read him, and only having heard (of him).

To sketch this portrait, I will allow myself to work from memory and without concern for exhaustiveness. This is due to a lack of time, but above all because no portrait can ever capture the whole picture. It is always a question of restoring what struck you as worthy of being kept in view and looked at. Others (or I myself) will (later) verify the exactitude, if necessary.

Anyone who encountered Alain Badiou's work in the late 1960s came across two novels, "Almagestes" and "Portulans", accompanied by an essay, "The Concept of Model" (where philosophy and mathematics intersect for the first time), and a few articles published in the journal "Les Cahiers pour l'analyse", alongside some young Lacanians. One could also encounter the short films produced by Dina Dreyfus in which a young man with a cigarette spoke with some of the great French academics of the time. However, it was his novelistic work, his works of fiction, that occupied the largest public space at the time.

It is remarkable that this initial intertwining of philosophy and fiction will never cease. Many people interested in philosophical works neglect or consider as minor, works of fiction and theatre. This close interwovenness between philosophy and fiction is nevertheless essential because fiction comes into play whenever something is too opaque or obscure, too deadlocked, for philosophy to shed light on it by its own means.

"Almagestes" (1964) and "Portulans" (1967) therefore create complex literary forms in which we can first see an assessment of the Algerian War period, the stifling and deadlocked nature of French society that emerged from it, and the profound unease and malaise of a youth seeking to escape it. Then the risk, in the stagnant years of Gaullism, of being consumed by hopeless nihilism: "I preserved myself, I took care of myself. I undoubtedly gained time. But what can be done? After all, Cortase is declining at the same time as me. I did not invent the sand on which I am stranded." "I, if one can say I, result from this book." In this way in "Portulans" the dark years are described that immediately preceded the blossoming, of the events of "May 68", which no one foresaw.

More surprisingly, from the early 1970s onwards, while intense involvement in revolutionary politics delayed but also matured the beginning of the strictly philosophical oeuvre. The feverish writing of "L'echarpe rouge [The Red Scarf]" anticipated the ordeal that would mark the end, that was still to come, of the communist revolutions. Underneath the conscious political activity, thereby plodded, through the bias of theatre, the anxified prescience of the flaws and shortcomings of these first revolutions. Three artists brought together by a common vision—Antoine Vitez, the director; Yannis Kokkos, the set designer; and Georges Aperghis, the musician—perceived and magnificently conveyed

how the play draws an extraordinary line between a luminous tribute and a melancholic tomb.

In the mid-1990s, the LePenism began to wreak serious havoc by allowing deformed political figures to appear on the parliamentary political scene. In the series of comedies about "Ahmed le Subtil [The Subtle Ahmed]", the characters of Moustache and La Pompestan brought these grotesque colours to the theatre. And while the far right spreads the hatred that is at the root of numerous murders of young people in the suburbs, the invention of the diagonal character of The Subtle Ahmed does justice to working-class and popular intelligence. Theatre here comes to the rescue, as philosophy does not believe it can on its own, at the height of the necessary riposte.

Similarly, in 1997, a new novelistic work, "Calme Bloc ici-bas" [Calm Block Here Below], laboured to maintain, through the power of fiction alone, a world where revolutionaries and the poor, workers and mathematicians will forever be linked. This book has as its title the beginning of Mallarmé's verse under which the 1991 philosophical essay "Of an Obscure Disaster" was published, which sought to contemplate the collapse of the Soviet Union. "Calme Bloc" then emerged to balance out the effacement of the communist project from a contemporary world and to breathe new life into he or she who inhabits it. Just as "Les Misérables" had been for Hugo the immense receptacle of all his fidelities.

Much later, "The Incident at Antioch" will attempt to use the resources of theatre to say what no one yet wants to hear concerning the impasses of the "classic" figures of the revolution, centred on the seizure and occupation of state power. And it will attempt to sketch, in the wake of the disaster, characters who represent another path.

In the tragic circumstances surrounding the death of his son Olivier, it is a "Tomb" that, from the depths of the most violent pain, will succeed in offering the young deceased to the respect and love of all.

Over the years, this philosophy has thus manifested an urgent need to engage in dialogue with its "other interiors," namely these multiple forms of fiction. These others intervene when subjective density and pressure, the difficult urgency of the questions could lead to their pure and simple asphyxiation or reduce them to total silence. So that if a wise publisher were to undertake the project of publishing "The Red Scarf" and "The Incident at Antioch" with the novel "Calme bloc" in between the two plays, we would have something like Alain Badiou's "Divine Comedy," of which "Almagestes" and "Portulans" if also brought together, could constitute not a "Vita Nuova," but a "Farewell to the Old Life."

According to my portrait, Alain Badiou's philosophy is truly born with the writing and publication of "Being and Event" in 1988. (Even if some today claim to have a greater fondness for the transitional book "Theory of the Subject" from 1982). What is, after all, the founding gesture of this first major book—born without knowing that it would later appear alongside

"Logics of Worlds" and "The Immanence of Truths" as part of a vast trilogy? It is about thinking the event, to think it on an ontological level. In other words, the challenge is to understand what distinguishes an event from the general regime of being. But why is it important to elucidate this point? Because something happened that opened up this question, something that happened in the realm of politics, May 1968, and in the realm of love. For, in order to understand what differentiates being from event, we will have to construct a conception of being without One, which this philosophy will seek to uncover in mathematics, while searching in the history of philosophy (Plato, Hegel, Heidegger...) and on the side of art, particularly among the poets, for something that could open the way to a thought of the generic.

This unwavering attention to the event is the burning thread that makes this philosophy a philosophy that intervenes in all the major circumstances that time will bring about over the course of six long decades: a philosophy determined to give an account of the changing colours of historical time, while shedding light on both its shadows and its highlights.

This philosophy immediately condemns the imposture of the new philosophers, renegade gravediggers of all revolutionary figures, present, future, or past.

Badiou enters into conflict with political philosophy and its convenient regime of "the political" in order to deploy, on the contrary, the necessity of disentangling and distinguishing within the multiplicity of politics. This philosophy will ever yield to the pressures of various forms of economism which, under the guise of historical materialism or orthodox Marxism, are incapable of confronting the peremptory nature of the organizational figure of the party, its inevitable reduction to that of the state, and of taking into account the political experiments of the second half of the 20th century.

It will welcome movements—the Arab Spring, the English riots, Occupy Wall Street, the local movements, the suburban uprisings, Tsipras' Greece...—without being satisfied with their inability to extract themselves from the electoral mechanisms of parliamentarianism.

He is not fooled by the "right to intervene" that justified the NATO's bombing of Serbia nor by the war on Afghanistan, that was a supposed a response to the massacres of September 11 in New York, nor by the American invasion of Iraq or by the European assault, under the glorious leadership of Sarkozy and Bernard Henri-Lévy, which left Libya devastated and drained with blood.

This philosophy is repulsed by the persecution of Muslims in the name of misguided secularism and has the insolent courage to stand up and say so sharply at the time of the ban on the headscarf. It does not capitulate with regard to the future of a communist hypothesis when the USSR collapses. Nor did it cry wolf when the attacks against Charlie

Hebdo and then those of November 13 in 2015 struck France hard and plunged it into mourning: “Our evil comes from further afield,” this philosophy made us understand at the time.

In each of these circumstances, whether joyful or very bitter, the philosophical intervention paves a way through what appeared to be a difficult-to-decipher disorder, a chaos in which it seemed impossible to orient oneself under the concept of justice. It creates an unparalleled calm because it takes the time, each time, to “go full circle,” to explore hypotheses to their end, and then to propose some consequences.

Since “Ethics – Essay on the Consciousness of Evil” in 1993 and “Saint Paul. The Foundation of Universalism” in 1997, this philosophy presents itself as a gateway to the universal, not the old abstract universal compromised by the “values” of the colonial West, but of a universality consturcted on the basis of singularities. The seminars will return a thousand times to the critique of identitarianism, working to formulate a new way of thinking of the same and the other.

Among the singularities, love: “De l’amour [Of Love]” in 1999 precedes “In Praise of Love”, 2009, by ten years. Placing love under the sign of the Two, in order to liberate it from the romantic fusional figure as well as from the contemporary informality of the contract. It is constructed as the place where the field of differences is ultimately experienced: what it means to be a woman and what it means to be a man, however variable their compositions may be.

What this philosophy owes to science, and more particularly to mathematics, is its constant desire to share it with everyone. To do so, it must invent new ways of transmission that can be summarized as follows: to make tangible not only the operations of mathematics, but what they think according to their very own order.

An envious person, whose name does not deserve to be mentioned, recently took Alain Badiou to task publicly, mocking his fidelity to himself. This ignores the extent to which this philosophy has constantly worked through itself, scrupulously integrating objections. “Logics of Worlds” is thus not only a supplement to ”Being and Event” but also a reworking of it, a reworking that involved a very long study of the mathematical field of the topoi, in relation to the field of the sets, which had framed the previous work. As for the immense summa that is “The Immanence of Truths,” which makes available to all, for the first time in the history of thought, the mathematical categories that allow us to think infinity otherwise than in its imaginary approximation, this is a still open builder’s yard that and one where it depends on others to continue with the same courage.

This philosophy, capable of occupying the highest regions of thought, is also capable of passing through these questions by offering a second version of them that is never a “popularization” but rather openness that dares to venture into uncharted territory. Thus, for example, each major work in the trilogy gives rise, immediately after

its completion, to a short manifesto – the first and second "Manifesto for Philosophy," which, in the case of "The Immanence of Truths," even becomes a "Praise of Philosophy."

Nietzsche brings together in *Beyond Good and Evil* the conditions that, in his view, are likely to give rise to a true philosophical destiny. Many of these conditions deserve to be reinterpreted, criticized, and debated today, but I will nevertheless retain the following, with regard to Alain Badiou's philosophy: "[the] affable protection and defence of what is misunderstood and maligned, be it God or devil, [the] enjoyment and practice of the great justice, [the] art of command, the expanse of [the] will, the lingering eye that rarely admires, rarely looks up, rarely loves..."[4] A list that I will have to complete, however: I recall that Jean-Claude Milner (in a burst of admiration almost entirely devoid of the sarcasm he often reserved for Alain Badiou) described "Being and Event," when it was published, as a "book of the factory era," a book, he added, in which thought asserted itself as being of the order of "modern labour." One need only consider the 15 volumes of the *Seminar* published to date—covering the years 1983 to 2010, and existing in parallel with the rest of the work—to appreciate the scale of the relentless work of investigation that constantly speaks out of its own laboratory. Yes, this philosophy is that of a tireless, scrupulous, and superb labourer, who has devoted his entire life to the courage to think.

Translated by Frank Ruda

1 Nietzsche 1998, p. 107.
2 Ibid., p.8.
3 Badiou 2013, p. 122
4 Nietzsche 1988, p. 108.

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Die Geschichtsschrift – on formalising history[1]

Daniel C. Barry

Abstract: The present article argues that a proper thinking of history can be achieved by way of a formalisation *of the history of formalisation*. Indeed, formalisation is not enough to fulfil a proper thought of history. Such a practice of mathematical formalisation must involve itself in the vertigo of its own (retro)act(tions). Indeed, this argument is constructed by reading Alain Badiou's *Marque et manque: à propos du zéro.* In following this line of argument, we are able to establish a framework whereby certain kinds of formalisation appear to be ideological insofar as they are antihistorical. In this respect, this article aims to set the groundwork for a mathematically formalised Badiousian critique of ideology.

Keywords: Epistemology, Ideology, Formalisation, History, Science.

...cette différence marquée entre deux notations...reste purement graphique: elle s'écrit ou se lit...

– Jacques Derrida

Any theory of historicity requires, commands, entails an encounter between thinking and its history. What we witness here, we might say, is the *chance* of historicity. For it is in this encounter with this history that thinking is offered the prospect of its own historical comprehension. Yet, the very achievement of historicity also coincides with an inherent danger. For the concept of historicity portends the potential of its immanent annihilation and collapse. Because when this thinking becomes 'for itself', it is opened to the risk of its self-unification. Such a thinking would thus resume and (re)appropriate its history – and therefore reappropriate itself. That is to say, it would live and breathe in absolute self-community, in an interpenetrating self-consciousness. Both in-itself and for-itself. By comprehending its own history, thought would therefore culminate in the comprehension of a totality. Here, an outside, a transcendent Other, is appropriated and re-appropriated to figure a whole where *no* Other figures outside this totality. The history of thought would be conceived according to an absolute *presence* of thought to itself. History thus features as entirely *present to* thinking. Thus, thinking would be *without historicity*. Since the concept of historicity seems to produce and induce a thorough privilege of the present; history, as Parmenides held, must be thought under the species of that which remains and persists, proximal and *disponsible*. Such is the drama of historicity: its self-dissolution, the annihilation of its dialectic where the "two fuses into One"[2]. Idealism.

This scandal is precisely what Alain Badiou's *Marque et manque: à propos du zéro* seeks to remedy. Indeed, Badiou's endeavour in this text is not at all an apology for idealism, but rather a rehabilitation of the concept

of historicity. The *problématique* confronting this endeavour is how to think, how to conceptualise, how to formulate historicity while *at the same time* resisting idealism. We are thus confronted with a twofold problem. On the one hand, we must maintain the chance (or prospect) of historicity. On the other hand, we must do so in a manner that avoids this tendency of totalisation. As we will show, this is overcome by Badiou's attempt to *formalise* this historicity. What this entails, however, is not a unilateral formalisation, but a *formalisation of the history of formalisation*. To defend this claim, we will proceed by following three main steps. First, in order to fully appreciate the recursivity of this meta-formalisation, we will develop a close reading of the first sentence of Badiou's text. Only then will we be able to appreciate the force of this gesture of formalisation by (secondly) examining the remainder of the text. Finally, we will arrive at the text's critique of Jacques-Allain Miller.

Accordingly, let us read:

> "Epistemology disjoins itself from ideological reprise, where all science comes to figure its reflection, insofar as it excludes the institutional operator of this reprise: the notion of the Truth, and proceeds according to the concept of a mechanism of production, from which we anticipate, by contrast, the theory of its structure takes account of its effect."[3]

This sentence figures not only one key concept of history, but three. They are:

Science
Epistemology
Ideology

While this sentence is indeed dense (and in places enigmatic), it can be quite soberly read by traversing the relation(s) between the three terms.

Upon first impressions, the relationship between *epistemology* and *ideology* appears to be an arbitrary one. If the two terms are indeed disjoint from one another, it is hardly appropriate to speak of a "relation" between them at all. The space between the two terms appears to be animated only by a mutual indifference. To that extent, the description we find in this first clause is apparently superfluous: epistemology and ideology are (seemingly) *distributive* terms.

Such a reading, however, is negligent. It ignores a crucial detail pertaining to Badiou's definition of ideology already at work in this sentence. Once we read closely, we notice that Badiou does *not write* that 'epistemology is disjoint from ideology'. Rather, Badiou writes that "epistemology disjoins itself from ideological *reprise*"[4]. The definition of

ideology we are confronted with is that of a *reprise*. Ideology is understood here as a resumption, repetition, reappropriation, or re-presentation. Yet this nuance in Badiou's text is also accompanied by a subtle presupposition. To uphold this definition that ideology as a repetition, resumption, re-presentation, commands that is repeat, resume, re-present some kind of raw material. *Of what*, then, is ideology a reprise? Badiou answers forthrightly once we read on. "Epistemology disjoins itself from ideological reprise, where all science comes to figure its reflection"[5]. Here we see *what* exactly is re-presented by ideology: namely *science*. Ideology figures its "reflection". Such a definition of ideology commands a vigilance of thinking. For if ideology *is* a re-presentation of science, then ideology *implies* the pre-existence of science. In this regard, both science and ideology are situated according to a historical sequence, one following the other.

The symptom that such an ideological reprise has taken place is indexed by the deployment of the notion of Truth. As Badiou says, "the institutional operator of this reprise: the notion of the Truth"[6]. Badiou continues by stating that "[t]he representation of this discipline in the network of its ideological indicators shows it to us as estranged from the real, a discourse presupposing, not the construction of an object, but the *position* of the Truth."[7] Ideology, according to this definition, situates the Truth as the ultimate referent of science. Propositions of the scientific kind are thus represented as referring to an extra-scientific referent. What is tacitly at work in such an ideological representation (of science) is that this referent – Truth – is taken to be a *given*. Scientific statements are thus evaluated according to their respective proximity to this given. The closer the statement, the better the statement. However, this ideological representation inevitably results in circularity: the claim that "a truthful science makes statements proximal to the Truth" can easily be followed up by the query; "what is the criteria for this "truthful science"? The answer: the Truth. If the referent of science is understood as given, the scientific process is thereby relegated to a (bad) reproduction (or as Jan Phillipe Weise aptly put it; a "re-cognition"[8]) of an empirically given Truth. In this sense, "vulgar empiricism"[9] is concomitant with ideology.

How, then, are we to understand the moment wherein "[e]pistemology disjoins itself from ideological reprise"[10]? To what do we owe this disjunction? We find an answer towards the end of Badiou's sentence: "Epistemology disjoins itself from ideological reprise, where all science comes to figure its reflection, insofar as it excludes the institutional operator of this reprise: the notion of the Truth, and proceeds according to *the concept of a mechanism of production,* from which we anticipate, by contrast, *the theory of its structure takes account of its effect*."[11]. In other words, epistemology inaugurates a cut *from* ideological representation insofar as it takes account of an effect of a process of scientific production; insofar as it takes account of something did not pre-exist this process. It is thus concerned with something historical and not

natural. Epistemology, in this regard, is distinct from ideology because the "referent" of epistemology is the by-product of a process of *production* rather than a given.

The consequences of placing emphasis on the unnatural function of science are far reaching. For if the referent of epistemology is no longer simply empirically given, this implies that the status of epistemology can no longer be a re-cognition of the given – since *not even the given is given*. Rather, the "object" of epistemology is *produced*. This implies that the referent or object of epistemology is no longer the Truth (as in the case of vulgar empiricism), but rather the effects of science itself. The referent of epistemology is thus *intra*-scientific. Or, as Badiou states in the appendix to *Marque et manque*, "the *epistemological* lesson of this convoluted adventure reminds us that mathematics [in this case taken as a science] operates on its own existence"[12]. The only referent for science – following the epistemological cut – is science itself. It is along these lines that Francois Regnault rightly states that the cut is "purely tautological, and it can only be such, because each science produces the criteria of its own truth"[13].

Where empiricism is on the side of circularity, epistemology is on the side of tautology.

Now, once we pay close attention to the role of prepositions in Badiou's first sentence, we notice that (following the definitions we have established above) the matrix of *science, ideology, epistemology* follows a very specific sequence. If "[e]pistemology disjoins itself *from* ideological reprise"[14], the very act of disjuncture implies a prior ideological representation *from which* epistemology departs. The role of this preposition is as subtle as it is profound; because it highlights that the relationship between these three terms must follow a specific sequence. As we has already pointed out, the "historical existence"[15] of science serves as the *matière première* of its ideological re-presentation: and if epistemology disjoins itself *from* ideology, epistemology is thus the last term in this sequence. *Science; ideology; epistemology*.

What this sequence highlights is that epistemology does not emerge *ex nihilo*. Rather, it is situated with respect to a particular historical conjuncture where it is preceded by both science and ideology (since the latter *is* a reprise of the science). If epistemology is a discontinuity *from* ideology, then this requires that the history of epistemology cannot be understood without taking account of the ideologies which preceded it. We are thus required to take account of the historical relationship between science and ideology. The problem (as Regnault remarks) is thus double: how to conceive of a discontinuity between the ideological representation of science while also accounting for the historical relationship between science and ideology[16]. The history of science is hence shot through with a degree of impurity[17].

The historical sequence is (to recapitulate) inaugurated with science; this science is then subject to ideological re-presentation; the epistemological cut is a cut from the ideological representation of science insofar epistemology takes stock of the *products* of scientific knowledge. "*L'épistémologie vient trop tard*."[18] To put it bluntly, the epistemological cut signifies a scientific treatment *of* the ideological treatment *of* science.[19] In short: a science of ideology.

The epistemological cut, as we have already mentioned, opens the space for an intra-scientific account *of* the product of science. This unbinding[20] from ideology thus enables epistemology to take stock of what science has produced without any recourse to an extra-scientific Truth. In this sense, epistemology is not a science of science, since this formulation would imply an evaluation of the scientificity of science according to an extra-scientific standard. Namely, Truth. Instead, this encounter between epistemology and science figures an intra-scientific rapport, indicating that the referent of science is nothing but science itself. This is what Badiou identifies as a *stratification* of the scientific signifier. The cut figures, in other words, a *layering* of science onto itself. A more precise formulation of the epistemology/science rapport would be that it places a science *on* a science. – And it is this stratified structure of science that allows Badiou to call this phenomenon as "*psychotic*"[21].

We must then take stock of the implicit (at least on the level of the first sentence) consequence of this stratification of science. Considering that the epistemological cut establishes an intra-scientific stratification, this reveals that science is indeed irreducible to ideological representation under the aegis of Truth. More strongly put, epistemology shows that science has *always already been* a stratified discourse. Consequently, by revealing the already stratified character of science, epistemology enacts a retroaction on the status of science itself. If you like, the epistemological cut establishes a dialectical reversal on science. What this means is that we only truly arrive at a definition of science (qua stratified) *after* we have arrived at the epistemological cut (but simultaneously reveals that it was always already the case). That is, after we have traversed the sequence *science, ideology, epistemology*.

To follow this dialectical reversal also means to highlight that the epistemological cut problematises the linear vector travelling from science to epistemology. Initially, our account of this relationship was that science has produced something, and this product is itself the "object" of epistemology. According to *this* understanding, the products of science command epistemology, and thereby reduces epistemology to a discourse on science. In this narrow understanding, there is no epistemology without science. Epistemology is thus engulfed in the shadow cast by its ancestral scientific condition – where this past presides over and determines its (the past's) future. However, if we are to say that the epistemological cut reveals that science was always already stratified, this requires us

to re-evaluate this narrow understanding of the science/epistemology rapport. Initially, it seems that science is a production of something and epistemology is historically situated to inherit scientific production. But if epistemology shows that science has always already *been* stratified, this inaugurates a vector in the opposite direction: *from epistemology to science*. In this sense, epistemology can be understood to enact a *retroactive causality* on science.

Let us try to break this idea down for the sake of clarity. Firstly, science produces something. Epistemology is situated in a certain historical relation such that it follows science. This is what we can call the first vector (or V1). Following the epistemological cut, we reveal that science has in fact always already been stratified. Therefore, the second vector travels from epistemology to science (or V2). What this means is that epistemology retroactively alters the status of science to have always already been stratified. It is not that epistemology changes what science is *per se*, but rather changes its *historical status*. This what Badiou will later term the double-occurrence of science. First, science seems to produce the conditions of epistemology, then epistemology re-articulates that science itself. Science, in other words, occurs at least twice.

For example, consider the formalised axioms of Euclidean geometry. According to Euclid's famous postulate, "through a point outside a line, there passes one and only one line parallel to that line."[22] The negation of this postulate would seem to amount in the inconsistency of the intra-axiomatic system of Euclidean geometry – thus placing the axiomatic system itself into *crisis*. However, what Riemann demonstrates is that this postulate is independent of the other axioms of Euclidean geometry. He does not change the axiomatic system *per se*, but rather changes its *historical status* – showing that this postulate has *always been* independent of the others. Or better, he historically formalises the historical status *of* that crisis as such. Riemann could thereby be said to establish an epistemological cut with respect to Euclid. (Could we not also say that this is the relationship that Badiou later identifies between Plato's *Parmenides* and Cantor? For what appears from Plato's to be an inconsistency and intra-discursive impossibility *within* the discourse on Being later receives its mathematical formalisation from Cantorian Set Theory. It is not that Cantor changes what ontology is, but offers the formalisation of this inconsistency as such, thereby changing the historical status of Platonic ontology. Thus, when Badiou speaks of inconsistent multiplicity in *L'être et l'événement*, this has *nothing* to do with *Being qua Being* but rather concerns a crisis of the *discourse* on *Being qua Being*; and is thus already a meta-ontological gesture. This is what it means to say that "*mathematics is ontology*"[23]. So, when we come to read Badiou's *L'être et l'événement* on a global level, when we come to the concept of a Truth procedure, this means that the crisis of Cantorian set-theory itself, concerning the axiom of choice and the continuum hypothesis, is already a *meta-meta-ontological* assessment[24].)

Accordingly, we can see why the vectors of production also involve a logic of repetition. Following the first vector, science is characterised as a form of production which thus allows for epistemology to occur. Yet, epistemology establishes a retroactive causality and thus alters the historical status of science in the first vector. If science is a means of production of knowledge, this means that epistemology is the *re-production of the very means of production of epistemology itself*[25]. In other words, the first vector is the means by which epistemology is determined by the products of science; the second vector is the means by which epistemology determines the very means by which *it* is determined. By taking account of the products of science, epistemology thus inflicts retroactive causality on *its own scientific history*[26]. Brutally put, whenever epistemology comes to take stock of its scientific predecessor (in the cut), it therefore changes *what* its history is.

This retroactive causality introduces a further turn of the screw. For if we are to localise science on the side of the past, and epistemology on the side of the present, the temporal[27] *counterthrust* inaugurated by the epistemological cut promotes an infinite process of self-positing of this sequence. According to our first vector, the past (science) is predominant over the present (epistemology) in a chronological register. We have here something like what one might call in Marxist terms the prejudice of the past. Considering everything we have said thus far, the epistemological cut also means that the present (epistemology) changes the status of *its* past (science)[28]. But if the present also changes the historical status of its past, this also implies that this retroactive causality from the present to the past furthermore promotes a vector from the past to the present. Put another way, if the present changes the past, this also involves a change to the past *of the* present which has changed the past. In changing the past, the present thus changes *its* past and therefore implies a change to *the past of the present*. The present thus suffers the retroactive causality that it inflicts upon the past. Following the epistemological cut and its *refonte*[29] of the past, we are thus forced to confront this first vector from science and epistemology *once again* – this time with the new stratified vision of science in mind. The sequence *science, ideology, epistemology* must be read *at least twice;* Badiou's first sentence must be read at least twice.

Indeed, if we are to uphold the rigour of *Marque et manque*, this also requires that we uphold the rigour of our own text. For if science produces something in the past, then epistemology takes account of that past in the present. Yet this very epistemological gesture itself changes the historical status of science, revealing it to be always already stratified. Now, if we claim that we are forced to traverse the vector from science to epistemology once more, this presupposes an already stratified science from the get-go. Therefore, we call this second traversal from science to epistemology vector V1'. (It should be noted that this stratified science – according to the *science, ideology, epistemology* sequence – also

falls under ideological representation before epistemology subsequently unbinds itself from ideology once more[30]). When epistemology comes to take account of the object of production of (already stratified) science, this implies that the vector V1' inaugurates a *further* intra-scientific stratification. It reveals, in fact, that science has always already been a *stratification of* stratification; always already a layering of a science *on* a science *on* a science. An epistemological cut *of* an epistemological cut. Following V1', by way of its retroactive causality, epistemology further changes the historical status of science as always already *stratified stratified*. Its historical status has thus changed, and thereby inaugurates V2'. As the reader might anticipate, the vector from epistemology to science, or from the present to the past, implies that it has changed the historical status of *its* past. Concomitantly, V2' has also changed the past of *its* present. Once more, V2' is subject to the effect of its own retroactive causality that it has inflicted on the past – and thus is caught in the ripples of its own retro-action. *Again*, we are forced to traverse V1'' (and subsequently V2''). *Again*.

We might then say that the first sentence of Badiou's text stages the infinitely self-positing counterthrust traversing the *science, ideology, epistemology* sequence. Or perhaps more provocatively, where Hegel spoke of speculative sentences, Badiou (re)begins *Marque et manque* with an *infinite sentence*. The diligent reader might ask about the precise nature of this infinity: whether or not this is a spurious form of infinity[31]. Such an enquiry seems justified since this process gives the impression (according to a certain intuition) that science acquires a new strata by the operation of addition i.e. it appears that we "add" a new layer each time. However, we should also note that the means by which scientific discourse "acquires" strata is not by way of addition but by way of historical reflection. In other words, each reading of the dialectic reveals a new (re)beginning and thus commands (re)reading (and each (re)reading commands a (re)beginning). We make no progress. Infinitely stuck in place – at a standstill. What appears to be an infinite forward march is in fact an infinite (re)lapse of self-positing. Certainly, dialectics is not at all about progress.

The retrograde movement from epistemology to science, as we have read through Badiou's sentence, confronts us with a true thinking of historicity. By following each vector and each retro-action we witness the consequences of the very act of positing and taking account of its history. For by positing this history, the present which reflects on its past induces a change in the *historical status* of that history. We are hence unbound from two problematic understandings of historicity in the same breath. On the one hand, we are freed from the chronological shadow cast by the past on the present. On the other hand, we are also liberated from the idealist tendency of the present to appropriate the past, and thereby render history entirely present: ultimately amounting to the dissolution of historicity[32]. For when the present comes to take account of its past,

when thinking comes to take stock of its history, this very confrontation between the present and the past enacts a retroactive causality on what this past is; thereby, changing the past of the present. Thus, the *effect* of this posting is suffered not only by past but also indexed by the present itself. The present bears witness to its own gesture. When the present seems to determine the past, it is precisely this backward trajectory that effectuates its re-direction towards the present once more: again from the past to the present. What this means is that the direction of dominance is subject to an infinite vacillation between predominance of the past and the predominance of the present (and so on and so forth). Thus, when the present arrives at the moment of its historical self-comprehension, this very (retro)act of comprehension is precisely what *prohibits* any totalisation of the present over the past in the form of an absolute presence of the present to itself. Because when the present posits its own history, this (f)act of positing also determines the history of this positing. Positing itself positing itself (positing itself positing itself). When the present comes to be self-conscious of its history, this is indeed a self-consciousness of its self-consciousness. *Self-consciousness of self-consciousness (of its self-consciousness of self-consciousness)*[33]. Historicity speaks dissidence to idealism.

When we think history, we are enveloped in the vertigo-effect of this thought[34].

As we will show in the following, it is thanks to this (repetitive) recursive movement that formalisation is not only the formalisation of history. Rather, formalisation proper is a formalisation *of the history of formalisation*. This is what Badiou demonstrates in the remainder of *Marque et manque*.

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We are now equipped to read the second sentence of *Marque et manque*.

Following what has just been said, we have now developed a certain sensitivity for Badiou's terminology. So, when Badiou writes "[w]hat about an *epistemology of* logic?"[35] we can now appreciate the historical weight that "epistemology" holds in this context. Considering that Badiou enquires into an epistemology of logic, this sentence signifies a desire to account for the vector(s) animating the space between logic (in this instance a science) and epistemology. Moreover, it characterises epistemology as that which *takes account of* the yield that has been *produced* by logical writing. We must therefore examine what epistemology relates itself *to.* "The theory *of* logic relates itself to the *mode of production* of a division in linear writing; perhaps the dichotomy of a structured set of statements introduced in the last mechanism under the title of raw material"[36]. The product in question is, as we can see, a *tear* or *division* within the very texture of logical writing itself,

and it is precisely this tear that figures as the "object" of epistemology. What is required, therefore, is that within this written dispositive there is some writing that is consistently partitioned into two disjoint classes[37]. Those classes in question are classified as "derivable statements" and "non-derivable statements"[38]. Either a statement is derivable or it is not. However, if a system is consistent, there exists *at least one* statement which is not derivable in that system. This minimal requirement of at least one non-derivable statement is what logic produces: a division within its own writing. Without maintaining this division, we fail to account for the *productive* activity of writing and thereby suffocate and possible manner of thinking its historicity. It is a question *of* the "*history of formalisation*."[39]

In order to arrive at this division in logical writing, we must first take care to address the other mechanisms at work in Badiou's text. This is simply because "this final division implicates the successive operation of three ordered mechanisms."[40] These mechanisms are *concatenation*, *formation*, and *derivation*. As Badiou is quick to point out (while explaining the mechanism of concatenation), "the absolutely raw material of the logical process is furnished by a particular sphere of the technical production, writing. It is a question, in effect, of a stock of graphic marks, separable and undecomposable, forming a finite ensemble (or at most denumerable) that we call the alphabet."[41] Let us add a subtle yet important clarification. At this point in Badiou's text, this description looks as if it falls under the category of concatenation. Described here is the material that the first logical mechanism *exercises itself upon*: "*La matière absolument première du processus logique*"[42]. Thus, *what* logic exercises itself on is the *fact* that there are some written marks. The first logical mechanism is not the existence of these written marks but the "reception" of these written marks. (These marks are thus closer to being the 'source material' of logical writing). Concatenation is the process of receiving the written mark and "composing some finite series (linear juxtapositions with eventual repetitions)."[43] Concatenation is thus not writing itself but the grouping together of written marks to form a series.

The second mechanism (*formation*) is exactly as it sounds. This mechanism operates on the results of the first mechanism (concatenation) and *forms* these series of marks into a certain *form*at. What this means is that the written marks grouped together in the first mechanism are configured or ordered in a specific manner. By way of this ordering, only certain configurations can be accepted for the logical system under construction. For example, when we want to write certain predicates of identity, only certain configurations can be allowed to figure in the system. In this case, I(x, x) is the writing for 'x is identical to x' and ~I(x, x) is the writing for 'x is non-identical to itself'. According to formation, we establish a sharp distinction between statements that are "well formed" and statements that are "poorly formed". To follow the above example, the configurations I(x, x) and ~I (x, x) are both well-formed statements,

whereas the writing x(I ,x) is poorly formed. Thus, within a logical system, the well-formed statements are accepted, and the poorly formed statements are rejected. In some regard, we are faced with the distinction between sense and non-sense[44]. Or, more precisely, "[t]he set of rules of formation constitute syntax."[45]

The third mechanism at work in Badiou's text is called *derivation*. What this mechanism operates on (as one might expect) are the results of formation. That is, it operates on the set of well-formed expressions produced by formation. What derivation produces is a strong dichotomy between derivable and non-derivable statements. These are what Badiou terms Theses (derivable) and Non-Theses (non-derivable)[46]. In Badiou's words, "it is true that all of these mechanisms separate the well-formed expressions into derivable and non-derivable *without remainder*"[47]. Thus, either a statement is localised to the *moitié* of Theses or it is localised to the Non-Theses. Without remainder. Furthermore, what derivation establishes (perhaps most crucially of all) is a relationship between the two *moitiés*. In order to illustrate this idea consider the following example. Let us localise a statement t to the side of the Theses. We write this as t∈T, which can straightforwardly be read as "t belongs to the *moitié* of Theses". Thanks to the third mechanism, we can then *derive* the negation of t. Accordingly, the negation of t can subsequently be regionalised to the *moitié* of the Non-Theses. We write this as ~t∈NT or "~t belongs to the *moitié* of Non-Theses". Here we see this third mechanism in action by observing that it establishes a relationship between both of the *moitiés.* As Badiou himself notes, "if a statement belongs to one *moitié*...the statement obtained by applying to it the operator, let it be ~, is in the other *moitié*"[48]. In this example, both ~t and t are traversed by the mechanism of derivation. Either a statement belongs to T or to NT, and to that extent it can be said to be a consistent system. (As we will see in the following, it is the rapport between the mechanism of formation and derivation that constitutes the *product* of logical writing – so much so that the dissolution of this second mechanism amounts to the dissolution of the productive function of the logical process[49].)

There are, however, some undecidable statements. This is not an insight that is owed to Badiou but rather to Gödel (to who Badiou refers to extensively throughout *Marque et manque* and its appendix). Let us add a word of caution: the existence of an undecidable statement is *dependent* on the existence of a *consistent* system, such that either a statement is localised to T or to NT. Thus, an undecidable statement (or a "Gödel statement"), is *not* a statement such that neither it nor its negation are demonstrable[50]. Badiou is very clear to point out that "the centre of Gödel's proof is, on the contrary, attained when we show that this statement *is not demonstrable*. It is thus properly assigned to one of the two *moitiés*."[51] Accordingly, an undecidable statement is one where neither the statement nor its negation can be *derived* – meaning that

both the statement and its negation are localised in the *same moitié*. In the case of an undecidable, it can thus be written as: t ∈ NT *and* ~t∈ NT. It can thus be *demonstrate* very clearly that such and such a statement is localised to *one* of the *moitiés*: and it is exactly at this moment that Gödel's proof obtains.

To achieve the localisation of a Gödel statement to NT thus coincides with a certain degree of myth busting. A statement is undecidable to the precise extent that neither it nor its negation can be derived, and hence both a statement and its negation are relegated to NT. When navigating this problem, we must erect the utmost vigilance regarding the terrain before us. There are only two *moitiés* available to us according to Badiou's text – without remainder. Without compromise. Concering an undecidable statement, we cannot import the (metaphysical) intuition that it can be localised to some third domain "leftover" from the division of T and NT. An undecidable statement does not correspond to some uncharted territory inaccessible to the grip of logic. Indeed, undecidability is not at all synonymous with the impotence of a logical system. On the contrary, an undecidable statement is unambiguously localised to the domain of Non-Theses.

It is precisely due to this stringent loalisation of the undecidable that we come to appreciate its force. If one recalls the mechanism of derivation, we were able to establish a correspondence between the two *moitiés* where each term bore a trace of the other. That is, derivation established a "rapport of reversibility between the *moitiés*."[52] Yet if we are to localise the undecidable statement to the domain of NT, this means that the indefinite reversibility between T and NT has comes to a "stopping point". Since both a statement and its negation are on the side of NT, we cannot derive either in T. Consequently, the trace of the other cannot be indefinitely (re)produced: "that in certain places, the trace is effaced; that a strong mechanism imposes a complete division in the rejection that it makes, in each of its parts, of certain marks of the old Whole."[53] We witness here not an ineptitude of logic but rather a "tear in structure"[54]. The undecidable thus instals a dis-relation, a non-relation, a thorough separation, between the two *moitiés*. The undecidable institutes "a distance without concept"[55] between T and NT.

As we have just noted, the undecidable is localised to *only one* of the two *moitiés*, and thereby resulting in the interruption to an indefinite reversibility between T and NT. Consequently, this means that we do not have a "piece" of writing in T that would *mark* the existence of such a statement (since it cannot be derived). According to this sketch, a Gödel statement is *without a mark* in the region of T. We have here "the foreclosure of that which lacks"[56] a mark.

It is thus not at all the *case* that these foreclosed logical writings (in NT) are situated beyond possible logical comprehension, but are *produced* within and by logical writing itself. Thus, it is not that these

logical statements are *lacking* from logical writing. On the contrary, they are simply localised to the region of NT, and this is what signifies the *scientific product*[57] of logical writing.

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The status of lack in logical writing brings us to the core of Badiou's critique of Jacques-Allain Miller's *Suture: éléments de la logique du signifiant* (this famous text was delivered as an intervention in Lacan's Seminar XII in 1965 and later published in 1966[58]).

Before we dive into the "debate" between Miller and Badiou's texts, we should take a moment to understand the precise nature of this famous exchange. Often, when this encounter is reconstructed by commentators, it is usually assumed that Miller has a certain vision of what logic is, and Badiou has another. If we are to present things under this horizon, we characterise both texts as if they are gliding over surface of the "Truth of logic". What such reconstructions thus presuppose is that there is some eternal, ahistorical, "Truth of logic" in the first place. The difference between the two is hence reduced to their relative proximity to this "Truth". The stakes of this debate are thus often minimised to the vulgar ranks of differing opinions.

The stakes are far greater than mere disagreement. Indeed, *both* thinkers, both texts, are attempts to *formalise* history. Yet when it comes to Miller's venture, his very attempt to formalise history has *the effect of a dehistoricisation of history itself.* To that precise extent, we can say that Miller's practice of formalisation is therefore *ideological*. So Badiou's assessment of Miller is not simply that he is "wrong about logic" but that the entire framework, the entire context, his entire *perspective* on logic is what leads to the petrification of history (and the history of formal writing).

As one can see quite early in Miller's contribution, the ambition motivating this text is to formally articulate the "logic of the origin of logic"[59]. Miller's desire to formalise the historicity of logic is thus overtly declared. Indicated by the title of the text, this desire is satisfied by "the logic of the signifier". This is because the logic of the signifier 'describes' a constitutive repression, a falling away, an exclusion of something which *coincides* with the emergence of logic itself; and what is repressed, what falls away, what suffers exclusion, is what Miller understands by the subject of the unconscious. *Lack* would therefore function as the index of history. The logic of the signifier thereby describes the history of logic by articulating this *suture* between the subject and logic. "Suture names the relation of the subject to the chain of its discourse; we will see that it figures as an element which lacks, under the species of a placeholder."[60]

Certainly, if we say that something falls beyond the purview of logic, making this very proposition itself seems to jeopardise its own validity: in declaring that there is something outside of logic in the first place, such

a claim seems all too meta-linguistic. Saying that there is an 'outside' with respect to logic should make that very proposition impossible. By all accounts, Miller seems to overstep the very boundary he himself has drawn.

Miller's *problématique* throughout *Suture*, however, is exactly what we have just highlighted. To account for the repression of the subject (and thereby the constitution of logic) Miller must *induce the emergence* of an "impossible object"[61] which would retroactively authorise him to claim *that* something has been repressed in the first instance. In so doing, Miller would thus achieve a formalisation of the coincidental repression of the subject and the emergence of logic. Thereby, Miller would manage to formalise the *historicity* of logic itself.

Suture achieves this formalisation of history by following a path set out by Frege's *Foundations of Arithmetic*. To let the cat out of the bag, Miller identifies *zero* as the inscription of this impossible object. Once we formalise *zero*, it can serve as the indexation, the transmission, of the history of logic. Or, in different terms, that there is something *lacking*: *zero* thus functions as the *mark of a lack*. As we will see in the following, the *non-identical* is what Miller chooses as the avatar for what must be constitutively repressed in order to permit the emergence of logic itself. Thus, to formalise the non-identical by zero is also to formalise the mark of history.

In order to arrive at zero, Miller follows Frege in outlining a system consisting of three concepts and two relations. The concepts are: *object*, *concept*, and *number*. The two relations are *subsumption* and *assignation*. *Subsumption* characterises the relation between concept and object; *assignation* characterises the relation between concept and number: concepts are *assigned* a number.

Following this schematic, we notice a strong interdependence between *concept* and *object*. For something to be considered a concept at all, Miller contends, it must be a concept *of* an object. Reciprocally, an object can *only* be considered an object if it is subsumed *by* a concept. "The logical specificity of this system lies in that each concept is only defined and only exists by the relation that it enters into as subsuming with the subsumed. In the same manner, an object only comes to its existence insofar as it falls under a concept, no other logical determination contributes to its logical existence".[62] In other words, there is a *unity* between concept and object.

It is this *unity* that enables one to count the concept/object couple as a *unit*. Due to the interdependence between the two, a number can be assigned to the *un*ity concept/object by counting it as one. We should note, however, that this operation of counting already involves another "redoubled concept: *the concept of the identity to a concept*."[63] When we describe the unity between concept/object, we smuggle in another concept that allows us to make the claim *that* a concept and object are

identified with one another. It is thus only once we have deployed *the concept of the identity to a concept* that the concept/object relation becomes countable as a unit.

The object has therefore acquired a unity, an identity, on the basis of its integration into the domain of the concept. This means that 'before' the object has been understood in conceptual terms, we could not really speak of an object at all. At this juncture, Miller introduces another category: namely, the *thing*. The *thing,* for Miller, is the object 'prior' to its conceptual appropriation, meaning that we cannot account for it in conceptual terms. "The thing integrated, by its spatio-temporal localisation, to the real."[64] A difference between object and thing is thus inaugurated by the concept. For the object, its identity is grounded on its integration into a conceptual network; for the thing, by contrast, it only has itself as the support for its *own* identity. We have therefore two levels of unity between object and thing.

The sleight of hand that Miller conducts as a result of these conceptual manoeuvres is to propose the following; because the thing is granted the dignity of being identical to itself, and the object also has its identity (by virtue of the redoubled concept), we can reasonably say that the *object is a substitution for the thing* – all the while safeguarding the Truth of this substitution itself.

What is most instrumental about this insight (for Miller) is not only the idea of substitution, but rather "what it takes for granted"[65]. Namely, the condition that a relation of substitution be tenable demands that what is substitut*ed* (thing) must be self-identical. If we are to posit that some-*thing* is *not* identical to itself then we cannot sustain the operation of substitution and maintain the Truth of the operation.

What is *necessarily repressed* by this operation is therefore the *non-identical*. "But that a thing might not be identical to itself subverts the domain of the truth, ruins it and abolishes it. You can see how the safeguarding of the truth is interested in this identity to self which connotes the passage from the thing to the object. The identical to itself is essentially what might save the Truth. *The Truth is. Each thing is identical to itself*."[66] The condition of upholding the Truth of the thing/object relation is therefore the repression of the non-identical.

Accordingly, if a thing is non-identical to itself, this would render the substitution relation inoperative. We could not account for an object that would be a True substitution for the non-identical simply because, as we have shown, the category of the "object" always implies a *un*ity through its subsumption by a concept. Thus an object that functions as a substitution for the non-identical is necessarily false according to this schema.

It is thanks to this manoeuvre that Miller achieves his desire to formalise zero. "In effect, there may be the concept "non-identical to itself". This concept, being a concept, has an extension, subsumes an object. *Which? None*. Since the Truth is, no object comes to the place

of the subsumed of this concept, and the number that qualifies its extension is *zero*."[67] What this sequence of moves *induces* is therefore the possibility of thinking that which is non-identical – only to furthermore insist on the necessity of its repression. The non-identical is evoked only to justify its revocation in a shimmering double movement.

In this regard, Miller has thus satisfied his desire to formalise the non-identical; and thereby the history of logic.

*

Why, then, is Miller's practice of formalisation ideological? Ultimately, this is b*ecause* Miller represses the non-identical and thereby represses the historical product of science (qua logic). In order to account for the weight of this accusation, we must first examine how the non-identical could be considered a product science. Otherwise put, how can non-identity be localised to NT?

Everything hinges, therefore, on how we understand the concept of non-identity. More specifically, how we understand *what* the writing of identity or non-identity pertains to. Let us take the writing I(x, x) as a starting point. Indeed, it is very easy to read this inscription as "the foundational self-identity of any mark whatsoever."[68] As Badiou makes quite clear, this is an erroneous reading. Instead, we should approach I(x, x) as an articulation the self-identity of a *variable* to itself. Against this background, we are now provided with the appropriate reading technique to address the writing of non-identity: ~I(x, x). Since this writing is to read as "the variable x is non-identical to itself", this is equivalent to saying "the variable x is not the variable x". Since the variable x cannot be anything but the variable that it is, this writing ~I(x, x) amounts to a contradiction within logical writing. We must thereby posit that ~I(x, x) is false. Consequently, this requires that the writing ~I(x, x) is a non-derivable statement and must therefore be localised to the region of Non-Theses. (As the reader will recall, this means that we cannot *derive* the writing of identity from the writing of non-identity because it has been relegated to the side of NT.)

Although this demonstration is simple, is nevertheless shows that ~I(x, x) is a *product* of logical writing that nevertheless falls within logical writing itself. As Badiou himself says, "[i]t is false that x might not be equal to itself to x. But this negation, in fact of lack, does not mark anything but the rejection (the presence) in the other *moitié* (that of the non-theses) of the statement ~I(x, x)"[69]. Therefore, the non-identical is not repressed but rather re-localised. "We would therefore be wrong to imagine that ~ I(x, x)... *marks* in the system...the unthinkable non-identical-to-itself of the sign, and that such a (correct) expression organises the suturation to the calculation of this unthinkable."[70]

Now that we have reinstated the non-identical to domain of Non-Theses, this implies that we have also reinstated the productive function

of the logical process. In other words, this simple demonstration has shown that the logical process in indeed scientific insofar as it *produces* the non-identical. Put in slightly stronger terms, we have reinstated the chance of a formalisation of the historicity proper.

At this moment we are confronted with an important question: what is the formalisation of the epistemological counter-part to this scientific science? Badiou's answer: *zero*. Given that we have now demonstrated that the non-identical is *not* repressed but rather *produced* by logical writing, the framework, the entire context in which we write 0 has completely changed. Rather than marking a lack, 0 marks the *fact* that we cannot derive I(x, x) from ~I(x, x)[71]. "Or rather: the indication, in a signifying order, that a writing is present in the rejected *moitié* of another order."[72] In this sense 0 is a *mark of a mark*, a writing *of* a writing, a writing *on* a writing, a letter *on* a letter. Indeed, 0 thus amounts to an intra-scientific account of the product of science, and to that precise extent inaugurates the stratification of scientific logical writing. Understood in this manner, 0 is the formalisation of the epistemological cut.

We therefore arrive at a formalisation of historicity. If the scientific product of logical writing is ~I(x, x), and if 0 is the epistemological account of this product, this establishes a vector between science and epistemology. In other words, this scientific production has established the possibility of epistemology. Now, as we have already discussed at length, the epistemological cut is not an innocent gesture. Rather, it produces the stratification of logical writing by way of a retroactive causality. 0, in other words, forms a vector in the direction from epistemology back to science. If we identify the product of science (~I(x, x)) with the past and we identify the epistemological cut (0) with the present, this means that the vector travelling from epistemology to science is a vector from the present to the past – ultimately showing that logical writing was always already stratified. As we have already argued, the *effect* of this retroactive causality is not to change the scientific theory in and of itself, but rather changes the *historical status* of this science. Furthermore, if the vector from the present to the past changes the historical status of the past itself, this also means that the past of the present has now changed. Therefore, the temporal succession from past to present has been altered by virtue of epistemological retroactive causality. We are therefore confronted with a situation wherein the vector from past to present, from science to epistemology has been re-invigorated and must be addressed once more. This, in turn results in a further requirement for the epistemological cut, a second time. At minimum, the epistemological cut occurs twice.

Writing 0 in this context is thus the *formalisation of the historicity of formalisation*. By inaugurating the epistemological cut, 0 is effectively caught up in the effects that it inflicts on the past: it is a formalisation which involves itself in the very historical process that it establishes, in its own vertigo.

The formal situation we are confronted with is as follows:

V1: ~I(x, x) → 0
V2: 0 → ~I(x, x)
V1': ~I(x, x) → 0
V2': 0 → ~I(x, x)
V1'': ~I(x, x) → 0
V2'': 0 → ~I(x, x)

...

We can thus fully appreciate the ideological nature of Miller's formalisation. That is, Miller's very attempt to formalise history also coincides with a dehistoricisation of history itself. This is precisely because he treats the non-identical as if it is necessarily repressed in order to constitute the historical emergence of logic. What this means in the context of our current argument is that Miller, by trying to formalise the non-identical, negates the possibility for science (logic) to *produce* the non-identical within its own writing. As we have maintained from the beginning, what differentiates science from ideology is that science produces something that is irreducible to an ahistorical given; science is thus demarcated from ideology by way of production. ~I(x, x) is indeed the scientific by-*product* of logical writing. – And if we fail to maintain the possibility of a scientific product, this suffocates any chance of an epistemological account of this yield. In the vocabulary of the first section of this text, this is tantamount to an interruption of the vector from science to epistemology. Moreover, if we are to interrupt this vector from science to epistemology, this also implies that the vector from epistemology to science is now impossible. Epistemology would thus be stillborn. Reaching at thin air, only to grasp nothing but an empty-handed despair. The consequence of this stillbirth is indeed immense. If epistemology has no scientific object to account for, there is no chance for epistemology at all, and thereby no historicisation of science. To put this in other terms, this means that epistemology is given no chance to account for its own history, and is therefore deprived of any retroactive causality *on* its history. Without the chance of this second historicising vector (as we demonstrated at length above), we are therefore confronted with a scenario where the past dominates over the present in a relentless chronological forward march. Miller's account of historicity is thus a thorough failure: an attempt to formalise history that amounts to that dehistoricisation of history and the naturalisation of time[73]. It is in this precise sense that *Suture* is an *ideological* formalisation.

Indeed, the consequences of this argument would demand a far lengthier examination. However, what this exchange between Badiou and Miller shows us is that there can be an ideological instance of

formalisation. Often times, the concept of formalisation is understood to be an inherently anti-ideological phenomenon allowing for an uncorrupted thinking. As we have shown with Miller, even the attempt to formalise history can amount to a naturalisation of history. Furthermore, it is this kind of formalisation that results in the petrification of the history of formalisation itself. Mathematical writing becomes ossified. If *Marque et manque* demonstrates anything, it is that mathematical formalisation can also be ideological.

But in the very same breath, this also suggests that if formalisation can be ideological then ideology itself can be mathematically formalised. Formalisation thus provides us with the means (at least in the manner in which we have understood its self-historicising character) to formally articulate ideology.

If there is to be a Badiousian ideology critique, it must follow this path of mathematical formalisation.

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1 Among many other things, I owe this title to my dear friend and collaborator Jan Phillipe Weise.
2 Badiou & Balmès 1976, p. 123
3 Badiou 1969, p.150 My translation. Henceforth any citation of this text can be assumed to be my translation.
4 Ibid, p. 150 emphasis added
5 Ibid, p. 150
6 Ibid, p. 150
7 Ibid, p. 150 emphasis added
8 Weise 2025, p. 10
9 Badiou 2007, p.67
10 Badiou 1969, p.150
11 Ibid, p.150 emphasis added
12 Ibid, p.173 emphasis added
13 Regnault 1968, pp.7-8
14 Badiou 1969, p. 150 emphasis added
15 Ibid, p. 172
16 Regnault, 1968 p. 3 This is precisely why Regnault emphasises, in reference to Bachelard, that there is a *formation* d'espirit scientifique.
17 C.f. Serres 1968
18 Regnault 1968, p.45 "Epistemology comes too late." We should note that although this formulation is a very helpful device, Regnault himself places this vector of dependency (from science to epistemology) under intense examination by way of reading Plato's *Parmenides*.
19 Badiou 1969, p. 172
20 A word that later Badiou is rather fond of.
21 Badiou 1969, p. 16
22 Badiou 2007, p.143
23 Badiou 1988, p.10 emphasis added
24 Ibid p.31ff It is therefore no coincidence that Badiou entitles the first part of *L'être et l'événement* as *Plato/Cantor*. I owe this line of thought to an intense discussion with Frank Ruda.
25 Badiou 2007, p.148
26 Ibid p.148
27 While Badiousians seldom address the concept of time in Badiou's oeuvre, it should be noted that the final chapter of his *Le concept de modèle* is devoted to this precise topic. The chapter title is, quite appropriately, *The category of model and the historical time of mathematical production*. Indeed, if Badiou specifies that there is a *historical* time of mathematical production, this already presupposes a difference from *ahistorical* time. In this regard then, not all time can be considered historical. Furthermore, Badiou makes the claim that this specifically epistemological account of historical time is what renders possible its "effective integration into proletariat ideology." Ibid p.136 A claim that is too large to unpack in the current context, but shall be treated at length elsewhere.
28 As Marx and Engels note in *The Communist Manifesto*, bourgeois societies proffer the dominance of natural chronological time where the past is dominant over the present; whereas in communist societies, the present dominates over the past. It is, as we will see, a dominance of the present over the past that does not privilege the present *per se*.
29 Badiou 2007 p. 149
30 This "alternating chain" (as Badiou calls it) between science-ideology-science-ideology is what Badiou schematises in the Appendix of *Marque et manque*.
31 I owe this provocation to a discussion and debate with my colleague Armin Schneider.
32 C.f. Derrida 1972, p.33ff
33 See also Badiou's *Théorie de la contradiction* from 1975 where he states "s'enrichissant et revenant sur elle-même dans la conscience de sa raison – force *subjective*." p.16 emphasis added
34 C.f. Lardreau, 1976 p.20
35 Badiou 1969 p. 150 emphasis added
36 Ibid p.151 emphasis added
37 Ibid, p.151
38 Ibid, p.151
39 Badiou, 2007 p.149 emphasis in the original
40 Badiou, 1969 p.151
41 Ibid, pp.151- 152
42 Ibid, p.151
43 Ibid, p.151
44 Ibid, p.152
45 Ibid, p.153
46 Ibid, p.153
47 Ibid, p.153 emphasis added
48 Ibid, p.154
49 Ibid, p. 151
50 We witness here a subtle yet important distinction between Badiou's and Lacan's understanding of Gödel. For Lacan maintains the vocabulary of indemonstrability. So radically is the case that for Lacan, not even the fact that something is indemonstrable can be demonstrated. However, Badiou's understanding marks a subtle yet important difference: it is only when such a statement is *demonstrated* to be localised to NT that we can say it is undecidable. Ultimately, this is why Badiou states that "J. A. Miller's discussion from Frege to Boole, and by Lacan of Gödel's theorem or of the semantics of implication, have this ambiguity that they simultaneously deploy, and without distinction, that which is indicated by the effective construction of a logical mechanism, and that which is indicated by the (ideological) discourse by which logicians represent this construction to themselves." Badiou 1969, p.156 See also Lacan 2006, p.85
51 Badiou 1969, p.153 emphasis added
52 Ibid, p.154
53 Ibid, pp.154-155
54 Ibid, p.154
55 Ibid, p.155
56 Ibid, p.155 The use of the word "foreclosure" in this case no doubt has psychoanalytic resonances, but Badiou's use of the term is an intentionally provocative reference to a text of

J. A. Miller called *Action de la structure* (written in 1964 and published in summer of 1968). For Miller the term signifies [t]he closure of science thus operating a repartition being a closed domain from which we do not see any limit if we consider it from the interior, and a foreclosed space. Foreclosure is the other side of the closure... the foreclosure makes a return under the form of the impossible." Miller 1968 pp. 102–103
57 We will examine the details of this product in the following section.
58 It is worth noting that despite its apparently Lacanian tone, Lacan himself forthrightly rejects Miller's attempts to formalise by way of Fregean logic. This is particularly clear in Lacan's SXVI wherein he very clearly opts for a Cantorian, set-theoretical, axiomatisation.
59 Miller 1966, p. 39 My translation. Henceforth any citation of this text can be assumed to be my translation.
60 Ibid, p. 39
61 Ibid, p. 47
62 Ibid, p. 41
63 Ibid, p. 42
64 Ibid, p. 41
65 Ibid, p. 43
66 Ibid, p. 43
67 Ibid, p. 44 emphasis added
68 Badiou 1969, p. 157
69 Ibid, p. 158 When Badiou uses the term "present" in this context it is not in the temporal register but rather to signify that the writing of non-identity has *not* been repressed.
70 Ibid, p. 157
71 "If however we want to think the link of the zero to the non-figuration of ~I(x, x) in the derivation of M3 a little allegory of concepts is necessary. But it is receivable to say: The zero marks... not lack of a term to satisfy the relation, but a lacking relation in M3: the relation ~I(x, x)." Ibid, p.160
72 Ibid, p. 156
73 We might then say that the problem with Miller's formalisation is *not only* that it is metaphysical (which is the vocabulary Badiou's accusation), but that it is all too *physical*.

Chancing on Byzantium

Jason Barker & Justin Clemens

Chancing on Byzantium

I

This is no Aegean cruise. Retirees
Of the mind, sunken in panoramas,
Consciences set adrift on karma seas;
The ships that sail to Ultima or Mars
Still serve the masters of the mines and leas,
Dreaming wrecks spread-eagled across the stars —
'Tis not the music of the spheres they seek,
But the lockdown of the hour and week.

II

A philosopher is but the remnants
Of rope and tackle in a fraying maze,
A fiery form that's stripped of sentience,
Shunning disciples and downplaying praise;
Subversion anchored in strict consequence,
A rabble container of castaways
Attaining the rapture of Kingdom Come —
Refugees chancing on Byzantium.

III

At the outer reaches of thought and thing
We find a rare and strange menagerie,
Which, in the dawn's deceitful quickening,
Foregathers a barbarous assembly
Of blinking beasts that make of vanishing
A song of immanent cosmology:
From the heightening void to teeming weir
Snap beak and lock upon the Idea.

IV

Spite eagle, in whom reason's power, may
Phoenix arise from the gleaming symbol
Of riot. Fox outwits owl, but let mole stay
If sharpened pike adds fish to flesh and fowl.
Submerged in decadence and disarray,
Anxiety's vacant study conspires
To raise a glout from knotted sediments,
And burst upstream of shallow consonants.

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Authors' note

Comprising four stanzas of ottava rima, our poem is partly inspired by Yeats's 'Sailing to Byzantium'. William Butler Yeats (1865—1939) was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1923, although no such trifling obstacle could prevent the great Irish reactionary modernist and wannabe politician from getting better. Now that's *late style*. Written in 1926, first published in 1927, and then again in 1928 in the poet's collection *The Tower,* 'Sailing to Byzantium' is probably now as well-anthologised a work as the notorious 'The Second Coming'. Bristling with allusions to Virgil's *Aeneid*, to Orthodox fables about the fall of Byzantium, to James George Frazer, as well as Yeats's own idiosyncratic mystic syncretisms, the poem is a spiritual journey southwards and soulwards, from 'the dying animal' of Yeats's own aging body to 'the artifice of eternity'. And as with Ratty and Mole in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, there's a lot of mucking about on boats.

Riot, Movement, Organization: Alain Badiou and the Critique of Historical Reason

Bruno Bosteels

Abstract: Throughout his prolific trajectory as a militant philosopher, Alain Badiou has proposed different articulations of history and politics. After a self-proclaimed orthodox Marxist period, in which politics is said to be anchored in history without being reducible to it, he is at his most anti-historicist and anti-dialectical in the period immediately before and after *Being and Event*. With *The Rebirth of History*, however, Badiou maintains the separation of politics and history while also historicizing politics. Through a typology of different forms of riot, history becomes immanent to a specific mode of insurrectionary politics in the form of the historical riot. Finally, between *The Rebirth of History* and the first volume of his memoirs, *A Political Life: 1937-1985*, Badiou is also able to make generous use of the idea of History in a sense that would escape the long shadow of Hegelianism.

Keywords: history, historicism, dialectic, riot, historical mode of politics, Hegel, Plato

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What are the relations between history and politics established in Alain Badiou's work in the wake of *Being and Event*, most notably in *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings* and *The Communist Hypothesis*, up to the recent *In Praise of Politics* and the first volume of his memoirs, *A Political Life: 1937-1985*?[1] What, if anything, has changed over the past two decades that would justify the reintroduction of a category of history, and even of History, when at the same time the critique of historicism constitutes one of the methodological principles that Badiou inherits practically unchanged from his teacher Louis Althusser?[2] This is not just a question of textual exegesis so much as a demand for critical analysis of our changing times—with philosophy providing one possible point of access among others for such an analysis and in my view, in spite or because of its centuries-old prestige, not necessarily the most effective one. The goal in what follows therefore is not just to differentiate various stages or turns in a philosopher's system of thought but rather to subject philosophy itself to the ordeals of our time, even if this means bringing philosophy down from its pedestal as the queen of the theoretical sciences, traditionally charged with providing the fundamental concepts for all other disciplines and fields of knowledge.

Concepts, to borrow a view from the late Argentine philosopher, painter, and poet Oscar del Barco, are "social forms" or "forms of the real."[3] Whether philosophical or otherwise, they function as both responses to and interventions in the present, which they willfully or unwittingly whip into shape as much as try to comprehend: willfully, when the terms used include notions such as capture, critique, or transformation; or unwittingly, when the preferred vocabulary involves receptivity, interpretation, or

abandonment to the things themselves. From a methodological point of view, the most difficult task consists in following the thread of events in conjunction with the conceptual apparatuses through which they become identifiable in the first place as a string of interconnected singularities rather than as a random series of disjointed facts. As a result, the double risk that looms large in this process lies in giving absolute priority to either raw facts (empiricism) or pure concepts (dogmatism). Yet even this familiar alternative may be a false one, since as soon as we lapse into one of these twin extremes, the ensuing result too will have to be seen as an intervention in the present moment, which therefore is still entwined with its opposite. Empiricism to some degree always implies a dogmatic rejection of its own conceptual scaffolding, just as dogmatism always involves a blinkered response to the recalcitrance of its own empirical underpinning. Finally, the articulation between concepts and events can be disjunctive as well as conjunctive, rugged as well as smooth; most often, there will be varying degrees of unevenness, lagging, or precipitous anticipation, degrees which furthermore change over time, with the ideal of identity, adequation or correspondence being just one variable among others.

Nowadays, to be sure, the pendulum may have swung to the other extreme, so that the privileging of difference, inadequacy or incommensurability between practice and thought, between the thing in itself and its concept, or between the real and its representation has reached the status of a new standard, invested with nearly irrefutable peremptory powers and insuperable heights of pathos—a shift in which, incidentally, the so-called affective turn, understood as the privileging of affect over concept or of pathos over logos, appears as both symptom and accomplice.

Today, to use a striking expression from Henri Bergson cherished by Gilles Deleuze, concepts are no longer supposed to fit their contents like a glove or a tailor-made outfit, as opposed to clothes that are either too baggy or too tight.[4] Such a desire for an exact fit is now seen as belying a dogmatic, if not authoritarian tendency. By contrast, after the likes of Theodor W. Adorno, Jacques Derrida, or Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, we have learned to feel anxious, melancholic, awed, or even sublimely enthusiastic—to mention just a few of the affects that have become dominant in the process of this paradigm shift—about the possibilities opened up in the inevitable gap or distance between language and the real, or between logic and history.

In Spivak's quasi-aphoristic formulation, the subaltern comes to be redefined as one possible name for this gap or distance, which in the process of redefinition becomes strangely absolutized: "The historian must persist in *his* efforts in this awareness that the subaltern is necessarily the absolute limit of the place where history is narrativized into logic."[5] As witnessed in this formulation, non-identity has taken over from identity as the unspoken standard for contemporary critical thought.

The only ones not to have received the memo regarding the inevitable gap between being and thinking or between history and logic are, for this reason, looked upon with a mixture of bewilderment and disbelief, before unceremoniously being brushed aside and relegated to what now seems to have become a truly bottomless dustbin of the history of Western metaphysics. Even Badiou, who more often serves as a target than as a source of reference for such philosophical tribunals routinely set up against the old metaphysicians (one of the few categories in which the author of *Being and Event* can be lumped together with his long-time rival Deleuze), occasionally seems to flirt with the new standard in *The Rebirth of History*, as when he writes that "it is no longer identity that counts, but non-identity."[6] But this swing of the pendulum, from the ideal of identity between the order of things and the order of ideas to the positing of their irreducible non-identity as a newly anointed absolute limit, does not take away the need to reflect on these different articulations of event and concept themselves as part and parcel of the historical and methodological problem they are trying to solve. After all, if nowadays we no longer believe in the possibility of narrativizing history into logic according to a scheme vaguely associated with Hegelian panlogicism and its avatars in the tradition of teleological historiography, does this new dogmatism disguised as skepticism not also claim to come in response to unprecedented historical developments, such as the liberation struggles and popular uprisings of the subaltern against colonialism in South Asia and other areas of what until recently was known as the Third World and now is called the Global South? If so, is this too not still, or once again, a form of narrativizing history into logic—only this time around according to the deconstructive logic of the subaltern with which to rewrite history from below? Similarly, even in strictly theoretical terms, is the Adornian notion of non-identity not dependent on the presupposition of a second-order identity between the concept and the kernel of its non-conceptual content?

2

In any case, we should begin by acknowledging the extent to which *The Rebirth of History* openly seeks to put philosophy to the test of our time. This also means a direct engagement with the question of method just elaborated. As Jasper Bernes and the late Joshua Clover remark in the conclusion to their critical review of Badiou's book: "At stake in the foregoing critique are not just ideas about how social change emerges, but ideas about the role of ideas, and the various intellectuals who might shepherd them, within emergent struggles."[7] Just as the concept of shepherding an idea into the mass of urban rioters for these reviewers already should be taken in a violently pejorative sense, reeking of pastoral-authoritarian tendencies in the style of Martin Heidegger, in the case of Badiou the authors argue that the philosopher tends to use

the riots as empirical validation for his own conceptual abstractions, or worse, as a foil to endow his philosophical system with the historical prestige and street-credibility of the riots. The result finds the philosopher perched on high, at the farthest remove from the rough ground of history. "The solution he imagines emerges from beyond history, from the rational process of the Idea and its faithful adherents, who translate the truth of present struggles into winning organizational structures and disciplines," Bernes and Clover claim. Faced with the riot as a Sphinx-like enigma, Badiou should be commended for rightly underlining the fact that the problem before us is tactical and strategic, instead of being either moral or theoretical, but he fails to locate the solution to this problem in the actual struggles and practices of our time: "Rather than seeing theory as a lesson we must teach to the participants of today's uprising, we might see it as something immanent within what they do. We might adopt a listening posture with regard to the world we live in. The answer to the riddle of the Sphinx is always another question."[8] Elsewhere in his work, though, Badiou had similarly raised the riddle of the Sphinx in ways that would seem to preempt, or at least complicate, much of this criticism.

When, in *The Rebirth of History*, Badiou emphasizes that "[h]istory does not contain within itself a solution to the problems it places on the agenda," first and foremost among them "the problem of politics par excellence—namely, organization," he is, according to his reviewers, standing on its head Marx's famous statement from the 1859 Introduction to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, according to which "humankind only poses those problems that it is capable of solving."[9] By way of reply, the reviewers turn this original insight from Marx back upon Badiou: "Though we find good reasons to balk at Marx's optimism, we nonetheless cannot see any place from which the solutions might emerge if not from the practices of the riots and uprisings and struggles of today."[10] For Bernes and Clover, in other words, the ongoing history of concrete struggles and uprisings would be the sole ground on which we can ever hope to solve any problem at all, whether political or other. Above all, there is no need to resort to any speculative beyond or aftermath, typical of a philosopher's Idea.

Now, in his earlier *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou too had explicitly addressed Marx's famous statement, all the while drawing a subtle connection with the riddle of the Sphinx. Instead of positing history as a single plane of immanence for the solution of all human problems, though, he argues there is always a remainder in the movement from the posing of a problem to its solution. This is because the problematic nature of a problem is not in turn posited by humankind. "For it does not depend on man, insofar as the animal named 'man' exists, that a problem befalls him *qua* problem. Problematization is how the real makes a hole for the truth. It is the remainder proper to the solution, the indissoluble salt of truth," Badiou claims. The relation between a problem and its solution, therefore,

demands the metaphor of an asymptotic approach, based on such an indissoluble remainder or minimal gap. Not only do we not freely posit the problematic nature of the problems before us, but our solutions also tend to generate new problems. This would seem to undermine Marx's historical optimism. "However," Badiou adds, "the fact that man can solve a problem, inasmuch as in the retroaction of the solution it turns out that this problem posed itself to him, and that he can solve it *entirely*, guarantees the metaphor of reflection."[11] For Badiou, in other words, the process of truth requires not only the asymptotic approach to the point of the real of a problem, but also the exact reflection of its solution. Both metaphors—the asymptotic remainder and the mirroring reflection—must be considered at the same time in trying to understand how humanity produces new knowledge in the process of solving its old problems, even as it poses only those problems that it is capable of solving. This combination of the reflection theory of truth with an asymptotic approach, due to the presence of a stubborn remainder, can be considered Badiou's attempt to reconcile the principles of identity and non-identity in the articulation of events and concepts, or action and thought.

Thus, whereas Bernes and Clover, in the final line of their review, may be justified in writing that "the answer to the riddle of the Sphinx is always another question," Badiou in the end balks less than they do at Marx's optimism when he adds, still in *Theory of the Subject*, that the riddle is both nameable and fully answerable. In fact, Badiou concludes, "I hold that the sphinx is nameable, once the questioning limit from where Oedipus's answer provisorily appeared to be well adapted, through a forced event, comes into the light of history."[12] Almost the entire debate to be had with Badiou over the relation or nonrelation between history and politics is encapsulated in this seemingly scholastic explanation of the riddle of Marx and the Sphinx.

What is this "forced event" without which the limit of our posing and solving of problems does not come into the light of history? What is the relation or nonrelation between history and politics, if indeed politics constitutes one of the places (according to *Theory of the Subject* still the one and only place) where such a "forced event" sheds new light on the problems of history?

We could also rephrase the fundamental question before us as follows: Can we or can we not understand politics "*through* history, *in* and *with* history," as the early Marx proposed in *The Holy Family* about the development of religion (referring not just to Judaism, which he was discussing in the fragment in question, but also by extension to Christianity), in a phrase often repeated by the likes of Daniel Bensaïd?[13] Or, alternatively, should we rather question the "adaptation" of politics to history in light of the "forced event" that the former adds onto the latter?

Even as over the years he will differently come to interpret the sense or meaning of the term "history," with or without a capital H, Badiou will

always defend the thesis that, for its part, politics—while necessarily *anchored* or *rooted* in history—cannot be *inferred* or *deduced* from history alone. This is why all events of politics (like those events that the later Badiou, beginning with *Being and Event*, will come to locate in art, science, or love as well as in politics) are necessarily forced events. The potential drawbacks rightly or wrongly associated with this position should be obvious enough: a seemingly ethereal aloofness, a privileging of the philosopher-intellectual to the detriment of the masses in revolt, and in general a separation of praxis and Idea under the openly accepted guardianship of Plato rather than Marx.[14] Conversely, the potential risks involved in the opposite position should be no less evident: an anti-intellectual disdain for theory in favor of the pedagogy of the deed, a tendency to explain away the emergence of autonomous political tactics on the basis of the historical cycles and crises of the capitalist world system, and in general a reduction of the political or interventionist Marx of *The Communist Manifesto* or *The Civil War in France* to the more analytical or systemic Marx of *Capital* or the *Grundrisse*.[15]

For Badiou, no matter how accurate Marx's diagnosis may turn out to be in retrospect, the analytical and systemic aspects cannot substitute the tactical and strategic aspects of his interventionist thinking without causing a deeply conservative effect on the autonomy of politics. This is why, in *Theory of the Subject*, he insists that the articulation of history and politics should not lead to the mistake of conflating the two altogether. "At bottom, it is always in the interests of the powerful that history is mistaken for politics, that is, the objective is taken for the subjective," Badiou argues. "This is the natural element for the maintenance of their own subjective activity, which is applied so that no unaligned quality may come to concentrate itself to confront them."[16] Only politics (or later, after *Theory of the Subject*, art, science, and love) can concentrate such an "unaligned quality," which will serve as leverage for the possibility of a "forced event," without which the writing of history risks being little more than a glorified transfiguration of the status quo, to paraphrase Marx's famous view of the Hegelian dialectic in *Capital*.[17] And yet, just as he calls for a separation of politics from history, Badiou also calls for a certain historicization of politics. In *The Century*, for example, he writes: "The word 'politics' has a history and we must postulate that the century has reinvented its meaning."[18] With important nuances that will have to be teased out in what follows, both these calls—to historicize politics while also separating politics from history—resonate in *The Rebirth of History*.

3

Going back to this last book, a further irony ignored by his reviewers is that Badiou also uses the language of listening right from the start to describe his approach to the so-called "immediate" riots and "spontaneous"

lootings from 2005 in Paris or 2011 in London. For sure, in Badiou's eyes, this type of outburst is "violent, anarchic, and ultimately without enduring truth," leading the French philosopher to announce early on that, "if riots are to signal a reawakening of History, they must indeed accord with an Idea."[19] The enduring political truth of the riots, therefore, will depend on the presence of an agreement or accord—similar to the once-vaunted but now much-maligned fusion of practice and theory in the history of Marxism—between event and concept or, as the case may be, between riot and Idea. At the same time, we should also pay close attention to the way in which Badiou immediately follows up on this early rehearsal of his book's overarching argument with a caveat: "For now, though, the philosopher will be allowed to lend an ear to the signal, rather than rushing to the police station."[20] Is this not also a plea for adopting a listening posture with regard to the world we live in? The book's opening question is after all indicative of an attempt to listen invitingly to the rumble of recent happenings: "What is going on?" And again: "What is happening to us in the early years of the century—something that would appear not to have any clear name in any accepted language?"[21] Or else—Badiou's skeptical readers might come back with another question—does this listening attitude hold only "for now" and, if so, will it fatally end when the signal in question gets named, recapitulated and rebroadcast on the loudspeakers of the philosopher's giant sound system, in a final section that is not for nothing titled "Récapitulation doctrinale" ("Doctrinal Summary")?[22]

For Badiou, the philosopher should avoid at all costs becoming the police or judge of history or, worse, helping the existing cops or judges by becoming a snitch. Philosophy (or what I prefer to describe as theory) is neither a waiting room in the police station nor a world-historical tribunal from which to judge everything and nothing, but an immanent and ongoing activity of thought under the condition of events that are partially beyond its control. Throughout *The Rebirth of History*, Badiou in this sense repeats a few expressions to make sure that philosophy both lets itself be conditioned by and learns from the riots as the immediate political events happening in our time. Thus, in French, he most often uses the expression être à l'école de, meaning "to learn from" or literally "to be schooled by," the riots and uprisings of the 2000s—exactly in the same way (or so it seems) in which, in the 1970s, it was common usage among French Maoists to rely on this expression to refer to the task of theory (the reference to philosophy, in my eyes significantly, being far less common at the time) in the face of the events of the "red years" that took their inspiration from the Cultural Revolution in China.

In any case, we in turn should not rush to judgment by imputing to the philosopher a desire for teaching a lesson to the participants in the riots. Doing so would mean turning oneself into an ironic mirror image of the philosopher who rushes to the police station: instead of blaming the rioters for their lack of an Idea, we would quickly and somewhat

predictably blame the philosopher for his excessive confidence or pride in possessing the Idea. Any day now, I picture somebody along these lines writing a polemical book called *Badiou's Lesson*, echoing and extending Jacques Rancière's harsh attack on the master-thinker who was their mutual mentor in *Althusser's Lesson*.[23] But, while in *The Rebirth of History* Badiou does indeed speak of "lessons," the fact of the matter remains that these are lessons to be *learned from* the rioters and not magisterially *taught to* them by the philosopher, very much in the same way that in an earlier book, *The Century*, Badiou presents a series of thirteen "lessons" taught *by* rather than *to* the artistic, political, and psychoanalytic experimenters of the twentieth century. "In the condition of political misery that has been ours for three decades, is it not obvious that it is we who have everything to learn from the current popular uprisings?" Badiou also asks in an article written for the French newspaper *Le Monde* with regard the events of 2011 in Tunisia and Egypt and reprinted in *The Rebirth of History*. "Yes, we must be the pupils of these movements, not their stupid teachers."[24] Finally, almost each chapter in Badiou's recent memoirs ends with an enumeration of the lessons the author learned during a life full of political apprenticeships, from the time of the war in Algeria up to the dissolution in 1981 of his Maoist (Group for the Foundation of the) Union of French Communists (Marxist-Leninist), replaced in 1985 by the formation with the generic and slightly tautological name Organisation Politique (Political Organization).

Accusations against the philosopher's overreaching ambition with regard to the cycle of riots and uprisings at the start of the new millennium depend very much on an unspoken presupposition that also may seem implicit in Badiou's work from the last two decades on communism, namely, the presupposition that it belongs to the philosopher and to him alone to formulate, develop, and propagate what he calls the Idea, without which there could be no reawakening of History. This would place the rioters in the position of impatient schoolchildren with a likely attention deficit disorder, having to wait for the teacher's master class about the role of the Idea. The latter would be the philosopher's brainchild with which to shepherd the rioters and looters around a resurgence of the communist hypothesis.

Similarly, some readers may have concluded from the title of another of Badiou's books, *Philosophy for Militants*, that political militancy depends on the prior development of a theoretical framework, which the philosopher would have to bring to fruition. This, too, would take us back to a form of speculative idealism along the lines of how Marx, in his 1873 Afterword to the second edition of *Capital*, reproaches Hegel for placing the driving motor of history in the realm of the Idea: "For Hegel, the process of thinking, which he even transforms into an independent subject, under the name of 'the Idea,' is the creator of the real world, and the real world is only the external appearance of the idea."[25] However,

while there is certainly no shortage of vagueness surrounding the notion of the Idea as brandished about by Badiou, neither *The Communist Hypothesis* nor *The Rebirth of History* bear out the presupposition that elaborating this notion of the Idea would be the exclusive purview of the professional philosopher. To the contrary, if there is one presupposition consistently at work in all Badiou's writings on the political condition, it is the notion that politics is an active form of thought, with its own ideas, statements, watchwords, and scripts. This explains, incidentally, the proximity between politics and theater, which in turn is part of the reason why throughout modern history theater so often has been the target of vicious political censorship and repression. As Badiou observes in *Rhapsody for the Theater*: "In fact, we could argue that there is politics when three things form a knot: the masses who all of a sudden are gathered in an unexpected consistency (events); the points of view incarnated in organic and enumerable actors (subject-effects); a reference in thought that authorizes the elaboration of discourse based upon the mode in which the specific actors in question are held together, even at a distance, by the popular consistency to which chance summons them."[26] Like the staging of a theater play, politics is a collective *pensée-faire*, a "thought-practice" or "thinking-action," which is not in need of the philosopher to know either what it is or what it does. "If politics is the practice of a thought in an absolutely self-sufficient register," as Badiou argues in *Metapolitics*, "then we can say that philosophy's tasks is to seize the conditions for the practice of thought within this singular register known as politics."[27]

Even the call to ensure that an Idea become rooted in the historical events that mark the age of riots and uprisings so as to give them greater durability and expansiveness should not necessarily be treated as the symptom of a philosopher's unpalatable desire for hegemony over the future of politics. Aside from the fact that it is philosophy that is conditioned by politics and not the other way around, part of this call stems very much from the opposite desire, namely, the wish for politics to bring about a situation in which everyone can be a philosopher. "Of course, you will recognize in this a Platonic desire, though expanded from the aristocracy of the guardians to the popular collective in its entirety," Badiou proposes in *Philosophy for Militants*. "This wish could be expressed as follows: wherever a human collective is working in the direction of equality, the conditions are met for everyone to be a philosopher."[28] And so, not only are ideas and thoughts immanent to the political struggles that are happening in real time, but even the communist Idea, for all its seemingly glacial Platonism or speculative Hegelianism, can be translated as the wish for politics to create a place in which rioters and philosophers—like the hunter, fisherman, herdsman and critic in the (still overly masculine) version of communist society famously prefigured in *The German Ideology*—become gathered into

a single polymorphous figure, perhaps even without having to split its time into morning, afternoon, evening, and after-dinner activities, as was still the case for Marx and Engels. "In this sense," writes Badiou, "all emancipatory politics contains for philosophy, whether visible or invisible, the watchword that brings about the actuality of universality—namely: if all are together, then all are communists! And if all are communists, then all are philosophers!"[29] It is true that, even according to this formulation, the time may not be ripe for the universal sharing of philosophy to become a reality. Still, instead of setting our expectant eyes on the distant future of a situation that always would be yet to come, we could also read this desire for everyone to become a philosopher as something that already becomes actualized in every instance of collective decision-making, no matter how local or short-lived. In this sense, once again, the argument would be in favor of politics as a thought-practice or a thinking-doing in which theoretical ideas are not transcendent but immanent to the actions and initiatives that are their sole practical existence. What remains to be seen is the extent to which Badiou himself, in works like *The Rebirth of History* and *The Communist Hypothesis*, facilitates such an understanding of politics as an immanent thought-practice.

In fact, we can easily see how the notion of thoughts or ideas appears as if redoubled in these reflections. There are, first, the ideas and thoughts inherent in any political practice; and then, second, there are the ideas and thoughts that would belong to theory or philosophy, conditioned by existing politics. In the words of the two reviewers mentioned earlier: at stake are not only ideas but also ideas about the role of ideas in contemporary struggles and events. This redoubling of the category of thought not only goes to the heart of the problem about the relation between events and concepts: where, or on which level, should we locate the category of what Badiou calls the Idea—on the first or on the second level? If the latter is the case, then ideas would be to the Idea as politics is to philosophy. If the former, then the Idea would be a category that belongs already to the field of operation of politics itself. What is more, the same redoubling of thoughts and ideas also begs the question of the place of our third category, namely history, in the articulation between philosophy and politics.

In this last regard, we face a decision between two basic positions: either we maintain the necessity of a double occurrence of thought, first within politics and then within philosophy, or else we strive as much as possible to dissipate such reduplication in the name of historical immanence, with the likely result of a gradual or axiomatic withering away of philosophy as a separate activity.

On the one hand, for reasons that should become clear in what follows, Badiou tends to be reluctant to accept the second position as a simple given or as a self-evident point of departure, even though it may well correspond to the final aim of his entire philosophy, which for this

reason always harbors certain anti-philosophical elements as well. After all, the third volume of his philosophical system, following in the wake of *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds*, is not for nothing titled *The Immanence of Truths*. Like the Idea, truths are immanent to the situation in which they are worked out. "A truth is something that exists in its active process, which manifests itself, as truth, in different circumstances marked by this process," Badiou also writes in *The Rebirth of History*. He explains: "Truths are not prior to political processes; there is no question of confirming or applying them. Truths are reality itself, as a process of production of political novelties, political sequences, political revolutions, and so forth."[30] Ideas, too, would be part of ongoing political processes. Rather than operating at a theoretically superior level, they would be active on the ground, or at the grassroots level, in the militant rationality of the interventions themselves. In other words, to borrow an expression from Badiou's fellow militant of many years Sylvain Lazarus, emancipatory modes of politics subjectively, or in interiority, produce their own "political intelligence" or "intellect."[31]

On the other hand, just as truths in the systematic elaboration of this philosophy always seem to exceed the circumstantial grip of the worlds in which they are stated and embodied, Badiou is equally adamant about always drawing a clear line of demarcation between philosophy and the various non-philosophical processes or procedures—among them politics—in which events can take place and truths can be produced. And, while such a line of demarcation is meant as a lesson in restraint to keep philosophy from making the disastrous anti-philosophical claim that it can be a politics (or a science or an art) in its own right, and even a great politics or a great art (as Friedrich Nietzsche increasingly came to argue toward the end of his life as he was sliding into madness), it is also true that this insistence runs counter to the wish to dissolve the heterogeneity between politics and philosophy into a single thought-practice, whose unity would be guaranteed by the mediating term of history as the sole realm of all human activities.

4

Part of the problem before us concerns the fact that in the case of politics, unlike what happens in other truth procedures such as science or art, history itself has been an integral element of the way in which truths are supposed to happen. History has been a central component part of the conceptual apparatus with which certain forms of politics in the past have tried to think of themselves. Just as politics has a history, there is also a history to the uses of history (and, with all the more reason, of History, the idea of History, which since at least Hegel has presented itself simultaneously as the history of the Idea) within politics—most notably though not exclusively (another tradition would be positivism) under the

aegis of Marxism. However, this is emphatically not or no longer the way in which history and politics are to be articulated in the eyes of Badiou. How, then, does the articulation in question work according to *The Rebirth of History* and in what way is this view different from what we have become accustomed to after a century and a half of experiments in political Marxism, up to and including Badiou's own earlier *Theory of the Subject*?

Two helpful indications in this regard can be culled from the French title of Badiou's riot book, *Le Réveil de l'histoire*. To begin with, we are dealing less with a "rebirth" than with an "awakening" or a "wake-up call" of history. The problem with translating *réveil* as "rebirth" stems from the misleading suggestion of a natural birthing process, whereby history would have died or come to an end at some point in the past, only to return or be reborn today. Now, Badiou may not be averse to the suggestion of history as a Sphinx coming back to harass us with its riddles or a Phoenix rising up from its own ashes, and he certainly aims to refute the ideologues who, following Francis Fukuyama among others in the 1990s, would claim that the period of the "restoration" (roughly from the 1980s onward until the worldwide uprisings at the start of the twenty-first century) coincides with the "end of history" tout court. Nevertheless, perhaps the more appropriate metaphorical connection would be with Walter Benjamin's famous quip that, if history is a train in motion, the task of the revolution is to pull the emergency brake: "Marx says that revolutions are the locomotive of world history. But perhaps it is quite otherwise. Perhaps revolutions are an attempt by the passengers on this train—namely, the human race—to activate the emergency brake."[32] Besides, the French *réveil* can also mean alarm clock. You put an alarm clock so as not to sleep in too late and miss a rendezvous. History, Badiou suggests, is waking us up from our post-historical slumber. Emergency bells are ringing, and alarm clocks are going off everywhere. Can we at least listen to them and awaken ourselves to the truth of their possible lessons? How would the new cycle of riots and uprisings fit into the process of making history when the task is also to think of the future of politics? Does the truth of politics derive from, produce, or contradict the sense or meaning of history?

Badiou's original title contains another suggestion that might help us if we want to begin answering some of these questions. *Le Réveil de l'histoire* indeed presents us with a genitive that can be read either in the subjective or in the objective sense. Either, when read as a subjective genitive, history is waking up all by itself or, when read as an objective genitive, it is woken from its slumber by a force other than history. As anticipated above in the discussion of Marx and the riddle of the Sphinx in *Theory of the Subject*, this ambiguity is also central to the articulation of history and politics throughout *The Rebirth of History*. Even if, in the guise of the so-called "historical riot," the current struggles prove themselves capable of moving beyond the first, "immediate" form of the riot, such an

upsurge of history by itself is not enough for there to be a form of politics properly speaking according to Badiou. Politics must furthermore include the organization of the historical riot, which in turn entails an expansion of the immediate or spontaneous riot.

Spontaneous riot, mass movement, and political organization, in this way, name the three fundamental terms of politics in the present insurrectionary situation. To be more precise, we will see that only the third moment—still underdetermined for now, if not lacking altogether—counts as political for Badiou. Therein lies precisely the problem.

5

The bulk of *The Rebirth of History*, then, is devoted to a typology of contemporary riots, with Badiou dividing them into "immediate," "latent," and "historical" riots. Bernes and Clover, in a coinage worthy of the poets and critics they otherwise also are, call this a "grammar of the riot."[33] Just as in the case of the composition of a sentence, the fundamental question concerns the way in which the elements of the riot-form are articulated and combined into a larger sequence. Specifically, the topics to be addressed in the grammar of the riot concern, first, the basic *types* of riot and, second, the problem of the *transitions* from one type to another. How can the immediate riot, as a punctual flaring up of anti-repressive violence most often provoked by an act of police brutality or murder, become part of a larger process capable of spreading to other territories and sustaining a longer temporal sequence? How does an immediate riot, instead of stagnating and fizzling out in the face of suppression, surpass itself and veer into a historical riot? And how can a historical riot turn into a broader mass movement capable of marking the beginning of a properly political sequence?

In his discussion of the various types of riot and the passages or transitions between them, Badiou does not shy away from suggesting a linear, if also discontinuous, process for which he returns to a vocabulary that to my knowledge he had not used since the mid-1980s, in *Can Politics Be Thought?*, namely, the vocabulary of the pre-political and politics proper: "I call *politics* that which establishes the consistency of the event in the regime of the intervention and propagates it beyond the pre-political situation. This propagation is never a repetition. It is an effect of the subject, a consistency."[34] Immediate riots, however, are too wrapped up in the obscure joy of destruction to be considered even pre-political: "The subject of immediate riots is always impure. That is why they are neither political nor even pre-political."[35] The first transition to be grasped, therefore, is the one between immediate and historical riots. The latter receive their definition from the exemplary events of the Arab Spring: "Learning from the striking novelty of the riots in the Arab countries—especially their endurance, their determination, their unarmed tenacity,

their unforeseen independence—we can, I believe, first of all propose a simple definition of an historical riot: it is the result of the transformation of an immediate riot, more nihilistic than political, into a pre-political riot."[36] Given this definition of the second type of riot, how do we pass from one to the other, that is, from the immediate to the historical type, which would also mean from that which is not-even-pre-political to the pre-political? Badiou proposes three criteria for this passage, having to do with the spatial expansion, the social composition, and the affirmative intensity of the riots. Still drawing upon the lessons learned from the Arab Spring, he writes that "a riot becomes historical when its localization ceases to be limited, but grounds in the occupied space the promise of a new, long-term temporality; when its composition stops being uniform, but gradually outlines a unified representation in mosaic form of all the people; when, finally, the negative growling of pure rebellion is succeeded by the assertion of a shared demand, whose satisfaction confers an initial meaning on the word 'victory.'"[37] Finally, the passage from the pre-political to the political proper will require new forms of organization, based upon a common set of principles or watchwords around a central Idea.

Badiou's grammar of the riot thus brings him to the point where he must posit a second major passage or transition, which corresponds to the passage from history (as historical riot) to politics (as political organization of a new type) and takes us beyond the logic of anti-repressive uprisings and rebellions alone. "The force of rebellions, even when they assume an historical significance, remains essentially negative," Badiou also observes. "It does not deploy a slogan in the affirmative element of the Idea. That is why collective mass action can only take the form of a riot, at best directed towards its historical form, which is also called 'mass movement.'"[38] Beyond the spontaneous riot and the mass movement, the onset of a new political sequence will mark the reawakening of history or even of History only if and when it leads to the universal sharing of a set of guiding principles or watchwords organized around a central affirmative Idea. For Badiou, this is a law of politics discovered or rediscovered during the Arab Spring but similarly at work, for example, during the French Revolution. "That the awakening of History, in the form of a riot and its possible immediate victory, is not generally contemporaneous with the revival of the Idea, which would give the riot a real political future, is a very old observation," Badiou says, referring to the revolts of the sans-culottes in France: "They presupposed an ideological hereafter, which had not taken shape. Consequently, in the absence of any real subjective sharing of an Idea, it was impossible for them to resolve the problem of the transition from riot, albeit historical, to the consistency of organized politics."[39] Even the example of Marx and Engels over half a century later shows the inevitable delay or lagging between the defeated uprisings of the 1840s in Europe and the victorious proposal of a new Idea in *The Communist Manifesto*.

The core proposal in *The Rebirth of History* thus amounts to a peculiar dialectic between history and politics, as the articulation between the (historical) riot as mass movement and the new forms of (political) organization outside of the saturated framework of party and State—with "saturation" being another category borrowed from Lazarus: "The method of saturation allows us to constitute the intellectuality of a closed form of politics on the basis of its foundational categories, that is to say, by studying what the thought of the sequence was and by taking its singular historicity into account."[40] Before we compare this proposal to the way history and politics had been articulated in *Theory of the Subject*, let us derive a few provisory conclusions from the preceding synopsis of the grammar of riots, since this will also allow us to answer several of the questions raised earlier.

A first conclusion begins to answer the question: What exactly is an Idea? In *The Rebirth of History*, Badiou defines an Idea in the broadest possible sense as the name for a core set of ideological principles and watchwords that transcend the circumstances of a local situation and can be universally shared. Admittedly, this is still a definition by default, insofar as today's world is precisely lacking such an Idea: "An open, shared and universally practicable figure of emancipation is wanting. The historical time is defined, at least for all those unamenable to selling out to domination, by a sort of uncertain interval of the Idea."[41] However, albeit only in passing, Badiou subsequently fleshes out this minimal definition by invoking the example of three such Ideas from the past and anticipating the possibility of a fourth currently in the making: "The Idea was republican for decades, 'naively' communist in the nineteenth century, and state communist in the twentieth century. Let us provisionally suggest that it is dialectically communist in the twenty-first century. Its true name will arrive in the margins of the rebirth of History."[42] Republicanism, utopian communism, state socialism, and dialectical communism would name the four modern kinds of Idea.

For Badiou, to define such an Idea would be the task for a new and unpredictable type of organization, which for now is still lacking. "At the same time, all this cannot find its political form, in the first instance because it cannot *draw its force from the sharing of an Idea*."[43] We would find ourselves today, in the first decades of the new millennium, in a situation analogous to the period around 1830-1850, when the emancipatory political ideal shifted from republicanism to communism. The uprisings of workers and artisans from the time when the young Marx was cutting his teeth as a journalist among the Young Hegelians in Prussia, before arriving in Paris to discover the unprecedented political force of the proletariat, would be symptomatic of an intervallic period similar to the one we are currently traversing: "These were precisely the riots, sometimes immediate, sometimes more historical, characteristic of an intervallic period: after

1850 the republican idea, now insufficient for demarcation from bourgeois reaction, would have to be succeeded by the communist Idea."[44] If over the past two decades, from Oaxaca to Athens and from Santiago de Chile to Tehran, the world similarly has been witnessing a steady stream of riots, uprisings, and occupations of the squares, in many cases accompanied by still tentative proposals for a new ideological framing with which to make sense of them or not, from leaderless horizontalism to networked neo-Leninism, this is also due, according to Badiou, to the ongoing search for a novel Idea. The latter, then, functions as a shorthand annotation for the question of adequate forms of organization for the events of our time: "What I call the question of *organization*, or the *discipline of the event*, is the possibility of an efficacious fragmentation of the Idea into actions, proclamations and inventions attesting to a *fidelity to the event*. All in all, an organization is something that declares itself collectively adequate to the event and the Idea alike, in a duration which has once again become that of the world."[45] Here, incidentally, we also can appreciate how, contrary to the dominant critique or deconstruction of Western metaphysics, Badiou revalorizes the notion of truth as adequation—only now made immanent to the world and not external or transcendent—between discourse and reality or between Idea and event.

In a third provisory conclusion, we can confirm that as the shorthand concentration of the ideological and organizational work involved in any political sequence, an Idea by no means is a creation of the philosopher. To the contrary, it belongs to the political actors themselves to devise an Idea that can be conjoined with the events that historically mark the age of riots and uprisings. As Badiou stipulates: "An organization lies at the intersection between an Idea and an event. However, this intersection only exists as process, whose immediate subject is the political militant. The militant is a hybrid being, since it is that which a riotous movement can give birth to once it has been seized hold of by an Idea."[46] What the metaphor of childbirth, also dear to Marx, once again risks naturalizing is the tension inherent in the hybrid nature of the militant subject, situated in the gap between history and politics and broaching the distance between event and Idea. In any case, contrary to the impression created in Bernes and Clover's review of *The Rebirth of History*, the Idea does not arise in the philosopher's head outside or prior to the events themselves taking place. "That is why the Idea does not precede the riot, but is intertwined with its real effects in the construction of a duration. Likewise, the Idea will later presuppose the reality of popular political organization."[47] And yet, it is also true that Badiou will not hesitate to affirm in his memoirs that "even as a mere project, politics cannot exist without leaders," something he describes as a "law," which motivates him to explain at some length why the choice of leadership in the case of his Maoist group did not depend on male domination: "The two men of the group, Lazarus and myself, formed the organization's 'provisional directorate.'"[48]

Finally, and most importantly, the militant hybridization of event and Idea brings us back to our opening question about the dialectic between history and politics. Badiou now reformulates this question as follows: "How is militant hybridization accomplished as fidelity to the event? That the *historical* value of the Idea is *first of all* attested by the riot is certain. That the *political* value of the riot is attested by the organization which is faithful to it, and faithful to it because for it the riot affirms the Idea, is no less certain."[49] To go from history to politics in this sense would be tantamount to moving from the spontaneous riots, by way of a mass movement, to new forms of organization in the wake of the exhausted party-form. This is what Badiou means when at the start of the new millennium he translates the dialectic of history and politics into his own philosophical language as the hybridization of event and Idea.

The triangulation between history and politics, or between event and Idea, by way of a disciplined fidelity can also be formalized in the lexicon of Lacanian psychoanalysis. "It might be said that with this formalization a transition is in a sense made from the real to the symbolic, or from desire to the law," Badiou remarks. "But in Lacan too—and I take this profound view from him—formalization refers to a mediation between desire and law whose name is: the Subject."[50] The result is a complete redefinition of the task of politics as a process of collective subjectivization, the production of a subject capable of sustaining an event's consequences as a new truth made immanent to the existing world: "A political organization is the Subject of a discipline of the event, an order in the service of disorder, the constant guardianship of an exception. It is a mediation between the world and changing the world; it is, in a sense, the worldly element of changing the world, because organization deals with the subjective question: 'How are we to be faithful to changing the world *within the world itself*?'"[51] Badiou's version of the eleventh of Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach" thus involves a triangulation of history and politics, event and truth, or the real and the symbolic, by way of a subject capable of changing the world from within the immanence of this world itself.

7

Though phrased in the vocabulary of the trilogy of *Being and Event*, this whole dialectic of history and politics by no means is a recent invention. Badiou had offered a nearly identical articulation in *Theory of the Subject*, a book based on his seminar from 1975-1979 and published in 1982, when he was still in the habit of speaking in the name of "we Marxists" or "we orthodox Marxists," with one section of the "Thematic Repertoire" at the end of the book reserved for "Historical Circumstances" and another, under the final subheading "Political Theory," for a discussion of "History and Politics."[52] So what, if anything, has changed in the last few decades?

This is the point where exegetical attention to the twists and turns in a thinker's individual trajectory does matter, not just out of loyalty to the internal consistency of his conceptual system but rather with an eye on grasping how these concepts have changed over time in response to shifting demands of the moment. In the case of a systematic thinker such as Badiou, however, the task of exegesis as a test of the time becomes increasingly difficult as his thinking progresses, insofar as he frequently papers over the gaps, breaks, and leaps of faith in this trajectory as if to insinuate in retrospect the existence of an eternal order of reasons that would have suffered no more significant changes in his own lifetime than over the two millennia and a half since the beginning of philosophy, which he consistently associates with Plato.

In *A Political Life: 1937-1985*, especially, Badiou revisits his formative years as a child, student, teacher, and militant, based on the quasi-Nietzschean "breaking in two of the history of the world" that for him meant the events of May 1968. But this cataclysm, which would "split in two" his political existence and accordingly divides the two halves of this first volume of his memoirs, at the same time lays bare some of the laws and processes whereby *any* political subject whatsoever comes into existence, to the point where Badiou will speak of a Subject with a capital S:

> That, right there, is the question. And its general scope consists in understanding that, in politics, we must succeed in thinking not only how the event, or more abstractly the situation (as the Bolsheviks said, it all comes down to attaining unity on "the current situation and our tasks"), determines the critical and collective aim of any collective, but also how this aim can take hold of Subjects in such a way that their rallying to the collective becomes as one with the local invention of means adequate to the realization of that collective's aim.[53]

Here, I would argue, two operations are simultaneously at work and mutually reinforce one another: the first is a form of *philosophical essentialization*, similar to the gesture of doctrinal recapitulation found at the end of *The Rebirth of History*; and the second, a form of *transhistorical absolutization*, whereby philosophical thinking raises the lessons of particular circumstances and situations to the dignity of the concept, valid for all times and therefore deserving of entrance into the realm of Platonic Ideas such as the Subject, which is how Badiou will transpose for instance the Greek *psychè* in his hypertranslation of *Plato's Republic*. The result is a baseline sense of continuity underneath the dramatic appearance of discontinuity or, vice-versa, the backward projection of an invariant structure where previously there had been the affirmation of a radical break.

On the one hand, a short book like *The Rebirth of History* appears to show Badiou almost as confident in claiming his Marxist credentials as at the time of his *Theory of the Subject*: "I would like to say that I too

am a Marxist—naively, completely and so naturally that there is no need to reiterate it."[54] This may seem a far cry from the double gesture of destruction and recomposition in *Can Politics Be Thought?*, which Badiou also describes as a deconstruction of Marxism as a metaphysics of the subject, inspired by Heidegger and prompted by the invitation from Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy to speak at their Center for Philosophical Research on the Political. On this occasion, Badiou emphasizes the need for introducing a radical discontinuity, including it seems with his own previous work, before proposing to redo the gesture of Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*. "That of which the true political forms today are contemporary is no longer the Marxification but a historical-political 'there is' whose emancipatory dimension—its heterogeneity with regard to the figures (including Marxist ones) of domination—must be thought anew."[55] And recent statements such as the one in *The Rebirth of History* stand in an even starker contrast compared to the way in which, almost a decade after *Can Politics Be Thought*?, Badiou opens his chapter on Althusser in his *Metapolitics* with the blunt statement: "Marxism doesn't exist."[56]

On the other hand, Badiou's affirmation of his spontaneous Marxism in *The Rebirth of History* is by and large limited to praise for the analytical strengths of Marx's original diagnosis in *Capital*. Today, this diagnosis is perhaps truer than it was a century and a half ago: "The part of Marxism that consists of the scientific analysis of capital remains an absolutely valid background," he says in an interview with Peter Hallward. But from this analysis no direct political lessons can be drawn: "We don't simply fall, by successive representations, from the economy into politics."[57] For Badiou, the essence of Marxism is not analytical but political. "It is neither a branch of economics (theory of the relations of production), nor a branch of sociology (objective description of 'social reality'), nor a philosophy (a dialectical conceptualization of contradictions)," he explains in *The Rebirth of History*. "It is, let us reiterate, the organized knowledge of the political means required to undo existing society and finally realize an egalitarian, rational figure of collective organization for which the name is 'communism.'"[58] Thus, over the course of the past two or three decades, Badiou has increasingly come to disjoin the analytical from the political role of Marxism, without a simple transitive relation between the two. The critique of political economy may well be more valid today than a century and a half ago, but according to the philosopher this does not help today's militant subjects to devise the appropriate tactics and strategies for intervening in the current situation. Something has entered a profound crisis in the articulation—whether as expression, derivation, application, or concentration—between these two component parts of Marxism, which I have called the analytical and the political and which others may prefer to label the scientific and the interventionist Marx, supposedly held together only by the imaginary glue of communism.[59]

Already in *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou had acknowledged the depths of the crisis of Marxism. "Yes, let us admit it without detours: Marxism is in crisis; Marxism is atomized," he states. "Past the impulse and creative scission of the 1960s, after the national liberation struggles and the cultural revolution, what we inherit in times of crisis and the imminent threat of war is a narrow and fragmentary assemblage of thought and action, caught in a labyrinth of ruins and survivals."[60] One way in which this crisis reveals itself is precisely through the withering away of the Hegelian-inspired belief in History as a meaningful totality, whose science would be Marxism.

In the Marxist tradition, history is presumed to make sense or have an underlying sense, as both meaning and direction. If the metaphor of the train is so apt in this context, it is because history presents us with a motion of a special kind. Revolutions may speed up the process but at bottom history is a train in steady motion with a base or chassis and a driving force or locomotive moving the wagons along a fixed set of tracks with the machine-like precision of a science. Marxism claims to be this science, the one and only science there is, according to a famous pronouncement in *The German Ideology*: "We know only a single science, the science of history. One can look at history from two sides and divide it into the history of nature and the history of men. The two sides are, however, inseparable; the history of nature and the history of men are dependent on each other so long as men exist."[61] Yet Marx and Engels equally famously crossed out this passage from the original manuscript of *The German Ideology*. And, as if to follow their example as early as in *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou, too, proposes to cross out or—as he would later say—subtract the science of history from Marxism in order to construct an active, militant or political Marxism without the pretenses of a scientific Marxism: "Science of history? *Marxism is the discourse with which the proletariat sustains itself as subject*. We must never let go of this idea."[62] What, then, is left of Marxism, once the science of history is crossed out? Should we perhaps read this as an attempt *avant la lettre* to put the science of history under erasure, so that at the same time there is and there is not a single science of history? Marxism as the science of history which is not one?

For *Theory of the Subject*, the fundamental reason why Marxism cannot be the science of history is because history as such cannot be reduced to a meaningful totality and, therefore, does not constitute the possible object of a science:

> For the mathematics of set theory as much as for the true materialist, all totality is particular. That which belongs to the whole requires the position of the other, which is not of the whole. From this, one concludes among other admirable modesties that universal history, conceived as the actual totality of political

> events, for example, is an inconsistent notion. There is an inevitable historical dispersion. This is one of the reasons that invalidate the definition of Marxism as "science of history," since history is not an object.[63]

When Mao, for instance, asserted that in the future communism would still be defined by further qualitative changes and divided into stages, for Badiou this meant that history could no longer be totalized:

> This type of statement amounts to the following, which is crucial for Marxism: history does not exist (it would be a figure of the whole). Only historical periods or historicizations (figures of the One-of-the-two) exist. This is why we communists postulate no halting point. When we determine the current stage, it is with regard to the preceding one and the coming one. We do not count further than three. Four at the most: an uncertain four is needed in order to obtain three certainties.[64]

And, three years after the publication of his *Theory of the Subject*, in *Can Politics Be Thought?* Badiou would conclude from this that politics must be freed from history rather than deriving one from the other according to the epistemic paradigm of Marxism as a science: "We will also say that politics must be freed of the tyranny of history so as to be rendered onto the event. We must dare to posit that, from the point of politics, history as meaning does not exist. What exists is only the periodized occurrence of the *a prioris* of chance."[65]

As I have argued elsewhere, in the period immediately preceding and following *Being and Event*, roughly from *Can Politics Be Thought?* to *Metapolitics*, Badiou is at his most anti-historicist, seemingly anti-dialectical, and potentially post-Marxist. This is also the period during which his thought is most closely aligned with that of Lazarus, who had similarly argued in his *Anthropology of the Name* that history does not exist. Or, to put the argument even more paradoxically: "Time does not exist."[66]

Before they would part ways both personally and theoretically with the dissolution of their militant group Political Organization, Badiou and Lazarus for much of the 1990s and early 2000s agree that politics must be separated from history, at least in the sense that the latter no longer supports the former in the same way in which, for orthodox Marxism, the objective factors are supposed to support the subjective factors, social being determines consciousness, and practice alone defines the truth of theory. Insofar as time serves as a polysemous circulating category enabling the compatibility between history and politics, a truly emancipatory politics must be grasped in strictly subjective terms, or in interiority, as Lazarus would say, which requires the evacuation or removal of the category of time: "Separated from history, politics no longer has

to do with time but, rather, with the prescriptive. The evacuation of time and the removal of time as a category effects the separation of history and politics, thereby breaking with an age-old tradition that saw a given politics as bound up with a given history and a given history as bound up with a given politics."[67] This demand to abolish time and history as given, but in order to restore them as categories immanent to unique political sequences, also explains why, in *Being and Event*, Badiou considers the official tradition of "old" Marxism or dialectical materialism, which since at least Engels posits an isomorphy between the dialectic of nature and the dialectic of history, to have been "still-born."[68] And why, in his contribution to the collection *Who Comes After the Subject?* Badiou's answer to the title's question involves the anti-dialectical concept of "On A Finally Objectless Subject."[69] That is, a subject defined not *in relation to* any objective given such as history or the economy but purely and strictly *from within* its own prescriptive fidelity to an event.

9

If Badiou, like Benjamin, proposes to pull the emergency brake on the high-speed train of history, this is because a certain Marxist or Marxist-Leninist vision of history has entered a decisive crisis, namely, the vision in which any given society or social formation must be studied scientifically starting from its material base, just as the young Marx in his original statement about revolutions as the locomotives of history takes our material life to be the base and driving motor of history. "There you have, the classics say in one voice, what constitutes the base of the social history of humanity. All the rest is superstructure," as Badiou will summarize in an early seminar session of his *Theory of the Subject*. "Base and motor. Two contradictions, two definitions, a single object—capitalism—and a single doctrine—Marxism."[70] In the mid-to-late 1970s, contrary to what a decade later would become the doctrine of politics as a purely prescriptive, immanent, and self-authorized mode of subjectivization, this dialectic of base and motor, or of the objective and the subjective, though no longer immediately given, would still be the difficult aim of any political subject. "Any subject whatsoever and first of all we ourselves, when it occurs to us to come into being as subjects—which, fortunately, is quite rare—require the stumbling encounter of the base and the motor," Badiou concludes. "As for knowing which one of the two is principal, the principal or the fundamental, the motor or the base, we can orient our thinking by meditating on this sentence from Lenin: 'Politics is the concentration of the economy.'"[71]

And yet, upon an even closer inspection, *Theory of the Subject* can also be seen as laying the ground for what will become the grammar of the riot in Badiou's politics according to more recent texts of his such as *The Rebirth of History*. The terms may change, so that instead of

masses, classes, party, and the State, we will obtain a dialectic of events, truths, subject-effects, and Ideas. But underneath the paradigm shift or epistemological break, we can perceive a metaphorical, if not also conceptual, permanence. In the opening seminar sessions of *Theory of the Subject*, the metaphor involves the act of anchoring politics, not in history as a social given but in historicity as mass action. This act is the work of the party as the organization of masses into classes:

> Class, apprehended according to the dialectical division of its dialecticity, means partisan political action anchored in the productive historicity of the masses.
> I repeat: it is fitting to think of class as antagonistic party and as productive mass in revolt.
> The whole point is to know how all this works together, because it is this working-together that *is* class. This entails nothing less than to make the rectifiable singularity of politics rise up in the real movement of history.[72]

Already in *Theory of the Subject*, moreover, Badiou rejects the notion that politics can be deduced from the simple analysis of class contradictions at the level of the economy. In other words, we need not wait for *Can Politics Be Thought?* to see him break with the doctrines of economism or class reductionism:

> The simple class contradiction is a permanent structural fact, which can be mapped economically (weak correlation); the class struggle is a process under particular conditions, entirely political in essence, which is not deducible from the simple weak correlation. To confuse the class contradiction with the class struggle, to practise the correlative indistinction of the contradiction, is the philosophical tendency of economism, of workerism, of somniferous Marxism for the lecture hall.[73]

And so, politics according to *Theory of the Subject* involves turning a structural contradiction into a historical contradiction, which in the later language from *Being and Event* means turning a fact into an event as much as making a historical circumstance into the condition for a new political sequence: "Every real dialectical process entangles a structural contradiction and a historical contradiction, *affecting the same terms*. The second is anchored in the first. This anchorage (purely metaphorical, at the point where we are now) is the nodal point of the question of the subject."[74]

Now, let us go back to the way in which Badiou formulates the grammar of the riot in *The Rebirth of History*. We will see that this grammar at least formally appears to be homologous to the one encountered in *Theory of the Subject*. In the latter, he had summarized

the complete process of political subjectivation as the partisan effort "to make the rectifiable singularity of politics rise up in the real movement of history"; in the former, the question that sums up Badiou's argument is the following: "How are we to inscribe politically, as active materiality under the sign of the Idea, a reawakening of History?"[75]

Everything appears to be different and yet so much remains the same! Metaphorically, the historicity of mass action no longer provides the ground in which to anchor the partisan action of the class struggle against the State. Instead, now it is politics that comes down to the ability of an Idea to root itself in the popular initiative of the historical riots and uprisings so that there may be a reawakening of History: "The only possible reawakening is the popular initiative in which the power of an Idea will take root"; and the latter must be communist: "The sole Idea capable of challenging the corrupt, lifeless version of 'democracy,' which has become the banner of the legionaries of Capital, as well as the racial and national prophecies of a petty fascism given its opportunity locally by the crisis, is the idea of Communism, revisited and nourished by what the spirited diversity of these riots, however fragile, teaches us."[76]

With this shift from anchor to root, we move metaphorically from water to land and from technology to a seemingly spontaneous process of growth and nourishment. But at the same time, in one case as in the other, we know that the politics of communism in its third stage or sequence requires a disciplined effort at organization.

In this last regard, too, there are striking similarities in the grammar used to describe the mutual presupposition between riot and the Idea or between the mass line and partisan action. Thus, in the "Doctrinal Summary" of *The Rebirth of History*, Badiou writes: "A non-localized Idea is impotent; a site without an Idea is merely an immediate riot, a nihilistic spurt."[77] But, in *Theory of the Subject*, he similarly had written: "Without the mass line, the party is null and void. Not to include the party disarms the masses in questions of politics."[78]

Finally, in *Theory of the Subject*, we had read that "the class struggle is a process under particular conditions, entirely political in essence, which is not deducible from the simple weak correlation" of class contradiction as a structural fact; and now, in *The Rebirth of History*:

> Let us simply note that if every political truth is rooted in a massive popular event, it nevertheless cannot be said that it is reducible to it. A political truth is not a simple moment of uprising. Certainly, the statement for which we are indebted to Sylvain Lazarus—namely, politics is rare—does indeed derive from the fact that the conjunction of an event and an Idea is rare. But this historical rarity does not *define* political truth.[79]

Or, in the words of Badiou's recent interviews with Aude Lancelin:

> It's absolutely necessary to take part in big mass movements by trying to establish a *political* subjectivity within the *historical* uprising. This involves *putting something affirmative, something positive, on the agenda, the discussion of which will prove to be a special case of the struggle between two alternatives* [capitalism and communism].[80]

Thus, despite the change in metaphors, many of the terms and even the grammar of the dialectic of history and politics remain the same for Badiou.

10

In the end, we can say that Badiou uses history throughout his work in at least three different senses:

> 1. There is the sense of history, or History, which does not exist. This is the notion based on the dialectics of subject and object, theory and practice, social being and consciousness, or the situation and our tasks, associated with the tradition of orthodox Marxism, which for this reason also does not exist, at least not as a single homogeneous whole, but instead proceeds by way of a series of radical leaps and discontinuities between Marx and Engels, Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, and so on.
>
> 2. There is history in the sense of the historicity immanent to rare and contingent sequences of politics, or what Lazarus calls historical modes of politics. This is the notion of history associated today with what I would call the insurrectionary mode of politics, in which the historical riot is one type of uprising among others. This is history internal to politics, not politics transitive to or deduced from the movement of history. Though this is lost in translation, Badiou announces such an understanding in *The Rebirth of History*, when he speaks of *une nouvelle donne de l'histoire des politiques*, which we might translate as "a new dealing of the cards in the history of forms of politics in the plural" but which Gregory Elliott renders as follows: "The *historical* riots of recent times [...] indicate the possibility of a new situation in the history of politics, without for now being in a position to realize that possibility."[81]
>
> 3. Once an Idea such as the communist hypothesis of a new type succeeds in taking root in the popular uprisings, there is also the possibility of a return to the idea of History: "Here the Idea refers to a kind of historical projection of what the historical becoming of a politics *is going to be*—a becoming originally validated by the riot."[82]

> This third sense would no longer correspond to the Hegelian notion of a meaningful whole or totality, which still determined the entire tradition of historical materialism. Instead, it would be an imaginary or ideological place of inscription for the stumbling encounter between event and Idea, between desire and law, or between the real and the symbolic, without the presupposition of a meaning-giving totality or final halting point in the Absolute.

This last sense is how the generous use of the category of History can be understood in *The Rebirth of History*, in *The Communist Hypothesis*, and throughout Badiou's memoirs in *A Political Life*. For instance:

> In short, guardians of the history of emancipation in an intervallic period, historical riots point to the urgency of a reformulated ideological proposal, a powerful Idea, a pivotal hypothesis, so that the energy they release and the individuals they engage can give rise, in and beyond the mass movement and the reawakening of History it signals, to a new figure of organization and hence of politics. So that the political day which follows he reawakening of History is likewise a new day. So that tomorrow is genuinely different from today.[83]

Or, again, in Badiou's short book with Aude Lancelin, *In Praise of Politics*, even though in this case the English translation fails to respect the large capital in History:

> The encounter of politics and History constitutes a major question. Politics only becomes historical, properly speaking, in exceptional circumstances, during what I would call political events, events that create unprecedented possibilities for peoples on a large scale.[84]

Finally, in the autobiographical recollections of *A Political Life*, Badiou writes about his militant work with workers at the chemical plant in Vitry, part of the Rhône-Poulenc group, after May '68:

> I can still remember early mornings at that truly symbolic gate, when the stream of workers would arrive and we would hand to them, in the form of a beautiful little book, the general lessons that could be drawn from their strike, and in particular from the collectivism of the decisions taken at the assembly. We experienced a kind of unprecedented joy, as if the morning of going back to work had become the dawn of a new History.[85]

To measure the fragility of this combination in the uses of history, suffice it to contrast Badiou's widespread recourse to the category of History in his latest writings with the radical consequences that his longtime comrade Lazarus draws in his most recent work from the need to de-historicize politics, in the understanding that time does not exist or at least ought not operate as an ideological circulating term between history and politics.

11

In writings from after his break with Badiou and since the dissolution of Organisation Politique, Lazarus has gone to ever further extremes in insisting on the strictly subjective, anti-dialectical, and anti- or anhistorical character of emancipatory politics, which requires that we break with time and History. Let us recall: "To break with time and with History amounts to a major rupture. I experience this as a break in the intellectuality of sense."[86] The result is a surprising and insurmountable disjunction between Badiou's philosophy, which reclaims both History and the Idea of communism, and the non- or anti-philosophical thinking of his one-time fellow militants Lazarus and Natacha Michel. To conclude, then, let us summarize this polemic in three doctrinal points on which Lazarus and Michel, beyond the pettier personal issues that sadly might be explained by the narcissism of small differences, take a stance that is resolutely and diametrically opposed to Badiou's.

First of all, if History does not exist, according to Lazarus and Michel this necessarily sweeps up the communist Idea as well. Communism is not just a hypothesis for which we may invent a third experimental stage, after its foundational stage with Marx and Engels and its statist phase from Lenin to Mao. Evidently referring to the Comité invisible (Invisible Committee) and to Badiou, but without mentioning their names, Lazarus admits:

> Today, certain committees and certain philosophers, clinging to the term "communism," continue undeterred to look for its signs, to search for indications of revolution, and to announce for tomorrow what the revolutions of the 20th century sought but did not find, and therefore to announce for tomorrow what should have happened yesterday or the day before yesterday, without, however, explaining why it did not happen, or even saying what did happen instead of what was supposed to happen.[87]

Yet, for Lazarus, "communism," together with such categories as the class struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat, or the withering away of the State, belongs to a conceptual framework that has long been saturated. "In my view these are *conclusive experiences*: why conclusive? What is at stake is not the experiment that took place but the utopian idea that we would have to reiterate the attempt with the same statements. It is the

reiteration that is utopian," Lazarus suggests, proposing that we assume instead the lapsing or expiration of communism altogether: "We must assume the political expiration of communism and advance its saturation by relying on the political processes actually taking place." [88]

Second, contrary to Badiou's insistence on the Idea as a shorthand notation for the need for organization, Lazarus now affirms that to think politics in strictly subjective and prescriptive terms, or in interiority, means to think the subjective without organization. At stake is a radically different balance sheet of the dissolution of the Organisation Politique in which all three, Badiou, Lazarus, and Michel had been militants together for almost forty years. Even the category of the subject, according to Lazarus, would be part and parcel of an external way of thinking, subordinated to the State:

> The problem today is that it is not possible to take what I call *people* (*les gens*) as a subject nor politics in terms of organization. That way of thinking is entirely and exclusively parliamentary: it sees subjects as electors, and every parliamentary party as the essential and inevitable venue for forms of organization. In the current conjuncture, I don't think that there is much to be gained from non-Statist forms of organization. Organization nowadays only takes places in spaces of the State.[89]

Third and finally, Lazarus and Michel, like their Italian comrade Alessandro Russo, are convinced that the rebirth of the Idea of communism in response to the 2008 crisis has to do not only with Badiou's personal success in America (by which they mean the USA but the same could be said for Latin America, where Badiou's presence has been uninterrupted since his Althusserian days) but also with his self-definition as a philosopher. As Michel explains in the preface to her edition of several of Lazarus's writings in the volume *L'Intelligence de la politique*:

> There is a principal reason for this: in Lazarus' doctrine politics must be thought by itself through the categories it produces or invents; it is singular and singular each time it exists: this is the theory of *historical modes of politics*. Any subservience to another way of thinking, even if it were that of history or of philosophy, strips it of its uniqueness and misses its singularity.[90]

History, communism, organization, and philosophy: in the end, all these notions according to Lazarus and Michel mutually reinforce each other in such a way as to miss out on the singularity of emancipatory politics today. In ignoring their historical expiration date, Badiou would have lapsed into sheer ideology, old-school Marxism, or craziness ("he went crazy, not, thank God, clinically speaking, but crazy about himself"[91]).

As for Badiou's response: other than a long endnote in *Logics of Worlds* devoted to Lazarus and other than a personal letter to Michel on the occasion of her then-forthcoming edition of *L'Intelligence de la politique*, a letter in which he suggests that their quasi-anarchist tendencies of late remind him that both originally started out in the ranks of the ultraleftist Gauche Prolétarienne, which now would come back with a vengeance to exact its devastating cost, we will have to wait for the second volume of Badiou's *Mémoires d'Outre-politique* (*Memoirs from Beyond Politics*), which will pick up the thread in 1985, the year when Organisation Politique was formed, which is where the first volume of *A Political Life* ends.[92]

1 See Badiou, 2011a and 2012b. In what follows, I will refer to both the French and the English versions, occasionally marking aspects of the text lost in translation. See also Badiou, 2010. I already addressed other aspects of this last book in Bosteels, 2011a. And see Badiou 2019 and 2026a.
2 For a study of this aspect of Badiou's philosophy, see Peden 2018. In what follows, I will partially pick up and further develop my analysis initiated in Bosteels 2014.
3 See, for example, Del Barco 2008, p. 183; and for further analysis, see Bosteels 2018.
4 Deleuze, 1991, p. 45.
5 Spivak 1988, p. 16 (emphasis in the original).
6 Badiou 2011a, p. 137; Badiou 2012b, pp. 93-94. Put back into its proper context, this affirmation confirms the identity between thinking and being. Non-identity here certainly demands a move away from the particular identities imposed by the state of a given situation and toward the generic stuff of the being of this situation, but the being of genericity is perfectly thinkable, in set-theoretical terms, according to Badiou.
7 Bernes and Clover 2012. See also the slightly more sympathetic review by another Californian friend in Smith 2012; and, in the same issue, Brown 2012.
8 Bernes and Clover 2012.
9 Badiou 2011a, p. 65; Badiou 2012b, p. 42. Compare with the original formulation of this principle: "Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation," in Marx 1970, p. 21. Deleuze also invokes this famous line from Marx to contextualize a similar formulation from Bergson: "The truly great problems are set forth only when they are solved" (p. 16).
10 Bernes and Clover 2012.
11 Badiou 2009, pp. 198-199.
12 Badiou 2009, p. 202.
13 Marx and Engels 1975, p. 109. See also Bensaïd 2006 as well as the criticisms of Badiou's supposed disdain for this-worldly history and strategy in Bensaïd 2004; and the fascinating debate between the two in Badiou and Bensaïd 2006.
14 On the privileged role of militant intellectuals and leaders known by their proper names, Badiou writes: "A singular point of politics, as fiercely debated as it is flagrantly obvious, is the following: the more that political action is collective and can be claimed to be based on the popular masses, the more it has need of proper names, leaders, heroes and martyrs"; and, about the role of philosophers as teachers, beginning in his own case at a high school in Reims: "Basically, what I learnt from teaching was the nature of a genuine meeting, whether political or not: the discovery, collective and directed by a leader, of the solution to a problem, it being understood that, first of all, the problem must be constituted, and as such discovered, by all those present," in Badiou, 2026a, pp. 92 and 134. Statements like these could be invoked to justify the kind of criticisms of Badiou's philosophy coming from Bernes and Clover and, earlier, from Bensaïd.
15 On this last distinction and its uneven geopolitical impact, see also Bosteels 2025.
16 Badiou 2009, p. 44. While the targets of such anti-historicism in *Theory of the Subject* include above all Michel Foucault, in *The Rebirth of History*, Badiou turns a variation on this critical insight against the work of Jacques Rancière: "It sometimes seems to me that Jacques Rancière is too quick to accept a reduction of politics to history, when he defines genuine equality by a kind of active, momentary break in the continuous inequality instilled by the state," in Badiou 2011a, p. 132; Badiou 2012b, pp. 89-90.
17 In the Postface to the second edition of *Capital*, Marx writes: "In its mystified form, the dialectic became the fashion in Germany, because it seemed to transfigure and glorify what exists" (Marx 1976, p. 103).
18 Badiou 2007, p. 150.
19 Badiou 2011a, p. 36; Badiou 2012b, p. 21. In *A Political Life*, looking back upon the early 1960s, Badiou is even more blunt in his negative judgment of the age of riots and uprisings: "Much later, I would show that contemporary youth is essentially disoriented, particularly by the contemporary weakness of the communist hypothesis, and that from this stems the fact that its goal is either to 'succeed' in life or to burn it all down. This is the secret of its own sadness, which often pushes it onto the side of inconsequential satisfactions, from drugs to chimerical 'uprisings' whose aim is strictly *dégagiste* (let's get this guy—whether Mubarak or Macron—out of the way!), but the content of whose thought is strictly conservative (give us back the happy days of easy consumption)" (Badiou 2026a, p. 167).
20 Badiou 2011a, p. 37. In French this sentence reads as follows: "Dans l'instant toutefois, on permettra au philosophe de prêter l'oreille au signal, plutôt que de se précipiter au commissariat." Gregory Elliot's translation, while certainly adequate, is less evocative of the philosopher as a tattletale who hastens to tell on the rioters in the police station: "For now, however, a philosopher will be permitted to lend an ear to the signal rather than rushing to judgement." See Badiou 2012b, p. 21. In *A Political Life,* Badiou sums up the principles to be followed by members of the political organizations in which he participated, in case they were arrested: "Don't say a word to the cops"; and: "Absolute silence, the repetition

of 'no comment,' and the consistent refusal to cooperate, even on the smallest details, are the best weapons" (Badiou 2026a, p. 206).
21 Badiou 2011a, p. 9; Badiou 2012b, p. 1.
22 Badiou 2011a, pp. 141-147; Badiou 2012b, pp. 85-95. At least twice before in the same text, the author had anticipated the gesture of speculative recapitulation, which might well be inherent in philosophy as such, due to its transcendental turn after Kant: "I can summarize this in a language at once more abstract and simpler," he writes at one point (p. 86; p. 55); and at another: "Perhaps, to clarify all this, we must repeat it according to the order of reasons" (p. 102; p. 67). While in the opening pages the reader can almost smell the teargas and burning cars, these later moments prepare the slippage into the speculative-doctrinal order of a self-contained philosophical system.
23 Candidates already vying for this dubious honor include Belhaj Kacem 2011, which was sold with the publisher's wrapper proclaiming *Ni Badiou ni maître* (*Neither Badiou nor Master*), a clever subversion of the anarchist slogan *Ni Dieu ni maître* (*Neither God nor Master*); and Laruelle 2013.
24 Badiou 2011a, p. 154; Badiou 2012b, p. 106 (the word used in French for "pupils" is *écoliers*, those who literally are *à l'école*). On the "immanent method" to learn the necessary lessons from the twentieth-century experiments in art, politics, and so on, see the Sartrean-titled first chapter, "Search for a Method," in Badiou 2007, pp. 1-10.
25 Marx 1976, p. 102.
26 Badiou 2013, pp. 7-8.
27 Badiou 2005, pp. 86-7.
28 Badiou 2012a, p. 37. Badiou does not elaborate on the Gramscian undertones of this formulation. In fact, Gramsci is conspicuously absent from all Badiou's writings. Ironically, one of the few philosophers who might legitimately claim to have accomplished part of this desire is the rabid anti-Platonist Nietzsche. Thus, in his 1992-93 seminar, Badiou expresses his fondness for one of Nietzsche's last letters from the time of his supposed madness in Turin, in which the author of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* envisions the realization of philosophy's universal address in the figure of the street vendor as the quintessential everyman or everywoman who picks out the best grapes for him: "How wonderful! It is at this point of extreme tension, in this moment of creative elation, just before he falls down and collapses, and, on January 3, 1889, enters the abyss of nothingness, that Nietzsche extols the genericity of philosophy," in Badiou 2026b (session of November 18, 1992).
29 Badiou 2012a, p. 38. Compare with Marx and Engels: "In communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic," in Marx and Engels 1976, p. 47.
30 Badiou 2011a, pp. 129-30; Badiou 2012b, p. 87.
31 See Lazarus 2013. Lazarus in turn borrows the expression in a clever *détournement* from Marx, who had used it pejoratively among other places in his 1844 "Critical Marginal Notes on the Article 'The King of Prussia and Social Reform.' By a Prussian," in a passage which in the French translation reads: "Si l'intelligence *politique* est précisément intelligence *politique*, c'est qu'elle pense *à l'intérieur* de la politique... La période classique de l'intelligence politique, c'est la Révolution française" (quoted in Lazarus, 2013, p. 172, emphasis added to reflect Marx's original). In English, the passage reads as follows: "The *political* mind is a *political* mind precisely because it thinks *within* the framework of politics. [The keener and more lively it is, the *more incapable* is it of understanding social ills.] The *classic* period of political intellect is the *French Revolution*," in Marx 1975a, p. 199 (emphasis in original; the bracketed passage, which betrays Marx's critique, has been omitted by Lazarus). For a different interpretation of the same notion, which highlights the extent to which Marx already in 1843 moves away from its Hegelian presuppositions, see Abensour 2011, pp. 24-30.
32 Benjamin 2003, p. 402.
33 Bernes and Clover 2012.
34 Badiou 2018, p. 78.
35 Badiou 2011a, pp. 42-43; Badiou 2012b, p. 26. It is worth noting that, in addition to the play between the pre-political and the political, Badiou also returns to another notion used in *Can Politics Be Thought?*, namely, the presence of *la pègre*, or the criminal element, in the midst of the riots: "The presence of organized crime in an immediate riot, to a greater or lesser degree depending on the circumstances, is inevitable. It should certainly be recognized by the rioters as a form of complicity with the dominant order: after all, capitalism is merely the social power of an 'honourable' organized crime" (Badiou 2012b, pp. 25-6). For Badiou, this goes to show the extent to which in each case the transitions from immediate to historical riots and from a historical mass movement to a political organization will be a question of subjective discipline and purification. Compare with the comments on the role of *la pègre*, which I translate as "the criminal world," in Varlam Shalamov's fictions about the Gulag, in Badiou 2018, pp. 45-53.
36 Badiou 2011a, p. 55; Badiou, 2012b, p. 33.
37 Ibid., p. 57; p. 35.
38 Ibid., p. 63; p. 40.
39 Ibid., pp. 64-65; pp. 41-42 (the French

expression translated as "an ideological hereafter" is *un au-delà idéologique*, which defeats the stated goal of immanence with the invocation of the "beyond" of an Idea). In his memoirs, Badiou also discovers "a general dialectical law" in the reluctance among the organizational structures of the UCFml to adopt the epithet "communist," namely: "negation, in politics, is never decisive in itself. It must be linked in one way or another to the creative novelty of a political process that is underway, and to the clear determination of its current stage, a stage which is a moment, undoubtedly experimental, that can be situated affirmatively within the third stage of communism," in Badiou 2026a, p. 226. Lazarus, without speaking of a law, let alone a dialectical one, agrees with the principle: "The work to be done is a labor of inquiry into the new, into those moments when people are not content to analyze the malfeasance of which they are the victims and to list all the promises not kept, but when they formulate something positive, a thinking of their own," in Lazarus 2022a, p. 36.
40 See Lazarus 2015, p. xxii.
41 Badiou 2011a, pp. 61-62; Badiou, 2012b, p. 39.
42 Ibid., p. 98; p. 63.
43 Ibid., p. 63; p. 40 (translation modified).
44 Ibid., p. 64; p. 41.
45 Ibid., p. 105; pp. 69-70. In Lazarus' most recent texts there is a similar tension at work, which harkens back to our opening discussion of the identity and non-identity between action and thought. On the one hand, he writes: "A major question is that of the adequation of thought with the order of the real"; on the other, "In the proposition: *thought is a rapport of the real* (among people), the problematic proposition is not that thought thinks the real: the real is unthinkable. Here, there is a rupture with the theme of a possible adequation of thought and the real," in Lazarus 2022a, p. 34 (I prefer to translate *rapport du reel* as "rapport of the real" rather than "relation of the real" not only because of the double meaning of the French term as "relation" and "report," but also because Lazarus resolutely rejects defining politics in dialectical relation to some objective outside).
46 Badiou 2011a, p. 98; Badiou 2012b, p. 63 (translation modified).
47 Ibid., p. 99; p. 64.
48 Badiou 2026a, p. 204.
49 Badiou 2011a, p. 98; Badiou, 2012b, p. 63 (emphasis in the original).
50 Badiou, 2011a, pp. 101-102; Badiou 2012b, p. 66. In the opening issue (numbered 00) of one of the periodicals of Organisation Politique, *Le Perroquet*, Badiou similarly writes in an homage to Jacques Lacan, who had just passed away: "Lacan establishes that the cause of desire is a lost, missing object, and that desire, articulated under the symbolic law, has neither substance nor nature. It has only truth," self-quoted in Badiou 2026a, p. 280.
51 Badiou 2011a, p. 102; Badiou 2012b, pp. 66-67.
52 Badiou 2009, pp. 360-362.
53 Badiou 2026a, p. 172.
54 Badiou 2011a, p. 18; Badiou 2012b, p. 8.
55 Badiou 2018, p. 67.
56 Badiou 2005, p. 58. See also Toscano 2008.
57 Badiou 2001, pp. 105-106. See also Bosteels 2019.
58 Badiou, 2011a, pp. 18-19; Badiou 2012b, pp. 8-9. For this type of statement, we can find numerous precedents in Badiou's writings of his "red years," from the 1970s to the early 1980s. For instance: "We must conceive of Marxism as the accumulated wisdom of popular revolutions, the reason they engender, and the fixation and precision of their target," in Badiou 1975, p. 16. Or, again: "Marxism-Leninism is that which avers that the proletariat, heir to a secular ideological struggle surrounding the communist program, is also the realizer of this heritage. Marxism-Leninism not only accumulates the ideological resistance but also transforms it into knowledge and project," in Badiou and Balmès 1976, p. 75. For an analysis of how such statements rearticulate the dialectic of Marxism and communism, see Bosteels 2005.
59 See Dardot and Laval 2012.
60 Badiou 2009, p. 182.
61 Marx and Engels 1976, p. 28. Earlier, in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx had written: "Natural science will in time incorporate into itself the science of man, just as the science of man will incorporate into itself natural science: there will be *one* science," in Marx 1975b, p. 304 (emphasis in the original).
62 Badiou 2009, p. 44 (emphasis in the original).
63 Ibid., p. 217.
64 Ibid., p. 92.
65 Badiou 2018, pp. 36-37. As I write elsewhere: "If there is a shift in this regard in Badiou's ongoing work, it is the slight but significant displacement from the idea of *politicizing history*, which still assumes a relatively external anchoring of politics in history understood at the level of social and economic being, to that of *historicizing politics*, which remits a purely sequential understanding of politics to its own intrinsic historicity," in Bosteels 2011b, p. 120.
66 In his own words: "In *Anthropology of the Name*, I argued that time does not exist. What exists, for the investigation, are sequences, each of which inscribed with a date," in Lazarus 2022a, p. 15.
67 Lazarus 2015, p. xxvi.
68 Badiou 2005, p. 4.
69 Badiou, 1991.
70 Badiou 2009, p. 26.
71 Badiou 2009, pp. 27-28.
72 Badiou 2009, p. 27.
73 Badiou 2009, p. 24.

74 Ibid., p. 25.
75 Badiou, 2011a, p. 102; Badiou 2012b, p. 67.
76 Ibid., pp. 27 and 14; pp. 15 and 6.
77 Ibid, p. 135; p. 92.
78 Badiou 2009, p. 91.
79 Badiou 2011a, p. 132; Badiou 2012b, p. 89.
80 Badiou 2019, p. 66 (translation modified).
81 Badiou 2011a, p. 47; Badiou 2012b, p. 27.
82 Badiou 2011a, p. 99; Badiou 2012b, p. 64.
83 Badiou 2011a, p. 66; Badiou 2012b, p. 42.
84 Badiou 2019, p. 13 (translation modified).
85 Badiou 2026a, p, 200. In the same volume, Badiou also remembers the impact on him and fellow militants like the Belgian Pierre Verstraeten of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*: "This theory founded the *possibility* of History, but did not yet broach History itself. It only described the movement opened up by certain types of practical ensembles in the direction of an inventive historicity—and, in particular, in Sartre's book, in the direction of communism. And yet up to and including the final page of its almost maniacal descriptions, History remained disappointingly enigmatic" (ibid., p. 85).
86 Lazarus 2022, p. 20.
87 Ibid., pp. 54-55.
88 Ibid., pp. 52 and 54.
89 Lazarus, ibid., p. 115. This chapter is translated in Lazarus 2022b, quoted p. 242 (translation modified).
90 Michel, 'Préface,' in Lazarus 2022a, p. 15.
91 Michel 2020, p. 102.
92 See also Michel 2020, pp. 105-106, where Badiou's letter is partially quoted.

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Alain Badiou and the Dialectic of the Present

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Abstract: This article will explore Alain Badiou's philosophy of time to show what role time plays in his philosophy of subjectivity, event and truth. As against the critical consensus that Badiou either denies temporality a valuable presence in his system of thought or the position that Badiou loses time in eternity, the article will argue that Badiou's late work, especially his 2001-2004 seminar, *Images of the Present Time* (2014, 2023) and the third and final instalment of the being and event project, *The Immanence of Truths* (2018, 2022) foregrounds the political temporality of the event as commitment and construction. In this this dialectical thesis on time, the political task of philosophy is to construct a dialectical present from a preset-less and world-less time. Badiou's temporal dialectic consists of pushing the present away from the repetition of the past and toward a projection that endears it to the future. As this article demonstrates, 'permeability' and 'inter-temporality' emerge as key takeaway concepts from Badiou's dialectical thinking on time that treats evental subjective truths as both temporal and eternal, thus revealing eternity to be an extension and not a negation of temporality. In the process, the article also addresses the crucial question about locating Badiou's idea of the event in historical time or better still a time that must be constructed at a distance from history.

Keywords: Alain Badiou; Philosophy of Time; Present; Event; Subjectivity; Truth; Politics

1. Introduction: Alain Badiou and Philosophy of Time

Does Alain Badiou have a philosophy of time? We begin from this basic question and go on to argue that time not only has a function in Badiou's system but also emerges as a crucial dialectical concept for his theory of event, subjectivity and truth. Our inquiry will address the temporal address of events and reflect on the relation between time and eternity in Badiou's philosophy. The present analysis will demonstrate how Badiou activates time in a political-dialectical logic of *construction* whereby events happen in a *new time* created by political commitment and at a distance from the grand narrative of historical temporality. His dialectic of time encourages us to subtract the present from the repetition of the past and push it toward a projection that approximates the present to the future. As we shall see, *permeability* and *inter-temporal movement* thus emerge as pivotal aspects of Badiou's temporal dialectic in which events must be animated and recalled across vast temporal periods for true political change to take place.

Time is treated in a piecemeal way across Badiou's corpus and unlike event, subject and truth, it is not a fundamental concept, associated with the French philosopher. For example, *The Badiou Dictionary* does not have an entry on time (2015). Antonio Calcagno on the other hand

has written an entire book, comparing and contrasting Badiou and Derrida's use of time (2007). He shows how time in Badiou emerges as a "diagonal" that separates one event from another and once the event happens, subjective intervention constructs political time: "Badiou identifies time with an intervention."[1] In *Theory of the Subject* (1982, 2009), Badiou discusses Jacques Lacan's idea of 'logical time' and its inter-subjective possibilities but goes on to announce that space is superior to time in the process of subjectivisation.[2] The event forms a spatial site but does it mean that there is no temporality to the event? Badiou is aware of this question. He calls the time of insurrection, "algebraic" and "topological." A revolutionary event makes something disappear but it is this disappeared term that designates its impact. The event warps time and produces a topological cut.[3] Badiou resists historicizing the event. He provocatively formulates that there is no grand narrative of history in the continuous sense except a *sequence* or *periodization* of time triggered by the event.[4] The event can lead to a rebirth of history and the latter is born only in its rebirth. The event is not located in history in the strict sense but it initiates a historical sequence by constructing time via intervention.

In *The Rebirth of History* (2011, 2012), Badiou theorises evental time as a construction on top of historical time. The post-evental organization of truth entails an invention of time outside of historical time:

> In this sense organization is, in the subjective latency where the Idea holds itself, the transformation of evental power into temporality. It is *the invention of a time* whose particular characteristics are taken from the event, a time that in a sense unfolds its beginning. This time can then be regarded as *outside time*, in the sense that organization is not amenable to being inscribed in the order of time dictated by the previous world. We have here what might be called *the outside-time of the Subject, as Subject of the exception*.[5]

The time of the event is not historical time but an "outside-time in time" that creates a collective form of subjectivity. At another point in the same book, Badiou calls it a "collective time" that needs to be organised by the event.[6] Historical time is statist while evental time is both disruptive and inaugural: "the time of organization , the time of construction of an empirical duration of the Idea in its post-riot stage, is crucial. Otherwise, we end up thinking that the state must endlessly retain a monopoly on the definition of political time."[7] Evental time as organisation takes political time away from the clutches of the state. It is a revolutionary disruption of historical *chronos*—a communist idea of time as political organisation. The event may inaugurate a new historical sequence but it does not happen *in* history. The event happens outside historical time which is a slave of the dominant ideology of the state. In its aftermath, it invents and organises a collective time of political engagement.

Badiou's resistance to historicizing the event has led to James Williams' accusation that his philosophy suffers from a complex denial of time, leading to a subtle support for political violence. Williams argues that Badiou's interventionist construction of time through the event falls on the side of eternity and not on the side of time.[8] The eternal truths appearing in the wake of the event are independent of durational time. According to Williams, Badiou locks time into eternity in *Being and Event* (1988, 2005) in the name of fidelity to the event and in *Logics of Worlds* (2006, 2009), the denial of time takes the shape of an extension of the present into eternity. In what follows, through a reading of Badiou's 2001-2004 seminar, *Images of the Present Time* (2014, 2023) and the third and final instalment of the being and event project, *The Immanence of Truths* (2018, 2022) I will show how Williams' argument is problematized by Badiou's theorizing of time's relation with eternity and his fresh negotiation with truths that are historically immanent and yet eternal and absolute. His point about political violence lies beyond my scope; I am more interested in recasting Badiou's philosophy of event, subject and truth qua temporality.

2. *Images of the Present Time*: From One Present to Another

What is Alain Badiou's position on the dialectical temporality of the present? How does the 'materialist dialectic' that poses truth as an exception to the totality of bodies and languages (as proposed by Badiou's 'democratic materialism') play out in relation to time? Let me respond to these questions and highlight how time is of essence in Badiou's evental philosophy of subjectivity. Time's relation to eternity and history will be glimpsed as we proceed. In *Images of the Present Time* (*Images* hereafter), a seminar given between 2001 and 2004, Badiou addresses how philosophy can become contemporary in its own time. Time is dialecticised not because this present is present but due to its absence. Hence his invocation of Stephane Mallarmé's maxim: "a present is lacking."[9] Philosophy's task is to go against what Badiou terms the "contemporary nihilism" of the present's absence. It must construct a present to make a "projection toward the future" that "preserves, in torsion, something of the repetitive dimension of the past."[10]

In the first session, Badiou wonders if philosophy is not an affair of the "after"? Does it always appear after the present, searching for lost time with nostalgia? Can it truly be contemporary with the present? If philosophy misses the mark of the present, how can it come back to reconstruct it? These questions take Badiou to Lacan's reading of Jean Genet's play *The Balcony* in *Seminar V*. As Badiou reports, in the session dated March 5, 1958, Lacan refers to Genet's play from 1956. These timelines in France are dominated by the Algerian war. Lacan reads the play months before the military coup d'état in Algiers, leading to General De Gaulle's return to power. In 2001 when Badiou delivers his seminar,

Algerian war is making a return through "remembrance." A historicity of temporal returns is at work in these references, as Badiou notes.[11] The present speaks its truth when it has become a past and returns via history. Badiou observes: "the present doesn't present itself as present. The present is shrouded in the obscurity of its presence, at least when it's a live, enigmatic present, a question-filled present."[12]

Badiou uses Genet to set up the idea of a present of images, represented by the brothel in the play. For him, truth can only come from the outside of this present and this truth will break the law of images.[13] A detailed analysis of Badiou's reading of Lacan's reading of Genet is beyond my scope and intention but I want to use the reference to dwell on the retroactive logic of historical time in Badiou that he shares with Lacan and Freud. This is the *nachträglichkeit* (afterness) of unconscious temporality. In the session of October 9, 2002, Badiou refers to the psychoanalytic term *après-coup* to mark philosophy's lagging function qua time. To philosophically construct a present in 2001, Badiou must go back to the past—the 1956 play's 1958 reading. He re-reads the past in the present.

The lack of presentness in the present matures into Badiou's critique of Globalization as the absence of a world in the 2nd session of *Images*. There is a global flow of capital, situations and emblematic images of democracy in the present but no 'world' as such. He understands contemporary nihilism either in terms of a meaningless world or a world that lacks being.[14] Either the nihilism of the present is existential (there is a world but it is without meaning) or it is ontological (there is no world or no being of the world). For Badiou, a world is not an *ontological* "category of the meaning of being" but a *logical* "category of the contingent arrangement of being-there."[15] The present does not allow the possibility for beings to appear in a contingent arrangement. It fails to make a world appear.

What then is the link between temporality and the world? Is the present incapable of making a world whereas the past and the future can constitute one? Let us not be too quick here. Badiou's present is not a universal idea of the present as much as it is the present as 2001. He indicates this by observing how there existed a world before Globalization up to 1970s. As he holds, it may have been a horrible world but there was a world, which was killed by economic globalization and liberalism. Badiou elaborates on this epochal shift:

> In the old days—about thirty years ago; we age fast— there was a world, in the sense that any worker or peasant farmer had a potential political name, an inscription in class and national liberation struggles, and so on. Nobody lacked a potential name. This world gave out the names and inscribed them in different camps. There were names and a distribution of names. What I call a world is, in a way, when, however remote from any figure of power someone

> may be, they are nevertheless not precluded from receiving a name. This name creates a future for them—which may be said to be false or illusory—but having a future, even a fragile or illusory one, is not the same thing as not having one at all. But we are in an in-between period when a huge number of people have no names. That's what democracy is in its emblematic sense: it's the acceptance of non-naming. There's no need for names since we're all equal before commodities! Most people have no name other than being excluded from the advantages of the false world. "Excluded" is the name of those who have no name. No name, no future. Nowadays, a peasant farmer has no name.[16]

Badiou's critique of the parliamentary democratic structure as global capitalism in the above passage boils down to "the acceptance of non-naming" whereby an enormous populace is deprived of names. In the older world, a worker or a peasant had a political name but in the present-without-world, post 1970s and 1980s, they have no name. Without a name they become disconnected from a "historical process."[17] Since these commoners, farthest from power, are rendered nameless, the globalised present remains without a world. Not any present but the *globalised* present fails to form a world. This present is disconnected from the past and cannot form a future. For Badiou, the nameless have no future. I would argue that when time is evacuated into the present with neither a past nor a future, it lacks the logical possibility of a world formation. Time must always already be *inter-temporal*. There should be bi-directional passages from the present back into the ruses of the past and forward into the future but not necessarily in a linear fashion. The present does not have to be the centre for past and future on both sides but from the perspective of the present, time can permeate the past and the future. When time loses this inter-temporal permeability, it gets reduced to the present and cannot create a world.

Badiou does not count out that the world-less present may go on to produce a world in future but for that we must construct the lacking present.[18] His detour through Plato's ideas on democracy from the Book 8 of *Republic* suggests that the democratic world is a nonworld of enjoyment. In the so-called democratic world, there is no "equality" but only an "equivalence" of things through "monetary presentation" of capitalism. In *The Immanence of Truths*, following Marx, Badiou calls it the Money-Commodity-Money (M-C-M) formalization.[19] There is equivalence between money that produces commodity and commodity that produces money. The endless repetition of this M-C-M loop is an equivalent structure but it cannot produce equality. To return to *Images*, Badiou derives from Plato the axiom of contemporary nihilism: "we have nihilism because we have a conception of time as immediacy, as the unilateral promotion of the present."[20] Democratic nihilism reduces all time to the

present and we cannot see beyond its figure of immediacy. This present is diagnosed as the time of modernity: "This time retains nothing, no shaping of the future but not the past either, since the past, by definition, isn't modern. The prescribed time is the time of nihilism itself, a time that lets no time remain."[21] The modern temporality of the present destroys time itself insofar as there is no true time without retention of the past and anticipation of the future.

What is philosophy's task then? Badiou maintains that philosophy must de-fetishize the present without any nostalgia for the past. Past need not be "overvalued"; it is instead a matter of determining the future.[22] Time's reduction to the present is characterised by extreme speed. Philosophy must slow it down but not in an artificial way that leads to stupor. Badiou advocates a "creative slowness" that chip away at the "hectic present."[23] He returns to Plato's definition of philosophy as a "long detour."[24] To sum up, using Badiou's own words from the 5th session:

> The nonworld of contemporary democracy is a temporal flight [...] an instance of planetary time as a substitutable, empty, and deferred present. It is substitutable because every moment is equal to every other one, none being declared strategic or decisive, and it is empty because these moments aren't incorporated into a representation of the future. They comprise a sort of vanishing present, which constitutes the dominant temporality.[25]

This summative passage adds the idea of substitutability, restaging the notion of equivalence without equality. Every moment in this empty, deferred present can be substituted by any other moment because there is no evental or subjective decision that chooses one over the other for strategic reasons. It is emphasised again that this is a vacuous time, abandoned to the present that vanishes without the aid of past or future. This is not the time of the event but a weak present without discipline or commitment.

In the 2nd year of the seminar, on October 9, 2002, when Badiou returns to his central question about the erasure of the present and world, his first hypothesis is that the present is negated by the overwhelmingness of the past. The past consumes the present in the name of tradition that turns the present into a shadow of the past. This is not only an auto-repeating past but also a change in its "constant restlessness" that can negate or erase the present.[26] If the past exhausts the present in this scenario, in the second hypothesis, Badiou presents the possibility of future exhausting the present. In this case, "the future is the absolute meaning of the present."[27] He uses "repetition" for the first hypothesis and "projection" for the second.[28] Repetition or projection in isolation negates the present but a dialogue between the two will revive the present by relating it to the past as well as the future: "The present, our present,

requires the conflictual interaction of repetition and projection. I'm not saying that the present exists as soon as there's such an interaction, but in any case, it doesn't exist if that interaction isn't there."[29] Following Mallarmé's declaration of the present in lack from 1895, Badiou argues that the present must overlap and interpenetrate the past and the future. To construct a present, a past and a future must be constructed as well.[30]

Badiou's point is the following: "the complexity of the present is the declaration—that is, the overlapping of repetition and projection—the declaration insofar as it exerts a torsion on repetition in order to hook it up or connect it to projection."[31] To construct the present, we need to push repetition with projection. To exert a torsion on repetition by way of projection is to dialecticise the present with the past and the future. Badiou champions an "indifference to anything that separates repetition and projection."[32] Repetition and projection must to be interconnected. This interconnection makes the future and the past permeable with the present. This is Badiou's dialectic of the present, constructed through making it permeable with the past and the present via retention and anticipation, by repetition and projection.

In the 2nd year of the seminar, Badiou pushes the problem of temporal construction toward place:

> The place is what denotes, even if in a sporadic, transient, ephemeral way, the construction of a different time. It is what reveals the possible novelty, the possibility of a new possibility, but reveals it as duration, through a sort of stability of its local foundation. The crystallization of the present as creation is also the problem of the place, of the establishment of a place.[33]

Badiou focuses on a logic of exception to construct a present where there may be none. Exception refers to "what is declared as a novelty of the present."[34] True temporality lies in the mutual *entanglement* of present, past and future. Repetition must be forced with projection. Exception as an evental possibility enters as the third term: "Declaring is situated in the nongap between repetition and projection, hence always in a position of exception in relation to the false present."[35] If repetition and projection talk to one another, in their non-gap enters a declaration—a decision that functions from a place of exception qua the false, world-less present. This "creative" exception produces the possibility of a new world. A present must be declared even if there is none.

Badiou insists on this non-gap between repetition and projection for the construction of a present: "the present had to be conceived of as the nexus between a repetition and a projection, with no gap between them. The present should not be the gap between the repetition of the past and the projection of the future."[36] Let me re-mark Badiou's departure from his own thought since he himself marks it:

> the present isn't simply a cessation of repetition, something new that's absolutely separate from what persists. We're parting company here with the twentieth century, which almost always conceived of the present as an absolute beginning, the beginning of the "new man," the fraternal participant in a completely new world. I spoke at length about this in my seminar, for three years in a row. And the conclusion from all of that was that the present needs to be conceived of otherwise than in the figure of a radical beginning. Something of projection has to absorb repetition and subject it to itself, of course, but also reorient and deploy it. In other words, the present must be an incorporation of the past into the future. Not of the whole past, but at least of something of the past.[37]

Badiou is referencing his seminars from 1998 to 2001 that produced his book titled *The Century* (2005, 2007). There he had remarked about the 20th century's desire to interrupt repetition:

> The first, typical of the century's prophetic stance towards the real, is that thought must interrupt repetition. There must be, and there will be, a new act, a 'new birth' which it is the century's task to invent. It is a question of responding, once and for all, to the imperative: 'Erase the bygone days.' [38]

Instead of erasing the past altogether, the point is to both break with the past and to internalise it into the present. Badiou's thesis on temporality in *The Century* is not all that different from *Images*:

> It is very striking to see that today we are practically bereft of any thinking of time. For just about everyone, the day after tomorrow is abstract and the day before yesterday incomprehensible. We have entered a period of a-temporality and instantaneity; this shows the extent to which, far from being a shared individual experience, time is a construction, and even, we might argue, a political construction.[39]

We see the similarity in his thought about the contraction of temporality to the immediacy of the present, rendering the past and the future blurry and absurd. This present lacks true temporality as a political and evental construction. Paris Commune is Badiou's instance of this political construction of time.

Unlike his characteristic interruptive logic, in *Images* Badiou outlines a tempered idea of projection that does not entirely break with repetition but absorbs it. The present is constructed when the past is incorporated into the future. The declaration of exception comes between the past and the future where the false present is lodged. It destroys the gap between

repetition and projection, created by the false present of the market and "commodity circulation."[40] Temporal division and permeability does not mean that the present is just a "consequence" of the past. It is a "projective torsion of the past."[41] The past is not completely negated but as Badiou reflects, the present involves a disruption of past repetition: "The present with its intensity, therefore the true present, is always the disruption of a repetition and the possibility of a projection."[42]

In the session of March 12, 2003, Badiou, alongside François Regnault, approaches theatre as a way of arriving at the present in the present. Unlike cinema, theatre is always in the present. The text-performance pairing connects theatre's present to a past but the past does not outweigh the present:

> what is meant by staging or contemporary theater is a special form of the problem of the treatment of the present, because the weight of the past is negated, lightened, or even done away with, as you suggested, in the time of the performance, which is itself a present. That would mean that there's something in theater that's like the relationship between two presents. There would thus be a splitting of the word "present" [...] the contemporary construction of the present involves both the incorporation of the past and a present figuration of the present. This indeed implies that there are two meanings of the word "present," that there's a kind of presentification in the present, namely the performance, which is the time of the quasi-empirical, fragile, given present.[43]

This passage suggests a division of the present. There are two presents in theatrical performance: one produced by the incorporation of the past and the other, configured in the present. This temporal split produces a double present. It is dialectically rich and points to an artistic construction of time. Unlike the false present of wars, discussed in the previous session (Feb 26, 2003), theatre offers Badiou a way to think the dialectics of the present with an internal division that makes two presents and forms a light but present relation with the past.

In the 3rd year of the seminar, on October 22, 2003, Badiou's philosophical question shifts to the nature of true life, probing the relation between time and eternity. Among dominant images of the present, Badiou lists democratic materialism that gives existence to bodies and languages without truths and the absence of eternity. Is eternity timeless or is it a function of temporality? The contemporary image of there being no eternity returns us to a lacking present or its failure to make a world. It declares that there are only "relevancies" and a time without eternity.[44] Badiou harks back to Plato here and fleshes out eternity as the "separability of forms":

> And "eternity," to the extent that it means anything at all, always more or less means the separability of the forms. If the forms aren't separable, if they're inseparable, they remain the prisoners of relevancies, of bodies, since they are trapped in the temporalities specific to relevancies. If you want eternity, there has to be a minimum separability of the forms. That was Plato's basic intuition, and he was right. [...] You can, of course, get along without it, and, ultimately, democratic materialism gets along very well without it. For democratic materialism, there's the relevancy of the forms; there is neither any separability of them nor any eternity.[45]

If forms cannot be separated from their epochal relevancies, they do not become eternal. Platonic eternity is this separability of forms. If there is no eternity, we are left with the present alone that cannot produce true time or world. For true temporality, eternity is required. Eternal forms are temporal. According to Badiou, it is crucial to accommodate eternity to time:

> It's important to understand that eternity is a structure of time itself and not the Other of time. The immortality of the soul, perhaps, is the Other of time. Eternity, as such, is not the Other of time. It's a certain vision of time, specifically the one that combines the existence of time with a minimum separability of the forms. The introduction to the theory of eternity is when a certain separability of the forms is created within time itself.[46]

To see eternity as part of time is to exit the false present and activate the past and the future via repetition and projection respectively. Eternalization is a function of time, allowing for truths that are historically located and eternal at the same time. Badiou's example is mathematical. That there is an infinite number of prime numbers is a mathematical truth. It appeared at a specific point in time when Greek mathematicians established it but it has become an eternal truth:

> It was, to be sure, Greek mathematicians, in a specific historical context, who produced, with specific words and in the Greek language, the proof of this. So it was clearly connected to a relevancy, but it was, to some extent, separable from it. That's what eternity means. And you can clearly see that if you don't have that at all, then time will gradually contract, because eternity is what keeps it open. A time that is not open is a succession, a time in which the moments are successive.[47]

A truth that is historically, culturally and linguistically specific can become eternal when its form is separated from particular historical relevancy. The

other significant thesis in the passage above is Badiou's argument that eternity makes time vast and complex in its *permeability*. If eternity is not recognised as a function of temporality, time will close down and contract into a tiny point. Such a closed time is nothing but a false present without a past or future. It is only an empty succession of moments. Because certain truth-forms are separable from their immediate milieu, we have access to a time vaster than our own. A time that reaches out of itself is capable of yielding an *inter-temporal* world. This is the time philosophy makes available for us. It is a time that transcends the immediate gratification of "contemporary hedonism" and connects us as subjects with deeper knots embedded in a greater scale of time.

Badiou's true life is an evental extraction of time as commitment, discipline and fidelity. It is no religious afterlife but an immanent conception of true life in this world. It must negotiate with death without the fantasy of an after-world post death and recalibrate life from the limit of death as a subjective foundation of time. When the individual becomes a subject via the event, they become an "immortal" of their situation. The subject can change the situation. They can outlive it by constructing a novelty that substitutes the situation. The immortal subject faces death but thinks life from the futural limit of death, relieving the present of its isolation:

> It is the concept of life itself only if it faces death rather than shrinking from it. Hegel would surely have thought that we are not living the true life because we don't face death. We think life is the purpose of life, that life can face itself, that it can deal with itself alone. Hegel would probably answer the question "What does it mean to live?" by saying that to live, in the final analysis, is to face death, but to face it truly, not just as the outside or the negation of life. No, to face it as that in which the power of life maintains itself even in this confrontation.[48]

Badiou clarifies with reference to Hegel that true life must gather its agency from death and face it:

> As regards death, I mentioned the famous statement in the introduction to *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where Hegel says that the true life is the life that does not fear death, the life that maintains itself even in death. Hegel's thesis is not that the true life is beyond death but that it is what endures death, what is capable of facing death. There's also the idea in Hegel that, when it comes to death, there are two stances of life. There is the life that gives in to death, the life that doesn't face death directly, and there is the life that staunchly endures the existence of death and maintains its permanence in it. (325).

Badiou does not explicitly engage with time here but the Hegelian encounter with death as part of life's continuum opens a complex time vaster than the individualist and liberalist present of global capitalism. To confront death is to go beyond the life of the individual and move toward a deeper and larger corpus of collective time. True life comprises this disposition to death whereby the living subject maintains their permanence in death. The immanent construction of true life is co-constitutive of the evental seizing and construction of time as a historical sequentialization or periodisation of fidelity.

Though the discussion on the present time takes a back-seat in the 3rd and final year of the seminar, Badiou's focus on true life as a subjective emergence through the event indicates how his philosophy of evental subjectivity is not without a philosophy of time. The event may not be located in historical time but it constructs a new collective time and inaugurates a historical sequence or period in its wake. As Badiou defines it on November 27, 2003 during his analysis of a Paul Valéry poem ("*Le Cimetiére marin*"), the event accords maximal existence to that which did not exist in the world: "It's when something that was nothing begins to exist maximally. The event [...] makes it possible for the particular inexistent of a place to come into existence in this same world, whose logic will be changed as a result."[49] I would argue that this change in the logic of the world that makes the inexistent exist is among other things a *temporal* creation of a dialectical present that closes the gap between repetition (past) and projection (future) by forging a decisive declaration in that interval. The exceptional declaration of a decision constructs a new time and a new world with its new logic.

The time of bodies and languages is the time of democratic materialism—a present that is bereft of time and world. The time of truth as an exception to the bodies and languages is an evental construction of subjective and collective time. This is the time of Badiou's materialist dialectic that produces a new collective subject-body of truth. Truth is not one but many. It is a category that functions as exception to the categories of bodies and languages. If truth is plural, so are these constructed temporalities of evental subjectivity. We are talking about as many times as there are truths marked by events. As Badiou clarifies, there is no totalization of truths qua bodies and languages.[50] Truth breaks into totalities of bodies and languages as exception. In this logic of exception lies its generative capacity for a new time and a new world.

To continue with my temporal translation of Badiou's philosophy of the event in *Images*, what breaks the false present of "there is" (there is language and there is body) is the "there will happen" of evental truth. He underlines that truth's exception to bodies and languages is retroactive:

> I said that there had to be a retroaction of the exception on the materialist given of bodies and languages. Therefore, and this is the

> key to it all, there will be a transformation of the concept of body. Because if we are really materialists, we must necessarily think that this happens in connection with a split in the concept of body, in connection with the possibility of the emergence of a different body, a new body.[51]

Truth will retroactively impact the body and produce a new subject-body. It will also have a retroactive impact on language and produce a new language that Badiou calls "subject-language."[52] This language is associated with subjective emergence—a language that does not merely communicate but acts to produce a new subject via event.

Badiou's true life consists of participating in a new subject-body and subject-language. Almost at the end of the seminar, he briefly comes back to the dialectic of present time:

> to live is to be incorporated in the present. And to be incorporated in the present can be understood in two different ways. Either as a temporal reference, that is, the incorporation takes place in the present, here and now; it's not a pregiven, preformed, etc. incorporation. But to be incorporated into the present can also mean to enter into the body of the present. To be incorporated into the present is something urgent: it's the present that matters; the incorporation needs to happen *now*. But it's also the fact that, since this body itself is a body in the present, it is into this present that one must be incorporated, in that it offers the possibility of a new body.[53]

The above passage splices the philosophy of event and true life with the philosophy of time by clarifying that to live is to be incorporated in the present. Life is a bodily act of entering the present or intervening in it. If this incorporation is not "pregiven" or "preformed," it is an affair of pure present. Incorporation is an emanation in the here and now. Alternatively this incorporation could be the result of an evental process that enters into the body of the present like an urgent incision of the past (the event as a vanishing supplement from recent past) that offers a future possibility, i.e., a new subject-body. Badiou adds (pursuing Valéry's poem) that when the inexistent is brought into existence through the event, it constructs a new "postevental present."[54] This present is a temporal construction that refers back to its evental past by being "postevental." It also generates a future by incorporating the possibility of a new body into the present.

As readers of *Being and Event* will remember, Badiou calls this future of the subject, a "future anterior."[55] Truth belongs to this particular future of the "will have been."[56] The tense of "subject-language" produced after the event is future anterior.[57] Future anterior or perfect enacts a grammatical suture of future (will), present (have) and past (been). It combines all three times of *chronos* and makes them mutually *permeable*.

It is therefore the best tense for a subjective construction of time. According to James Williams whose critique of Badiou's denial of time was my starting point, future anterior does not save Badiou as it becomes a treatment of eternity and not that of time.[58] But, as we have seen, eternity for Badiou is not outside time. Eternity makes time truly temporal. It makes time *inter-temporal*. There is no time without this inter-temporal movement.

3. *The Immanence of Truths*: Toward the Infinite, the Eternal and the Absolute

In *The Immanence of Truths* (*Immanence* hereafter), Badiou consolidates his philosophy of time in which truths are "eternal while at the same time resulting from a process that begins in a determinate world, as an event of that world, and therefore belongs to the time of that world."[59] Truths are both temporal and eternal. For Badiou, "every truth is an immanent production within a particular world" and yet "a truth is also an exception to the world in which it is created, quite simply because it has a universal value."[60] This double status of truth is a thesis on time that includes eternity. He observes that the time of revolution cannot be a "finite time"; it must "leave the future open."[61] This idea of infinite time is implicit but significant in *Immanence.* Badiou writes about the present becoming future in this infinitizing movement of time:

> reviving the infinite means living and acting in the real world in such a way that the present is so intense that there is no need for tomorrow to be "waited for," in the messianic sense. As Brecht puts it, as soon as we are dealing with a political truth, "'never' becomes 'today'." Tomorrow must *be here*. Activating the present in such a way that tomorrow is always-already-here has nothing to do with prophesy.[62]

The infinite and the eternal are not the same but they are on the same side. Once an event happens and upholds its truth, the truth creates its own present. But there is no need to wait for a future in that created present. The created present must make the future present. Activating the future is its ethico-political imperative ("must"). This is not prophesy but commitment to revolutionary time.

In *Immanence*, "the modern operation of subjectivation of finitude" is named "covering over" [*recouvrement*]: "Its objective is to cover over, by means of finite mechanisms taken from the alienated present, anything that could give rise to a new infinity making possible works that are themselves modern but independent from Capital."[63] That which is potentially infinite is covered over with finite mechanisms, obtained from what Badiou calls an "alienated present." This alienated present is like the

false present in *Images*. It needs to be changed into a new temporality. A political time of infinity must be constructed to work against the covering over that tames evental truth into the convention of routine. Badiou calls such tamed work "archive."[64] It is covered over by finitude and becomes a period document after enjoying their brief moment in the light. On the other hand, we have works of truth that become infinite with time as they are absolutized. Badiou notes that this kind of work's "real infinity is permanently protected from any finite closure, it exists absolutely. And this absoluteness exempts it from being reduced to the status of an archive: what it bears witness to—in this case after the specific time period—is that truths exists."[65] Though Badiou has a set-theoretical idea of the absolute marked in space (indexed by V), space and time cannot be divorced from each other. Truth's existence as absolute is temporally validated and inter-temporally re-activated. In this *inter-temporal* reactivation it becomes a work of truth.

A work of truth is born in a finite temporal situation but it is constructed into something that ceases to be finite:

> if we count [...] the dynamic belonging to the post-evental procedure—the work ceases to be finite. This means that no constructible subset of the world can then cover the work. [...] A constructible set necessarily knows nothing of the active present of a procedure, since all its elements are already defined "before" its own existence. A constructible set belongs to the realm of results [...]. It can therefore not grasp, follow, let alone exceed, what in the work marks its belonging to a dynamic procedure whose "result," the generic subset, far from being given, is always to come.[66]

As Badiou suggests, the post-evental procedure makes a truth infinite. Truth does not know its present. It resists the covering over of constructible sets and reaches the generic subset whose temporality is "always to come." In the post-evental process truth becomes generic by leaning on the future. This is how the work of truth ceases to be finite.

The post-evental work is finite but with time it becomes infinite. It is finite insofar as it germinates with finite materials in a determinate world. It becomes infinite when it assumes a generic potential of being re-animated in multiple worlds:

> Every work is universal in that, owing to its evental origins, it is a partial exception to the laws of the world in which it appears. This universality is attested to ontologically by the fact that the multiple that constitutes the being of a work is a generic multiple. It is attested to phenomenologically by the fact that a work, inasmuch as it is universal, can come back to life in worlds other than the one in which it was created.[67]

When a work returns to life in worlds other than the one in which it was created, it forms an *inter-temporal* appeal to the universal. This universality has a temporal dimension as it opens the possibility of return in a new world. This is what Badiou evoked in *Images* as the gap between repetition and projection that needs to be closed by a decision. When a work comes back in a new world, it is repetition that gets projected in an inter-temporal permeability. Badiou continues in *Immanence*: "Every work, finally, is absolute, in that the finite multiplicity that it is comes into contact, through the interaction of several different infinities, with an attribute of the absolute."[68] This interaction with several different infinities happens when a work is re-animated across multiple periods or sequences or worlds. It is in this chain of differential and projective repetitions that it becomes absolute. Absoluteness is attained via interaction with different kinds of infinities.

Eternity, infinity and absolute—these three terms align with each other to frame a new time of the event. This new time must be constructed with an inclination toward the future, incorporated into the body of the present, following Badiou's discussion of 'incorporation' in *Images*. To give a political example of this inter-temporal permeability from *Immanence*, Badiou zooms in on the proper name as a marker of how the past travels into the present in search of a future. He mentions how the German Communist Party launched a Spartacist uprising in 1919 Berlin. The proper name 'Spartacus' as an "absolute symbol" of anti-imperial revolt came back after two thousand years.[69] Badiou's emphasis on the *inter-temporal* return of an old evental name and the interaction of multiple evental truths contradicts Antonio Calcagno's point that Badiou does not consider the "pre-political" influence of *Kairos* as a time of "pre-intervention."[70] Badiou's late work crosses out the possibility that the past has no purchase on evental time. Spartacus' return in Berlin uprising is testimony to the folding of the so-called "pre-political" *kairos* within the political sequence of organized time.

The inter-temporal return of the evental proper name of the subject launches a new period of post-evental work. This is how truths become absolute across multiple timelines: "the proper name can be said to be the combined index of a finite time—the one in which the work exists —and the eternity of its value, which can be constantly reactualized in different time periods."[71] The reactualization of the political work creates eternity, absoluteness and infinity for the returning truth. Here is the key formalization of the index or the proper name:

> *We call the index of a political work one or two proper names, rarely more, that have the property of denoting simultaneously: a) the fulfilment of the universal conditions of a work, mainly the continuous immanence of the guiding intellectuals to a mass movement opposed to the dominant order; and b) the local*

> *singularity of the creation of the work involved. Because of this simultaneity, these proper names can henceforth be evoked in any movement of the same kind as the one of which they are the index, thus transcending differences in time and place and affirming the virtual infinity and absoluteness of the work, beyond its circumstantial finitude.*[72]

The indexical proper name facilitates the travel of a political truth across historical periods and worlds. It is by being re-activated in a new world that the work of truth becomes infinite and absolute.

Badiou's key goal in *Immanence* is to establish the absoluteness of truth. What is absolute can also be immanent. The absolute does not have to be transcendental. Though Badiou's reference frame for the absolute is quasi-Hegelian, quasi-Spinozist and quasi-mathematical (set-theoretical), what is relevant for our purposes is that the becoming-absolute of truth must traverse time. In a discussion of Edmund Husserl on mathematics (like politics, science or mathematics is one of Badiou's four truth processes), Badiou writes: "the index of absoluteness of a scientific work is indeed the immanence of the future in the form of what will give new meaning to the past, and therefore the overcoming of the inevitable finitude of a work by its real inscription in the infinity of a truth procedure."[73] As highlighted here, the becoming-absolute of truth is a temporal process. A truth that traverses multiple times and gets re-activated, re-signified and re-inscribed in *inter-temporal* motion becomes infinite by resisting the covering-over by finitude. This infinite work of truth is absolute.

4. Toward a Conclusion: Inter-temporality and the Permeable

Badiou formulates in *Greece and the Reinvention of Politics* (2016, 2018) that "the real time of political truth is the present."[74] It is this organised, invented and collective creation of a political present that I have foregrounded in this article. And yet Badiou echoes Marx in *A New Dawn for Politics* (2021, 2022) to maintain that the true present can only be thought from the future.[75] If the communist idea is a hypothesis, it can only be tested in an *inter-temporal* way across multiple timelines. Badiou declares in *The Communist Hypothesis* (2008, 2010) that we are still contemporaries of May 1968 because despite the historical situation changing, the political problem has not substantively changed. May 1968 becomes a political index of the event that makes it travel to other worlds where it can (re-)open a new historical sequence. A chronological temporal marker like May 1968 thus becomes *permeable*. Discussing Jacques Rancière in *Metapolitics* (1998, 2005), Badiou emphasises his break with historical time: "with my thought of politics as a truth process, [...] singularity is determined in its being (this is its generic reality) and

has no relation as such to historical time, for it constitutes its own time through and through."[76] The political truth as singularity can only exist after the event as it constitutes its own time outside historical time.

In *The Communist Hypothesis*, Badiou insists that the practical failure of communism does not necessitate its abandonment as a hypothesis. There are many mathematical hypotheses that were left without a proof for hundreds of years until they were proved. We have to keep testing the communist hypothesis to orient our times, cutting across a longer duration of future.[77] This temporal testing of the hypothesis opens a politics of *permeable time* in which the past reactivates itself in the present and constructs a present that in its turn is faced toward the future. When historical time transforms into a non-linear, permeable time, we arrive at evental temporality. The idea of *permeability* emerges as a strong claim from Badiou's philosophy of time. Let us look at a passage from *The Communist Hypothesis* in which temporal permeability becomes dynamic in a reversal of linear time:

> within a given type of truth [...] the historical inscription encompasses an interplay between types of truth that are different from one another and are therefore situated at different points in human time in general. In particular, there are retroactive effects of one truth on other truths that were created before it. All this requires a transtemporal availability of truths.[78]

The point about retroactivity is notable here. A truth interacts with other truths across a vast stretch of time and the past informs, triggers and ushers in a present that leans on a future. But this linear movement (past-present-future) can be reversed in a retroactive motion whereby a new truth can impact older truths it interacts with. The truths are available to each other on a 'transtemporal' plain and their dialogue is not unidirectional. This idea of *retroactive transtemporality* strengthens my argument about *permeable time*. *Chronos* melts away in this *permeability* of future, configuring the past from its construction in the present.

To conclude, this article established the dialectical temporality of event in Alain Badiou's philosophy. As we witnessed, Badiou's system dynamically constructs time from a subjective and post-evental orientation of truth, interacting across multiple timelines, building on without being reduced to historical time. Evental time is collective, constructed through subjective fidelity and commitment. It creates a new present, that takes a leaf from the past but also breaks with its repetition to establish a novelty and project toward the future. Evental time is capable of producing a retroactive effect on past evental truths as they co-invoke each other. Reversibility, permeability and inter-temporal movement are hallmarks of this *plastic* temporality of political action. To modify T. S. Eliot's opening lines from 'Burnt Norton':

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past
If all time is eternally present
All time is 'changeable.'

Permeable temporality that goes against *chronos* does not make time 'unredeemable' (Eliot's original qualifier for 'all time' in the final line). When an eternal present makes all time mutually traversable, it becomes changeable. Badiou's philosophy remains faithful to a time of change.

1 Calcagno 2007, p.73.
2 Badiou 2009, p. 308.
3 Badiou 2009, pp. 243-244.
4 Badiou 2010, p.241.
5 Badiou 2012, p. 70; emphases original.
6 Ibid, p. 89.
7 Ibid, p. 90.
8 Williams 2012, p. 125.
9 Mallarmé qtd in Badiou 2023, p. xxxxvi.
10 Ibid., p. xxxvii.
11 Ibid., p.7.
12 Ibid., pp. 7-8.
13 Ibid., p. 20.
14 Ibid., p.54.
15 Ibid., p.55.
16 Ibid., p.57.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., p. 60.
19 Badiou 2022, p. 124.
20 Badiou 2023, p. 67-68.
21 Ibid., p. 70.
22 Ibid., p. 73.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., p. 74.
25 Ibid., p. 75.
26 Ibid., p.135.
27 Ibid., p.138.
28 Ibid., p.140.
29 Ibid., p.141.
30 Ibid., p.142.
31 Ibid., p.145.
32 Ibid., p.150.
33 Ibid., pp.151-152.
34 Ibid., p. 156.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., p. 152.
37 Ibid., p. 153.
38 Badiou 2007, p. 57.
39 Badiou 2023, p. 105.
40 Ibid., p. 156.
41 Ibid., p. 257.
42 Ibid., p. 286.
43 Ibid., p. 223.
44 Ibid., p. 303.
45 Ibid., p. 304.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid., p. 316.
49 Ibid., p. 348.
50 Ibid., p. 378.
51 Ibid., p. 389.
52 Ibid., p. 353.
53 Ibid., p. 390.
54 Ibid., p. 391.
55 Badiou 2005, p. 398.
56 Ibid., p. 399.
57 Ibid., p. 523.
58 Williams 2012, p. 126.
59 Badiou 2022, p. 19.
60 Ibid., p. 27.
61 Ibid., pp. 32-33.
62 Ibid., p. 86.
63 Ibid., p. 104.
64 Ibid., p. 458.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., pp. 456-457.
67 Ibid., p. 448.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., p. 563.
70 Calcagno 2007, p. 108.
71 Badiou 2022, p. 563.
72 Ibid., p. 565; emphases original.
73 Ibid., p. 520.
74 Badiou 2018, p. 7.
75 Badiou 2022a, pp. 92-93.
76 Badiou 2005a, p. 117.
77 Badiou 2010, p. 7.
78 Ibid., p. 233.

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Phantom of Inconsistency and Spectre of the Void

Lorenzo Chiesa

Abstract: Taking my cue from what Alain Badiou, in Being and Event, refers to as "phantom of inconsistency" and "spectre of the void", in this article, I ask whether his understanding and use of set theoretical ontology can be mapped onto a general Lacanian framework for which the unconscious is sets. My overall claim is that the degree of compatibility between Lacan's and Badiou's set theoretical ontologies depends on what Badiou makes of the unconscious. Does Badiou presuppose the unconscious in his basic distinction between any ordinary situation and the state of that situation? If that is the case, namely, if a situation is the unconscious of its state, and this is what is presented by set theory as an extra-ordinary situation without state, then Badiou's convergence with Lacan proves far more remarkable than usually assumed. In the present contribution, which is part of a much wider project, I will simply look at how Badiou himself seems to invite such enquiries, only allusively but insistently.

Keywords: phantom of inconsistency; spectre of the void; danger of the void; wandering of the void; fixing of the void; count-as-one; second count; total part; situation; state of the situation; unconscious; set theoretical ontology.

As I argue at length and substantiate with a close scrutiny of the sources in my current book project, for Jacques Lacan, the psychoanalytic unconscious is sets, ontogenetically and structurally.[1] Unbeknownst to itself, axiomatic set theoretical ontology writes this already formal fact in a formalised fashion and renders it, up to a point, readable, if not perceptible. It writes the unconscious qua sheer letters, or unary traits, or also "the trait that counts" as operationally, in Lacan's own phrasing, "count as 'one'".[2] Such a one "undoes itself" and must be opposed to the "unifying One",[3] the semblance of which nonetheless necessarily arises. Better said, set theoretical ontology thus writes fantasy, given that, strictly speaking, the unconscious is constituted only in fantasy through the repression of fantasy as primal repression. Even more precisely, it writes the primal ontogenetic and structural "logic of fantasy, namely, a logic that preserves in itself", independently of repression, "the possibility of accounting for what is at stake in fantasy and its relation to the unconscious".[4] While, of course, for the unconscious "to be-there as unconscious" I cannot "think it as a [conscious] thought", fantasy as what anchors the unconscious tout-court "is in a much more rigorous way than the rest of the unconscious structured as a language" and can set theoretically be written.[5]

Taking our cue from what Alain Badiou, in Being and Event, refers to as, significantly, the "phantom of inconsistency",[6] and other cognate phrases I will inspect, the question then is whether his understanding

and use of set theoretical ontology can be mapped onto this Lacanian framework. The initial answer would seem to be straightforwardly negative. In Lacan, what is ultimately at stake in set theoretical ontology is the writing of the logic of fantasy as the subject of the unconscious. Through set theory we formalise what is by itself "the strictest relation of the subject of the unconscious with [...] [the logic of] fantasy".[7] Instead, as is well-known, for Badiou set theoretical ontology not only remains de-individuated, a stance with which Lacan would agree, but also does not concern the process of individuation. Bluntly put, unlike for Lacan, for Badiou, set theory is not a theory of the subject. This is despite their corresponding meta-ontological treatment of letters that are sets as functioning as these sets – in short, Lacan's unary trait and Badiou's count-as-one.

In my project, I aim to challenge and overcome this apparently neat division. My general claim is that the degree of compatibility between Lacan's and Badiou's set theoretical ontologies in the end depends on what Badiou makes of the unconscious, which is far from clear. Is the unconscious only the specific "situation of psychoanalysis", as he contends at times?[8] Or is it rather presupposed in his most basic distinction between any ordinary situation and the state of that situation? If the latter is the case, namely, if a situation is the unconscious of its state, and this is at bottom what is presented by set theory as an extra-ordinary situation without state, then Badiou's convergence with Lacan proves even more remarkable.

In this brief intervention I will simply look at how Badiou himself seems to invite such enquiries, only allusively but insistently.[9] Elsewhere in my project, I also closely investigate, among other related and underestimated connections between the two thinkers, the way in which:

> a) Badiou's meta-ontological theory of situations and their state enables, intrinsically hints at, and even requires for its own consistency a set theoretically ontological theory of the ontogenesis and structure of the subject, which, so to speak, is not yet the subject of the event.
>
> b) Lacan's embryonically mathematical writing of the logic of fantasy calls for a stricter set theoretically ontological interpretation of the ontogenetic and structural subject of the advent, which also diagnoses the limits of such enterprise, and set theoretical ontology in general, in view of a psychoanalytic subject of the event.

Having succinctly sketched this broad context, let us turn to Badiou's text. As early as the second Meditation of Being and Event, Badiou tells us that Plato's Parmenides already sensed how "the inconsistent multiple is actually unthinkable as such" and can be "glimpse[d]" only

as a "dream", or more precisely, as a "dream within sleep".[10] "Wakeful thought", Badiou paraphrases, presupposes a situation, or structure, or count-as-one, in which the multiple is consistent.[11] From within a thus understood (dormant) situation the inconsistent multiple is then obtained retrospectively as an "ungraspable horizon of being".[12] The inconsistent multiple is obviously accessible as a dream only through an abrogation of the (unsleeping) being-of-the-one. But a situation in which the consistent multiple is always, by definition, given does not itself grant any being to the one: indeed, the count-as-one amounts to a purely operational – unsurprisingly in inverted commas – "'there is'" ("'il y a'") of the one and can thus posit the inconsistent multiple as an un-thinkable dream.[13] Or also, I would contend in a not merely analogical manner, a situation qua consistent multiple is the sleep from within which the inconsistent multiple can be dreamt. For Badiou, the crucial step forward accomplished here by axiomatic set theory is having turned Plato's dream of "a multiple disseminated without limits", which points in the right direction yet remains pre-Cantorian, into a formalised ontological theory.[14] Set theory has given Plato's dream "the fixity of thought".[15] More colourfully, we may add that, for Badiou, Cantor interpreted Plato's dream, in the sense that set theory presents it. Still, as importantly put in Briefings on Inexistence, the set theoretician thereby binds his thought to being solely insofar as, by writing situations in a formalised way, he is himself "unconscious of being" bound to being, he has no consciousness of it.[16] Or also, as put in the "Introduction" to Being and Event, working mathematicians are "'ontologists without knowing so'".[17]

In the fourth Meditation, Badiou introduces the "phantom of inconsistency" and, in close connection with it, the "'non-consciousness' of the void" ("'inconscience' du vide").[18] For him, this refers to presentation in any ordinary situation and is exclusively presented as such by set theoretical ontology as an extra-ordinary situation that presents presentation.[19] On the one hand, all that is presented in ordinary situations is counted as one, as one-multiples, that is, consistent multiples: there is in this sense no "lacuna" through which the inconsistent multiple could positively be presented.[20] Not only that, but the effect of the operation of the count-as-one, namely, one-multiples as result, is also and especially "complete" because, as explained in the seventh Meditation, through the so-called "forming-into-one" the count-as-one is indefinitely repeated, that is, it "appl[ies] itself to a result-one", a one-multiple it has already produced.[21] But, on the other hand, and concomitantly, the absence of thus understood lacunae in ordinary situations goes together with a structural "gap".[22] This is the gap between "the one as result and the one as operation".[23] Badiou already summoned it, more abstrusely, with respect to Plato's dream as the gap between "the supposition of the one's being and the operation of its 'there is'".[24] Basically, this means that in ordinary situations the one as result of the one as operation points

at "a must-be-counted"[25] that precedes it, and this structural vacillation evokes a phantom of inconsistency. Here we additionally need to stress that even on the level of the forming-into-one, which is not really distinct from that of the count-as-one, situations confer no being upon the one. However, the phantom of inconsistency remains just a phantom. It is in turn unpresentable in ordinary situations. It only points at the inconsistent multiple qua being as being-nothing in ordinary situations.[26] The being of an ordinary situation is subtracted from its count. The void is the situation's subtractive suture to its being. And the void cannot itself be encountered in "the normal regime of structured situations", which dictates the "'non-consciousness' of the void".[27]

In the eighth Meditation, Badiou complexifies all the above in a way that further strengthens my attempt at bringing it closer to a fundamentally psychoanalytic line of reasoning. There is no ordinary situation without a state of that situation. De facto, ordinary situations are only given retrospectively by their state. The latter amounts to counting as one the operation of the count-as-one, and not simply forming-into-one, that is, re-counting as one the one as result, or one-multiple, the one as operation has already counted. Counting as one the operation of the count-as-one can be achieved by counting as one the parts, or subsets, of an ordinary situation. Such second count, the count of the count, is necessary to ward off the void in ordinary situations. Faced with what Badiou himself, far from coincidentally, does not hesitate to designate as the "situational anxiety of the void", structure's own anxiety, the state of the situation as meta-structure successfully establishes that "the one is".[28] Such "One-One"[29] can then be unmasked as a semblance only from the standpoint of an event, or better, of a truth-procedure following an event.

Let us investigate these intricate passages more thoroughly. The phantom of inconsistency that remains just a phantom in the normal regime of ordinary situations nonetheless does not rule out the "danger of the void" in them.[30] Badiou now calls it a "spectre" of the void which thus "must be exorcised".[31] What is this danger? Why is there a lingering danger? And how is it exorcised?

First, the danger is that the void may still be "fixed" in situations.[32] That would cause the "catastrophe of presentation" in the situation, "the ruin of the One".[33] More precisely, if the void as the situation's subtractive suture to its being were encountered, if, that is, the void ceased to merely stand as the situational "name of inconsistency" or, which is the same, if the spectre of the void were no longer confined to the status of a "phantasmatic remainder" of "what 'would be' the presentation itself, the presentation 'in-itself'" and directly pointed at inconsistency as "the being of consistency", then the inconsistent multiple as unpresentable would be presented as such.[34] That would be "Chaos", Badiou says.[35] And we should specify: that would be chaos from the vanishing perspective of the situation alone, for outside of presentation being is not a multiple

chaosmos according to Badiou. Very importantly, as commentators usually miss this Ur-meta-ontological point, without which we are exegetically lost, "being is not multiple [...] strictly speaking [...] because being is only [inconsistently] multiple inasmuch as it occurs in presentation".[36]

Second, despite the effect of structure being complete in a sense, to the extent that the count-as-one leaves no lacunae in the situation, there is a persistent danger of the void because after all "something [...] escapes the count".[37] Badiou speaks of this danger as having two "poles".[38] Predictably at this stage, one pole amounts to the count-as-one itself, its "pure operational transparency".[39] As considered, the one as result, the consistent multiple, always points at a must-be-counted in the operation, which evokes the phantom of inconsistency. Here the danger of the void perpetually "haunts" the situation, Badiou says.[40] Yet, at this pole the danger of the void cannot be localised, not to mention warded off, for evidently the count-as-one, or structure, as such pole, is not a term of the situation it structures, and a fortiori cannot count itself as one. At this pole the danger of the void haunts the structured situation simply as a "wandering of the void" (errance du vide) in it.[41] Or, on closer inspection, although Badiou falls short of putting it so explicitly, structure is itself this spectral wandering of the void. It is structure that haunts itself. In other words, as rapidly conceded by Badiou, structure, the count-as-one, is nothing but a "doubt" with respect to the one.[42]

The other pole of the danger of the void gives us instead a localisable "place of the danger of the void".[43] This place corresponds to those parts included in a situation that nonetheless remain uncounted by the count-as-one and thus as such unpresented or in-existent in the situation. For Badiou, following axiomatic set theory and specifically Cantor's theorem, inclusion in a situation as a part, or subset, or sub-multiple always exceeds belonging to a situation as a term or element. There are parts of a situation that are not terms of that situation. Or better, although all parts are compositions of terms belonging to the situation, namely, of terms counted as one and thus consistent multiples, and although some of the parts are themselves counted as one and therefore reducible to the status of terms of the situation, other parts are as parts "non-one compositions"[44] of consistent multiples and thus inconsistent multiples included as such in the situation without belonging to it. These uncounted parts are the place where the wandering spectre of the void might give way to an encounter with the void that fixes it and ruins the situation. Or, as Badiou has it more technically, it is in these parts that the "void [...] could 'realise' itself within the inexistence of a composition of consistent multiplicities upon which structure has failed to confer the seal of the one".[45] Moreover, it is only in these parts, as lying outside the normal regime of ordinary situations qua belonging, that the void could take place: the however irrepressible spectre of the void that is structure, or the count-as-one, could not give way to an encounter with the void as one term of the situation – since the

void is locally that which is subtracted from the count, "the not-one" term of the count – or as the whole of the situation – since the void is globally "the nothing of this whole".[46]

Third, the danger of the void inherent to every ordinary situation is exorcised by the state of that situation which counts as one all the parts of that situation. The state of the situation thus stands as the meta-structure of structure and the representation of presentation. It is therefore transcendent to the situation insofar as it counts as one also the parts that do not belong to the situation. But it is also immanent to it insofar as what is in this way counted as one in excess of the situation's count-as-one, the place of the danger of the void qua inconsistent multiples that in-exists in the situation as included in it, is nonetheless composed of terms that belong to the situation from the outset. Summing up and following closely the powerset axiom: there necessarily is a state of every ordinary situation whose terms are the parts of a given ordinary situation. Or better, everything that is included in a situation, including that which is not counted as one in it yet is composed of terms that are counted as one in it, belongs, as counted as one, to its state.

Here the difficulty lies in understanding how both poles of the danger of the void are thus warded off by the state of the situation. The count-as-one of one pole of the danger of the void, that of the previously uncounted parts of a situation, concomitantly counts as one its other and more elusive pole, that of the count-as-one itself, or structure. Namely, counting as one the place of the danger of the void, the second count that plugs "the breach [...] via which the wandering of the void could have fixed itself",[47] equally counts as one the count-as-one, the first count, as, again and importantly, nothing but the spectral wandering of the void. This is the case because, as Badiou ingeniously explains, if the second count counts as one all the parts generated by the first count, then it must also count as one the "total part", that is, the part to which belongs everything the first count counts as one.[48] The first count, which could not and cannot count itself as its own term, is counted as one term in the second count, and structure is counted as such by the meta-structure of the state. In other words, the completeness of the one-effect of structure, its absence of lacunae, is in turn counted as one. Structural completeness is itself numbered. This is the count of the count.

However, very significantly, note that the count of the count, the count-as-one – as parts – of the count-as-one – as terms – is not the count-as-one of the operational count-as-one but of the count-as-one, of the one-effect. Here Badiou might easily be misapprehended. Bluntly put, that the one-effect of structure is not only complete but now also counted as such does not mean that structure itself is now complete. At bottom, the crucial kernel of Badiou's overall meta-ontological argument – as almost invariably overlooked or misconceived by both Badiousian commentators and Lacanian detractors of Badiou – is that "the nothing

is the operation of the count", which, furthermore, is "exactly the same thing" as to say that "the nothing is the pure multiple upon which the count operates".[49] Hence the operation of the count that is nothing – and in turn is thus the, purely retrospective, pure inconsistent multiple on which it operates – cannot be reduced to the "is-one" of the count.[50] I insist: the count "is-one" but it still is nothing. The state cannot obviate this. If, instead, structure were completed by the state, that is, if the second count were to really count the first count as operation, then the One-One of the state would not ever eventually turn out to be semblance. The state would be God. Badiou in fact reminds us that, in the end, "the countering of the void [...] is apparently complete" and that, as soon as completeness is numbered, "it seems" that "the peril of the void [is] banish[ed]" and replaced by "the universal security of the one".[51]

The related, subtle, and initially counterintuitive point to bear in mind in this context is that the spectral wandering of the void must at the same time both be counted as one, in its effect, and let free to wander. It is counted as one by the meta-structural state of the situation because, as we just saw, the latter counts as one the structured situation itself, which, again, is nothing but what haunts itself. It is left free to wander on the level of the structured situation – now counted by the state – because otherwise the void would fix itself and the ensuing ruin of the situational One would also obviously ruin the state's One-One. Badiou does not unwrap this. He never systematises the "wandering of the void" (or "spectre" of the void, or "phantom of inconsistency", which he tends to loosely treat as synonyms), although he repeatedly refers to it at crucial moments in Being and Event, in seven quite different Meditations. More to the point, Badiou does not overtly address how the situational wandering of the void is consolidated as the spectre of the void by the state, starting from the latter's emergence. But he nonetheless clearly states that the wandering of the void is a "requirement" to prevent its fixing.[52] And this applies to, so to speak, before and after the state counts structure's haunting itself, as one in its effect. Badiou indeed tells us, just in passing in the sixth Meditation, that the void "is confined by the state" to its wandering.[53]

We should expand on this difficult argument by leveraging on its spatial coordinates. First, Badiou claims that, in ordinary situations, the void as wandering is "nowhere and everywhere".[54] It is nowhere because the void is the subtractive suture to the being of the situation. It is everywhere for the same exact reason: the void subtractively sutures the situation to its being – namely, inconsistent multiplicity. From a slightly different angle, the wandering of the void is equally nowhere and everywhere because the subtraction of the void from the situation sutures it to its being exclusively as the name of the void, or void set, that is, however, following axiomatic set theory, included in every ordinary situation.

Second, for Badiou, it is thereby set theoretical ontology as an extra-ordinary situation that presents the ubiquity of the wandering of the

void. Set theoretically, the wandering of the void is everywhere and not nowhere. Set theory shows that ordinary situations are not only "woven" from nothing but (the name of) the void in terms of belonging – starting from the void set's singleton[55] – but also concomitantly "infect[ed]" by it via its universal inclusion.[56] So much so that, as Badiou specifies, in the situation of set theoretical ontology, which alone does not have a state, the "'anti-void' functions are not guaranteed" and, sooner or later, the fixing of the void is "inevitable".[57]

Third, this clarification sheds light on another proximate and tricky issue. Badiou says that the void cannot be a term of a situation, and as such it is not localisable as a point. It is incorrect to refer to the void as a point.[58] Yet, in another context, he also speaks of the void as a "pure point".[59] Despite the rather confusing terminology, the tension is here only apparent: in ordinary situations the void is not a point (qua term) of the situation but, as such, it subtractively is its "point of being".[60] Such point of being is, again, given only qua phantom of inconsistency through which alone the void wanders. Instead, in the ontological situation, the point of being is given as sheer wandering of the void, that is, as presented everywhere, and sooner or later fixed.

Fourth, the further, and crucial, complication is that, as we have exposed, in ordinary situations themselves the void may indeed be encountered and fixed somewhere. That is the case in the excessive parts of a situation that are included in it yet remain uncounted by it. In this respect, we need to be even more precise: the name of the void, or void set, is included in every situation as part; the name of the void also belongs to some situations and as such is counted as one by it; but some included parts of any situation – qua themselves situations in which the name of the void is always included – do not belong to the situation under consideration, that is, are not counted as one by it. Here the wandering of the void as phantom of inconsistency and the parallel universal inclusion of the name of the void may lead to a catastrophic encounter and fixing of the void. It is the state of the situation that prevents this from happening by counting as one all the parts of a situation and, specifically, the total part of the situation, whereby the situation as such is counted as one by its state. Most importantly for our current discussion, on the level of the state of the situation, the situation's wandering of the void – which is the situation – is thus nowhere. It is, I dare finally say at this stage, repressed by the state. But, on the other hand, with the same move, the void now wanders everywhere in the situation as repressed. Or better, the void now wanders in the total part, that is, again, in the situation as counted as one by its state: the void is nowhere for the state but precisely as such spectrally everywhere for the (state's) situation. It is everywhere in a somewhere. Or also, the – merely situational – phantom of inconsistency gives way to – and, strictly speaking, should now be distinguished from – the spectre of the void – as situational from the stance of the state of the

situation. Badiou himself hints at this distinction by referring to the merely situational wandering of the void as the "pure wandering of the void".[61] We are left to assume that there is also an impure wandering of the void.

Fifth, when conceived in this way, namely, when grasped as mutually dependent with the state, the wandering of the void can more appropriately be defined as what I would call the wand-erring of the void. For the void to impurely wander as confined by the state in the total part, which alone makes it wander and prevents its fixing, there must be an erring about the void. The wandering of the void or, evocatively in Badiou's French, the errance du vide required against its fixing in turn requires a structural errancy, as going astray, of the count. This coalesces in the error of the second count, the count of the count carried out by the state of the situation, that counts as one all the parts of the situation and hence also the situation itself qua total part. Badiou does not make this passage explicit, since there is no such error from the stance of set theoretical ontology as a situation that presents the merely situational wandering of the void as everywhere. As seen, this comes at the cost of not "expuls[ing]" the danger of the void, whereby such wandering can thus better be designated as, Badiou nicely says but does not unfold, an insidious void that "prowls" (*rôde*).[62] But also note that, importantly, this set theoretical prowling of the void is, on closer inspection, de facto the only pure wandering of the void there is. That is the case because there is no ordinary situation without its state and therefore, after all, no pure wandering of the void in ordinary situations. Ordinary situations are only obtained retrospectively from their state. Or also, in them, there is no phantom of inconsistency that is not a repressed spectre of the void. In other words, as already discussed, it is only in set theoretical ontology as a situation without a state that, notwithstanding the second count, issuing into the powerset, all is still manifestly woven from the void, not the one. Badiou indeed unambiguously speaks of the state of the situation as establishing a "fictional being", or "imaginary being", through a "fictionalising of the count".[63] Echoing Lacan's "error of counting",[64] which he associates with the operation of the powerset and even that of the void set's singleton, for Badiou himself, in ordinary situations, the count necessarily makes a mistake, it mistakes itself for what it is not – namely, the one.

Sixth, de-fictionalising such fictional being necessitates an "evental occurrence" of the void that "proceeds 'explosively', or 'everywhere', within a situation".[65] It is then a matter of assessing how, for Badiou, this both refrains from catastrophically fixing the void and lifts state repression.

Having highlighted how Badiou appears to tacitly encourage a reading of ordinary situations as the unconscious of their state, primarily regarding the spectral status of the void, the next step in my overall itinerary is corroborating the above from an openly Lacanian perspective. In other words, I dwell on the way in which Lacan himself meta-ontologically quadrangulates the questions of the void, the count, fantasy,

and the reciprocity of (self-)consciousness – the state of the situation – and the unconscious – the situation. The general "homogeny" Badiou himself detects between his meta-ontological orientation and Lacan's, on a rare occasion of almost unconditional solidarity with him – "if that is psychoanalysis, then it is a philosophy homogeneous to mine"[66] – can at this stage, in this context, be rendered schematically as follows. In my own Badiousian-Lacanian terms:[67]

1. The count-as-one, the first count, corresponds to the unary trait
2. The count of parts, the second count, corresponds to the S1, the master-signifier.
3. The (state's) situation, (meta-structure's) structure, or better, the repressed spectre of the void, corresponds to the unconscious fundamental fantasy.
4. The total part as itself repressed corresponds to the unconscious object a, the part-object.
5. The total part as a term of the state (of the situation), of the meta-structure (of structure), corresponds to the ego, or self-consciousness.
6. The state of the situation corresponds to the big Other.

1 In a hyperbolic admission of this, which should be taken with more than a pinch of salt, Lacan speaks of his "reduction of psychoanalysis to set theory" (J. Lacan, "Lacan pour Vincennes!", in *Ornicar?*, 17-18, 1978, p. 278).
2 J. Lacan, Seminar IX, lesson of 13 December 1961, unpublished. J. Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XX. Encore. 1972-1973* (New York: Norton, 2000), p. 47.
3 J. Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XIX. ... Or Worse* (Polity: Cambridge, 2018), p. 114 (transl. modified). J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire livre XIV. La logique du fantasme. 1966-1967* (Paris: Seuil, 2023), p. 42.
4 J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire livre XV. L'acte psychanalytique. 1967-1968* (Paris: Seuil, 2024), p. 94 (my emphasis).
5 Ibid., p. 95 (my emphasis). J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire livre XIV*, p. 386.
6 Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 53-55 (my emphasis).
7 J. Lacan, Seminar XII, lesson of 12 May 1965, unpublished.
8 See for instance, with slightly different formulations, Alain Badiou, "Truth: Forcing and Unnameable", in *Conditions* (London: Continuum, 2008), pp. 132-134. Alain Badiou, "Six propriétés de la verité", in *Ornicar?*, 32 (1985), p. 41. Alain Badiou, "Group, Category, Subject", in *Briefings on Existence. A Short Treatise in Transitory Ontology* (New York: SUNY Press, 2006), p. 151.
9 Here I take the opportunity to thank Frank Ruda, one of the rare philosophers I know who remains truly faithful to the Badiou-event. Our twosome and by now more than two-year-long meticulous rereading of *Being and Event*, which is for now on the whole proceeding in unison, has given me ample opportunities to test what I am henceforth proposing. I also wish to thank Moritz Herrmann for his comments on an earlier and slightly different version of this article, which I have taken on board and elaborated to the extent that this was possible in such a short contribution.
10 Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 34 (my emphases).
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 See ibid., p. 35. In English translation, where the "'*il y a*'" cannot but be rendered as "'there is'", this subtle point is somewhat lost.
14 Ibid., p. 36.
15 Ibid.
16 Badiou, *Briefings on Inexistence*, p. 57 (transl. modified) (my emphasis).
17 Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 13.
18 Ibid., p. 56 (transl. modified).
19 More specifically, set theoretical ontology presents the presented being of any ordinary situation insofar as it is a theory of the pure inconsistent multiple. In other words, it "form[s] into inconsistency all consistency", that is, "deconstructs" every *one*-multiple as (one-)*multiple* (ibid., p. 30). Because of that set theoretical ontology thus also amounts to an extra-ordinary situation without state: it presents how representation (the state of any ordinary situation) is nothing but re-presentation (the state of any ordinary situation as itself a situation).
20 Ibid., p. 54.
21 Ibid., p. 54, p. 91.
22 Ibid., p. 54.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., p. 36.
25 Ibid., p. 53.
26 See ibid., p. 54.
27 Ibid., p. 56 (transl. modified) (my emphasis).
28 Ibid., p. 93, p. 95.
29 Ibid., p. 95.
30 Ibid., pp. 93-94.
31 Ibid., p. 95 (my emphasis).
32 Ibid., p. 93.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., p. 93, p. 53 (transl. modified).
35 Ibid., p. 93.
36 Ibid., p. 24. Hence, all in all, "being is neither one [...] nor multiple" (ibid.), full stop. Attributing to Badiou's philosophy an "absolute priority of the multiple over the one" seems to me inaccurate or, at the very least, simplistic (C. Norris, Badiou's Being and Event. A Reader's Guide [London: Continuum, 2009], p. 39, my emphasis). The same goes with similarly claiming that, for him, "Being [sic] is essentially pure multiplicity" (B. Baki, Badiou's Being and Event and the Mathematics of Set Theory [London: Continuum, 2015], p. 23, my emphasis). Imprecise, and by now almost hegemonic, readings like these tend to be contiguous with interpretations that, clarifying comparatively with other philosophers the actual stakes of the "absolute priority" and "essentially" above, are, in my opinion, just incorrect, which are advanced even by otherwise sophisticated and pathbreaking commentators: "Badiou shares with Deleuze the fundamental conviction that [...] being is inherently multiple", "a pure multiplicity underlying, and preceding, any act of presentation" (S. Gillespie, The Mathematics of Novelty. Badiou's Minimalist Metaphysics [Melbourne: re.press, 2008], p. 3, p. 12, my emphases).
37 Ibid., p. 93.
38 Ibid., p. 98.
39 Ibid., p. 95.
40 Ibid., p. 94 (transl. modified).
41 See ibid., pp. 93-95. Oliver Feltham's decision to translate this central phrase as "errancy of the void" is slightly misleading in my opinion. To the best of my knowledge, in French "*errance*" univocally refers to movement, in the specific sense of an aimless movement or roaming: it cannot easily be associated with "making a mistake". In English, "errancy" is primarily associated with the latter, and only literarily with

movement. As we will see, the notion in question nonetheless has theoretical implications in terms of "making a mistake", but that does not directly follow from the linguistic expression itself.
42 Ibid., p. 95.
43 Ibid., p. 96 (transl. modified).
44 Ibid. (transl. modified).
45 Ibid. (transl. modified).
46 Ibid., p. 56, p. 95.
47 Ibid., p. 97.
48 Ibid., p. 98 (my emphasis). In axiomatic set theory, the total part is technically called an "improper subset". It is *improper* in the sense that it is itself a set to which belongs all the terms that already belong to the original set. But, as *subset*, it is a term of the powerset of the original set. For instance, given the set {a, b}, its improper subset is {a, b} in the powerset {{a}, {b}, {a, b}, {Æ}}.
49 Ibid., p. 55 (my emphases). In plainer language, we can say that the void, the *count*-as-one, and the inconsistent multiple are "exactly the same thing". In my view, Lacan's own general meta-ontological orientation is exactly the same. Linking this Badiousian tenet back to footnote 36, if one does not appreciate that being *qua being* is *not* the pure inconsistent multiple (as it instead is for, say, Deleuze), then one equally does not appreciate that the inconsistent multiple, the void, and the count can be said to be exactly the same thing – and vice versa. I wonder whether even a refined reader like Peter Hallward misses this, by himself granting a meta-ontological prevalence to inconsistent multiplicity and therefore breaking this triad: "Inconsistent multiplicity is the very being of being [...]. Every situation, however, includes a link to this ontological ground, namely that which, considered according to the criteria whereby the situation counts its elements, remains uncountable. This link is whatever can be counted in the situation only as nothing rather than *a* thing. Whereas inconsistent multiplicity, as the 'stuff' counted by any situation, is itself effectively meta-situational, this nothing or *void* is always void *for* a situation" (P. Hallward, "Introduction: Consequences of Abstraction", in *Think Again. Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy* [London: Continuum, 2004], p. 8). Although much more nuanced and detailed than that of the authors I quoted earlier, this stance still seems to imply a crypto-Deleuzean understanding of Badiou, which moreover does not dispel, and even encourages, the vulgar anti-Badiousian assumption that Badiou remains at bottom a Pythagorean mathematical realist: the very being of being is multiplicity, namely, number (Pythagoras), but this numericity, as inconsistent, is as such excessive (Deleuze). Such strand of interpretation then unwittingly leads Lacanian detractors of Badiou, like Adrian Johnston, to wrongly accuse him of being an idealist "metaphysical realist" who "believe[s] in the ontological reality of mathematics" (A. Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism. Volume One. The Outcome of Contemporary French Philosophy* [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013, p. 84). Against Johnston, whose position I extensively challenge in my current project, let us here simply recall that, for Badiou, very openly, "the thesis that I support does not in any way declare that being is mathematical [...]. It is *not* a thesis about the *world* but about discourse", whereby set theory "pronounces what is *sayable* of being qua being" (Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 8, transl. modified, my emphases). Hence, again, outside of presentation, being *qua being* is neither one nor multiple.
50 Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 95 (my emphasis). Pertinently, this is the only instance in which Badiou writes "is-one" with a hyphen.
51 Ibid., p. 98 (transl. modified) (my emphases).
52 Ibid., p. 94 (transl. modified).
53 Ibid., p. 74.
54 Ibid., p. 55.
55 That is, the set of which the void set is the only element, {Æ}. In turn the singleton {Æ} equates with the powerset of the void set, p (Æ), and this in turn cannot but come with the powerset of the singleton of the void set, *p* {Æ}. Moreover, moving quickly here, but I do explain these passages in detail in my current book project, once {Æ} is obtained, via the forming-into-one, the forming-into-one can be applied to *any* existing multiple, via the axiom of replacement (ibid., p. 106). If the void set, the multiple of nothing Æ, has its singleton {Æ}, then every multiple, as multiple-of-multiples, has its singleton. Given a the singleton {a} follows, that is, the multiple to which only a belongs, the result of the forming-into-one of a. The singleton of the singleton of a and the singleton of the singleton of the singleton of a – namely, {{a}}, to which only {a} belongs, and {{{a}}}, to which only {{a}} belongs – etcetera can follow too. My only (Lacanian) reservation regarding Badiou's handling of these set theoretical passages, which he spells out and I also dwell on in my project, is that he does not seem to fully consider that the sheer void set, as name of the void, Æ, cannot really be isolated from all these passages, namely, as I put it adopting Paris Lavidis's felicitous expression, it comes in a "package", the packaging of Æ as {Æ}, *p* (Æ), and, especially, *p* {Æ} – and all that follows by means of the axiom of replacement. That has significant meta-ontological repercussions.
56 Ibid., p. 59, p. 101.
57 Ibid., p. 101.
58 Ibid., p. 55.
59 Ibid., p. 77 (Badiou's emphasis).
60 Ibid. (Badiou's emphasis).
61 Ibid., p. 96 (my emphasis).

62 Ibid., p. 101 (translation modified).
63 Ibid., p. 98, p. 95.
64 See J. Lacan, Seminar IX, lesson of 7 March 1962. Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XIX*, p. 143 (transl. modified).
65 Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 74.
66 A. Badiou, "La psychanalyse a-t-elle des fondements philosophiques?" (unpublished and available here http://www.entretemps.asso.fr/Badiou/Chexbres.htm)
67 I here still partly rely on my 2006 article "Count-as-one, Forming-into-one, Unary Trait, S1", in *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, vol. 2, no. 1-2, 2006, pp. 68-93. It still informs some of the major coordinates of my present project. But there are also in this early attempt some errors that needed to be rectified: for instance, I tended to confuse Badiou's "forming-into-one" (the level of the singleton) with the count as one of parts, or second count (the level of the powerset) – however much the two are indeed closely related. More generally, there is at best little problematisation of the fact that, in Badiou, there is no direct link between his set theoretical ontology and a theory of the ontogenesis and structure of the subject.

Truth, Being, Practice: On Badiou's Immanence of Truths[1]

Peter Hallward

Abstract: This response to Badiou's 2018 book *Immanence of Truths*, the third volume of *Being and Event*, raises some questions about its investment in the 'absolute' dimensions of being and truth.

Keywords: Alain Badiou, ontology, revolutionary practice, psycho-politics, infinity, transcendence.

On the first page of the imposing third volume of the *Being and Event* trilogy, Badiou offers a distilled summary of what he calls his general 'philosophical strategy.' He explains that his priority is to 'create the effective possibility of affirming that truths exist as concrete universal exceptions,' adding that 'this allows us to escape Kant's dilemma' (IdV, p. 13/19).[2]

Immanuel Kant doesn't figure prominently in *The Immanence of Truths*, but this brief allusion offers a useful way of approaching the book's guiding aim: an unqualified affirmation of the absolute that is grounded, ultimately, more in ontological more than in practical let alone 'psychological' terms. If commitment to a truth involves participation in a unending project or cause that might hold true for all the members of a situation, Badiou's aim here is to secure the infinite space of such participation more on the basis of its being than of its willing or doing. The priority is to ensure that truths can be forever affirmed as absolute—i.e. as absolutely or universally or unconditionally true, as true without compromises or concessions—primarily on account of what they *are*, on account of what can be said about the quality of their infinite being. Badiou has at least this much in common with Heidegger or Deleuze: for all three, ontology, rather than any sort of psychology, is the properly *fundamental* discipline of philosophy.

Compared to pre-critical thinkers like Descartes, Spinoza or Plato, Kant doesn't play an important role in *Immanence of Truths*, of course, or indeed in Badiou's work more broadly.[3] To the extent that Badiou discusses Kant here at all, it is as one of the thinkers who seeks to problematise and to question 'metaphysics, that is, any rigorously thought or conceived testimony of the absolute [*tout témoignage pensé de l'absolu*]' (IdV, p. 99/93). Here as elsewhere, Badiou associates Kantian critique with the abject limitations of 'modern relativism,' i.e. with a prevailing suspicion of the very notion of truth. Kant is the figure who deflates any attempt to present or affirm an actually-*existing* truth as itself dogmatic and excessive, as exceeding the bounds of human cognition and the strict conditions that limit all human experience. Here as elsewhere, Badiou condemns 'the empiricist—and Kantian—obsession that seeks to reduce everything, as the fundamental basis of all possible knowledge, to "experience," that is, to our perceptual capacities' (p. 467/408).

Filtering sensory intuition through concepts, whatever counts as Kantian knowledge depends on merely empirical demonstration.

Nevertheless, Badiou acknowledges Kant is still a philosopher and not merely a sophist or anti-philosopher or ideologist. Like any great philosopher Kant retains *some* notion of truth in the proper sense of the term, i.e. truth as distinct from mere knowledge, truth as universal, as unconditional, as endowed with intrinsic dignity and incomparable worth, etc. For all their differences, Kant and Badiou both refuse to align their thought with the prevailing demands of what Badiou here calls the logic of *recouvrement* or re-covery i.e. a logic that recovers or recuperates subjective agency by orienting it towards reproduction of the status quo, by fostering a deep internalisation of the necessity and norms of the established order of things—and with it, a profound scepticism regarding the very possibility of defiance or of radical change.[4] By contrast, true thinking or thinking truth, for both Badiou and Kant, instead brackets all the prevailing ways of this world so as to embrace an affirmation of the true and of the truly infinite as both (a) 'unconstructible' (and thus as inaccessible from within the limited confines of finite existence) and as (b) immanently self-affirming, grounded in 'the power of internal determinations,' themselves sustained by their 'intimate relation to Absoluteness as such [*l'Absoluité comme telle*].'[5]

Badiou explains that as a general rule, 'for me, what makes a great philosopher recognisable is their determination to save, I would even say to save *at all costs*, the concept of truth' (p. 530/462). Kant is surely a great philosopher—but the price he's willing to make us pay for truth is too high.

I

What then was Kant's dilemma, as Badiou describes it in his opening paragraphs? Since he is indeed a philosopher rather than a sophist or an anti-philosopher, Kant remains committed to the category of truth, but given the limits he sets on human cognition and experience, given our apparent dependence on sensation, he concedes that truths must be thought in either a hugely deflating or else a supremely inflated sense. For Kant, truths must be treated either as 'merely subjective modalities of judgment' (i.e. as little more than expressions of opinion, more or less justified by the accumulation of reliable experience) or else 'we must grant them a kind of transcendence' (i.e. attribute to them a kind of being beyond all experience and thus beyond all cognition) (IdV, p. 13/19). If an absolute truth *is* true, in the Kantian universe, it is as supra-thinkable or unthinkable. The truly true, for Kant, exists not as an immanent 'concrete exception' to what ordinarily prevails; it can only be postulated in excess of phenomenal reality altogether. For Kant the being of a truth can only be noumenal, beyond the reach of all possible understanding.

If Badiou's reference to Kant here is clearly very thin, I think his strategy for escaping Kant's dilemma helps to clarify what is arguably the central question of this new book: in order properly to ground the thought

of the true, must we ultimately refer to what we can grasp or articulate of its *being* through our capacity to think and formalise being-as-being? Or might we appeal more to what we are capable of willing and of doing, in short, of putting into *practice*?

To put it another way: if Badiou's philosophy is of course a philosophy of the subject, and if his account of truth is an account of something that subjects intervene to uphold and impose, what provides the ultimate ground for such an account? Ontology? Or might we consider instead the practical domain of 'psychology' broadly and indeed 'classically' understood—i.e. understood not as that set of recently-invented techniques of normalization and supervision condemned by the likes of Canguilhem, Lacan, Foucault, and so many others (including Badiou himself), but as that part of philosophy which (as the younger Sartre might have reminded us) addresses actors or acting subjects from the perspective of their motivations, desires, intentions, wills, commitments, actions, and so on.

For Kant this is indeed a stark alternative, and as everyone knows it is one that he resolves decisively with his embrace of transcendental idealism. If Kant wants to limit and humble any pretension to discuss metaphysical questions in the theoretical realm (including the realm of a 'rational psychology' or doctrine of the soul) this is precisely because he aims to secure the answers to such questions by setting them on an exclusively practical foundation. If he insists that we can know nothing about what we most truly *are*, about our being as a thing in itself—and therefore about whether or not we are free, immortal, destined to be saved by a benevolent god, etc.—it is because he is convinced that our practical abilities are perfectly sufficient for the imperative demands of action. Our capacity to engage in the practical exercise of reason demonstrates that we can act freely, willingly, etc., without needing to understand what such abilities are.[6]

For Kant, in other words, we prove that we are capable of moral action, of engaging in pure reason in its practical exercise, just by actually acting or more precisely by *willing* morally (e.g. by treating all persons as ends in themselves, as co-participants in the making of a kingdom of ends, and so on). As Kant prescribes it, moral practice requires no theoretical foundation, no understanding of what it *is*. To be a moral actor, all we need is actually and deliberately to engage in willing what any and every rational being ought to will. (Rousseau might have added: to be *political* actors, all we need is a sufficient account of what it means to participate in an actively egalitarian and generalising collective will). For both Rousseau and Kant, freedom is obscure in theory but luminous and sufficient in practice.

By 'practice,' Kant explains in his first *Critique*, 'I mean everything that is possible through freedom' (CPR, A800), adding that 'it is in the power of freedom to pass beyond any and every specified limit' (CPR,

A317/B 374). More precisely, 'freedom in the practical sense is the independence of the power of choice [*die Willkür*] from necessitation [...]. There is in man a power of self-determination, independent of any coercion through sensuous impulses' (CPR, A534). Understood in this sense, 'freedom is the intrinsic value of the world, the *summum bonum*,' the supreme good.[7] We are free to act morally, and therefore to desire, decide, assert, and commit ourselves freely, even if we have no idea how we are free in this way, even if we could never know what it means to *be* free.

In short: for Kant, theoretical understanding cannot grasp the being of the free actor, but this actor's rational willing and doing is sufficient for an account of moral practice that upholds those criteria Badiou associates with truth, i.e. of truth as absolute commitment without compromise or qualification. If 'Kant's dilemma' implies that anyone who seeks to affirm absolute truth has to try to ground it either in being or in practice, in what actors are or what they do, then clearly Kant resolves his dilemma by affirming the primacy of practice.

II

How does Badiou address this alternative in his new book? At first glance, we might think that he merely chooses the opposite path. We might think that where Kant opts for practice, Badiou simply sides with being and more specifically with ontology as the discourse that articulates what can be said of being as vertiginously infinite multiplicity. We might think this all the more readily since Badiou concedes all actually-existing or 'real capacity ultimately operates within a register of finitude' (IdV, p. 100/93). We might then think that the key move of *Immanence of Truths* is *simply* an affirmation of being, and in particular of being's absolutely infinite and open- or non-ended character, and thus its absolute openness to any new truth. After demonstrating, in the first two volumes of *Being and Event*, the exceptional universality and singularity of truths, here he is especially concerned with their *absoluteness*, the way they express, participate in, or approximate the absolute as such (515/451), and therefore 'the irrefutable permanence of their being-true' (p. 530/462).

Immanence of Truths is certainly emphatic on this point. To refute the ideology of finitude, to escape all those myriad forms of *recouvrement* or re-covery that condition us to accept what is established and to submit to what exists, he devotes most of this book, and its most innovative parts, to consideration of the mathematical consequences that can be deduced (i.e. that have been deduced, by mathematicians like Dana Scott, Johan Jensen, Kenneth Kunen, etc.) from the existence of new infinities, i.e., very large cardinals, and in particular from what Badiou renames here a 'complete' or 'measurable' cardinal. 'There is no doubt,' Badiou proclaims, 'that the concepts of a Ramsey cardinal and a complete cardinal stand at the threshold of all emancipation of thought [*toute émancipation des*

pensées]' (p. 472-3/413). The mere names of these hyper-infinite numbers are evocative of what's at stake—a partial list includes cardinals that are 'indescribable, ineffable, strong, super-strong, strongly compact, super-compact, enormous, super-enormous...' (p. 281/248).

As Badiou presents it, the demonstrated existence of such cardinals seems to offer us, in effect, a kind of ontological and thus definitive refutation of the whole logic of finitude, in all domains—and thus, in effect, a pre-emptive refutation of scepticism, of relativism, of pessimism, and of any mortifying 'realism.' Moreover, the vertiginous unfolding of the un-ending hierarchy of great cardinals, in their dizzying ascent towards the absolute as such, seems to offer human subjects of truth, in all pertinent fields (i.e., in politics, in love, in the arts and in the sciences), a kind of ontological validation of what they are trying to do, a kind of guarantee that it is indeed forever possible to uphold an immortal truth. Demonstration of the absolutely infinite dimensions of being seems to offer a kind of certainty that what these subjects want to do can indeed happen—can indeed come into being. Recent work in set theory, in other words, reassures us that there is at least an irreducible and uncompromised place for absolute truth in the inexhaustibly infinite expanse of being.

Badiou repeatedly insists on the literally decisive place and space of the absolute in the affirmation of truth as such. For a truth to be affirmed as eternal and universal, it is not enough here to demonstrate that it applies to all elements of a situation, nor to indicate that it has the power to change the world in which, one day, following an event, it begins to appear and to impose itself. It is now also, and above all, necessary to insist on its unconditionally *absolute* aspect, its capacity absolutely to transcend both its worldly existence and the limits of its situation. What is true can forever held to *be* absolutely and unendingly true.

To ground this idea as a general principle of truth in general, Badiou devotes some crucial and demanding sections of his book to a demonstration of how mathematical truths concerning the existence of large cardinals prove their absolute nature by the fact that they ultimately touch on the absolute as such, or that they express an attribute of the absolute itself. While the detail of these demonstrations (from 'elementary embedding' to 'ultra-filter') certainly transcends my own understanding of the mathematics involved, we can at least try to summarise what's at stake. Badiou's priority here is show how a truth 'can claim a form of absoluteness' and receive 'a kind of imprint of absoluteness' (p. 681/589), 'a "touch" of the absolute' (p. 35/38). Badiou calls such a touch of the absolute the '*index*' of a true act, procedure or work (p. 682/590; I'll come back to this point in my final section below). Affirmation of a truth finds its ontological foundation in the attestation of 'the existence of a true infinity,' which confirms 'the relationship of a truth, not to the situation in which it was produced, but to this or that attribute of the absolute' itself

(p. 515/450). Such attestation illuminates it with a definitive and irrefutable 'flash [éclair] of a certainty,' and 'the flash that touches upon the assumed complete cardinal is simply that by which the work absolutises itself.'[8] The priority is to secure 'the fragile works of truth,' ensuring they can resist any 'mortifying falling back into finitude' by protecting them behind a 'thick barrier of infinities, of kinds of infinities that are still rare or even still unknown' (p. 468/410).[9]

In the first volume of *Being and Event*, Badiou had already grounded the elementary dimensions of his ontology in the familiar and uncontroversial precept that there can be no set of all sets, i.e. no largest possible infinite number. For all mathematicians who accept the principles of Cantorian set theory, the series of infinite numbers is an ascending ladder with no stopping point. In *Immanence of Truths* Badiou develops the implications of this precept much more fully.

In the technical terms he adapts from recent set-theoretical work on enormously infinite numbers, Badiou wants to show that 'all creation [in all fields] that sustains a relation with the absolute has as its witness a complete [or measurable] cardinal' (p. 405/354). Parts five and six of the book, drawing on theorems demonstrated by Scott, Jensen and Kunen, show how, once affirmed, non-constructible or inaccessible infinities escape all possible *recouvrement*, i.e. cannot be covered-over and re-placed in a constructible universe, even while their affirmation belongs to one and the same universe of thought (pp. 495-6/431-2). A truth thus demonstrates its absolute quality through its possession of what Badiou calls a 'complete index':

> Metaphorically, we can say that the complete index is the subjectivised result, or the result caught up in the dynamic of the truth procedure, of a sort of friction [*frottement*] or flash between the intrinsic infinity of the work and the existence of a complete cardinal. This friction between two infinities produces locally, in and through the work, in accordance with the theorems proposed by Scott and Jensen, the possibility of a permanent protection from re-covering or covering-over, and therefore the possibility of the un-ending or "infinite" pursuit of the infinity of the work [*la poursuite "à l'infini" de l'infinité de l'œuvre*], seized in the dynamic of the truth procedure. Consequently, the work then deserves to be called truth; it is *a* truth (p. 525/459).

In more general parlance, Badiou seeks to show how 'being in person [*l'être en personne*], for the Subject who creates as well as for the one who contemplates, rises absolutely to the surface of appearance. Or almost…' (p. 393/343). It remains an *almost*-absolute being, even at this limit, because otherwise the absolute itself might be relativised by its expression, and thus compromised by what it touches, or what it allows

to touch it. According to a logic reminiscent of apophatic theology, the truly and utterly absolute must remain ultimately and forever out of reach: if it can be touched it cannot be grasped, and it touches us from a height we can never reach. The series of infinite numbers can never end, i.e. this series can never exhaust the absolute space in which it unfolds.

In brief, a truth receives the imprint or 'seal of absoluteness, without however being created or absorbed by the absolute itself' (p. 405/354). A life-long disciple of Plato, Badiou here readily accepts an analogy with his famous allegory of the cave: the thoughts of this world receive their clarity from the sun as a worldly figure of the supra-worldly absolute, of an Idea that transcends existence, thus receiving their 'trans-ideal illumination [*l'éclair trans-idéel*] from the Idea that is too powerful to exist, the Absolute Idea, the Idea of Ideas, the Truth…' (p. 537/468). In doing so, we indicate 'the place where a truth "touches" its absoluteness, and the absolute itself, the relationship in the name of which it makes sense to speak of the near-absoluteness of this truth, which will distinguish it "absolutely" from any opinion in actual situations' (p. 400/348).

This is how Badiou proposes to meet the challenge he has set for every great philosopher—the challenge of 'saving, at all costs, the concept of truth' (p. 530/462).

III

If we might linger for a moment on this point, it seems to me that we could trace a broad evolution in Badiou's thinking, from the *années rouges* that followed May '68 to *Immanence of Truths*, one that centres on the fundamental category of *confidence* [*confiance*].

(a) Badiou's watchword in the 1970s was adopted from the ongoing mobilisation of Maoism as a world-making project: 'be confident in the masses,' 'be confident in the Party' (Badiou 1976, p. 128). In his first great book, *Theory of the Subject* (1982), Badiou retained confidence in the masses insofar as they represented a revolutionary (albeit evanescent) force that made history, and he retained confidence in the party (exemplified by the party as it might have emerged from the Cultural Revolution in China) insofar as it gave political form to this force without freezing it into a new state order. In the late 1970s, Badiou remained confident in the revolutionary proletariat as a subject of dis-placement, precisely in its difference from any notion of a working class defined by its social place. As a classed or classified group in the ordinary sociological sense, the workers remain confined within the static algebra of place, in the arranged inertia of a situation (Badiou 1982, pp. 252-253); they only become *subject* when they contribute to the process that blows this imposed arrangement apart. The proletariat is not that class which seeks an improvement of its place, and still less, a class that merely aims to

usurp the privileged place of the bourgeoisie; it is that insurgent force beyond class whose coming into existence destroys the very concepts of class and of social place in general. The proletariat is the unique historical subject which overcomes and destroys its objective basis.[10] The proletariat anticipates the more general possibility, to adopt a phrase from the later Badiou, of a 'subject finally without object' (Badiou 2008b).

Rather than any merely 'objective' science of history, rather an analysis of the machinations of capital or of commodification, Badiou's first great book reminds us that 'Marxism is the discourse which supports the proletariat as subject. This is a principle we must never abandon' (Badiou 1982, p. 62). Here 'the political subject is the class party' (p. 259), or more precisely, 'the party supports the complete subject, whereby the proletariat, erected upon the working class, seeks the dissolution of the algebraic framework in which this class is placed' (p. 254). In other words, the proletarian class party consists only so as to dissolve class and to dissolve itself, and to continue dissolving itself. Since 'the party has no proletarian reality other than in the tumultuous history of its own termination [*résiliation*],'[11] so then if 'the fundamental concept of the ethics of Marxism is confidence' (Badiou 1982, pp. 327, 337), this is because Marxism upholds a rigorously subjective rather than an objective discipline. Badiou could then say: 'I have confidence in the people and in the working class in proportion to the degree to which I do not believe in them.'[12] Confidence in proletarian victory, for the younger Badiou, did not require belief in the qualities, virtues or achievements of any actually-existing working class.

Such a commitment, nevertheless, had to contend with the cumulative and accelerating experience of political defeat that came to characterise the mid-1970s, and the end of the decade in particular was of course marked by a generalised crisis of revolutionary confidence, together with the renegation of many erstwhile Maoists (cf. Badiou 2008a). The Khmer Rouge catastrophe in Cambodia was the most extreme manifestation of a wider crisis of post-Maoist revolutionary purpose. The old imperatives—'be confident in the masses,' 'be confident in the Party'—no longer seemed to ring true, at least not beyond increasingly narrow and embattled circles of what might be called (in a formulation that jars with Badiou's whole theory of the subject) 'true believers.'

(b) In *Being and Event* (1988), and the books that quickly followed it, Badiou was able to resist renegation by effectively reframing confidence as a commitment to confidence itself, i.e. by affirming the confidence and fidelity of subjects who uphold a universalisable truth, and who did so in ways based on nothing other than their practical affirmation or commitment. A subject intervenes to affirm an event and draw conclusions from it, and an event is nothing more than an ephemeral indication of the void of the situation, i.e. of that which normally counts for nothing in a situation. An event thus opens up the dimension of what

is precisely *not* reducible to the discourse of being-as-being, a dimension of pure affirmation, the wager of an intervention that takes the form: I commit, I will participate, I will act, and I will do so on the basis of an occasion that itself appears (to me) to be based on nothing at all. An event thus serves as occasion for the self-organisation and progressive self-assertion of a subject, of a subject's successive investigations, the development of its organization, etc., i.e. of all those forms of practice that set a truth procedure in motion.

As for ontology, in *Being and Event* it is precisely the excess of event over being that is decisive, an excess secured by paradoxical status of an event as an interruption and violation of the axiomatic or rule-bound order of being. The only ontological foundation for a truth procedure is itself unpresentable and non-constructible. (In the slightly more technical terminology of *Being and Event*, a truth procedure rests or relies on the unpresentable or 'inconsistent' multiplicity of pure being, an inconsistency which is only conceivable by indirect implication: since any consistent or presentable multiplicity is the *result* of an operation or a 'counting-as-one,' so then, by implication, this operation must have been performed on something that was or rather *is* not itself consistent[13]). *Being and Event* urges any subject of truth to rely only on inconsistencies, and Paul Celan's formula recurs in several texts of this period: *sur les inconsistances s'appuyer*.[14] (This is surely the moment when Badiou's philosophy of the subject invites at least some comparison with Kant's practical philosophy).

c/ So it might seem that with *Immanence of Truths* (2018), Badiou has confronted a further crisis of confidence, and that he has responded to it by investing his confidence in something that might warrant and justify *absolute* certainty. Only the absolute seems adequate to the task of refuting or overcoming the relatively lure of *recouvrement* in all its manifestations. The ontological absolute, i.e., the space presupposed by the inconceivable 'whole' that would be a set of all possible sets, again appears here as 'inconsistent' and beyond any presentation. The aim now, however, is to demonstrate the absoluteness of the absolute as such, insofar as it can be approached.

As Badiou is clearly well aware, such an aim invites comparison with other neo-Platonic projects, including avowedly theological projects. Badiou's ultimately inaccessible absolute is approached here via a series of approximations reminiscent of an angelic hierarchy, a series of figures that ultimately recede into a point that transcends all figuration. 'Access to infinity,' Badiou explains in strikingly emphatic terms, is here secured

> through a kind of process of infinitisation, whereby infinity is approached in such a way that it orients or guides the process itself. This path invites to participate in a hierarchical way of thinking, since there are degrees of proximity to the One-infinity as

> inaccessible absolute. But it animates this structure with a kind of mystical ecstasy, insofar as the polarity of the ascending series of degrees is also an approximation of annihilation in ecstasy. We find precise indications of this point in the angelology of the scholastic theologians and in its paradoxical correlation with mysticism.[15]

(This unabashedly Neoplatonic aspect of *Immanence of Truths* reminds me first and foremost of the argument presented by one of Badiou's erstwhile comrades, Christian Jambet, in a discussion organized to mark the publication of the first volume of *Being and Event*, back in 1989: countering Badiou's assertion of a multiplicity-without-one, Jambet proposed that the infinite transcendence affirmed by certain stands of Islamic thought was best understood as an aspiration towards the absolute One, a one beyond all approach or approximation [Jambet, 1989]).

Some readers of the new book will surely focus on the apparent religious connotations of Badiou's approach here, just as other readers have emphasised the apparently 'miraculous' qualities of his notion of an event. On the face of it, Badiou's project remains as resolutely and expressly atheist as it's ever been. What seems new, however, compared to his earlier affirmations of generic as *opposed to* transcendent conceptions of being (cf. Badiou 1988, meditation 36), is this recourse to the absolute itself as a horizon of being that seems to give a kind of sanction or authorization to the unfolding of a truth, a kind of guarantee of authenticity—a guarantee which seems to *prove*, irrefutably, that an infinite truth really *is* true, that it really is, absolutely, forever and for everyone, infinite. We can only definitively refute finitude and re-covery, Badiou seems to be telling us, if we can rely on this guarantee.

IV

This is indeed one way of reading *The Immanence of Truths*, and one way of accounting why so much of it develops an ontological i.e. mathematical approach to the absolute. It helps to account for why Badiou devotes so much care, in its final sections, to a formal reconstruction of the way in which works of truth might claim to receive, from the absolute, irrefutable proof of their infinity. If we read the book this way we can certainly read it adopting an approach diametrically opposite to that of Kant, as affirming theory over practice.

But of course it's not so simple. If the ontological absolute, the being of the absolutely infinite, might here seem to give a certain sanction to works of truth, still we cannot avoid the obvious question: what ground this absoluteness itself? What does it mean to think or acknowledge or refer to the infinitely absolute?

Badiou's answer to this is clear. In theoretical *practice*, precisely, we approach the infinitely absolute by thinking and addressing it. More

specifically, we approach the absolute through mathematical thought insofar as such thinking allows us to affirm the existence of a complete cardinal number and other cardinalities that depend on it. We approach this absolute more and more adequately, more and more 'closely,' to the extent that we can posit or affirm new and ever-more-infinite existences on the basis of this initial affirmation. Complete or inaccessible cardinals cannot be constructed, they can only be posited or affirmed. 'Ultimately we must affirm that there is infinity [*il faut affirmer qu'il y a de l'infini*]—infinity in the strict sense, that is, infinite multiplicity that cannot be constructed' (IdV, p. 265/234).

The being of the infinite is therefore literally an affirmed being. Ultimately, Badiou here affirms affirmation itself, beyond any demonstration or monstration. Wrapping up his dialogue with the 'finitist sceptic' at the end of chapter 14, Badiou concludes that 'between what is and what can be shown, there is a serious difference. Showing the infinite? That's difficult. Thinking it? Practicing it? To subjectivize it? To create it? Yes, a hundred times yes. Down with the finitude of demonstration!' (IdV, p. 366/319).

Already in *Being and Event*, when it came to measuring 'the complete vagueness of the state of a situation' with Easton's theorem, and following Cohen's refutation of the continuum hypothesis, Badiou insisted that wherever axiomatic thought encounters a point of genuine decision we must 'tolerate the almost complete arbitrariness of a choice'; in this way 'quantity, that paradigm of objectivity, leads to pure subjectivity' (Badiou 1988, p. 309). Once we conceive of ontology in a way that equates thought and being there is nothing to separate its properly 'subjective' character on the one hand from its universal or abstract character on the other. (Hence Badiou's proximity to Hegel or Deleuze on the one hand, and his distance from Benjamin or Adorno on the other).

In *Immanence of Truths* this emphasis is even more marked, in the domain of ontology and more generally. As for ontology, this is the key point of chapter 10 section 3 ('A crucial choice: Gödel or Cohen?' [IdV, p. 262/232]), which acknowledges that it is consistent to conceive of the entire universe of sets *either* as constructible, and therefore well-ordered, *or else* as generic, and therefore as confronted by a constitutive dis-order. A choice must be made. It is by definition impossible to construct and therefore demonstrate the existence of a complete cardinal number, and a fortiori the still more enormous indeed 'ineffable' cardinal numbers that will exceed it; to refer to any such excess or existence it must be affirmed.[16] As for the book's overall strategy, the entire book presents itself as an invitation to engage or participate in the truths that are at work, or that are renewable, in the worlds we inhabit. Dare to live a real life, Badiou urges us, before it's too late. Dare to affirm, dare to act, dare to organize; prefer the new to the old, the unpredictable to the established, revolution to reform. In this sense *Immanence of Truths*, like all of Badiou's work, is

yet another exhortation to have confidence and to remain confident, to cultivate the confidence required to begin and to continue.

Drawing on Scott's Theorem (which demonstrates that the existence of a complete cardinal implies the existence of non-constructible sets) and Jensen's Theorem (showing that such a cardinal further implies the existence of sets that no constructible set can cover), Badiou comes to 'posit the following definition: the index of a work is said to be complete if the dynamic of the work within the truth procedure generates the certainty, even if only for an instant, that a complete cardinal exists.' But to avoid any misunderstanding, he quickly adds the following caveat, which aligns the status of such a conclusion with the 'supra-ontological' subjectivism affirmed all through the *Being and Event* trilogy. 'We are not suggesting here that the existence of a complete index logically implies that of a complete cardinal. We are not, after all, in the order of ontology but in the always subjectivized order of the consequences of an event. We are merely saying that, in the case at hand, between the infinity threatened with being covered, which is the infinity of the work, and the existence of a complete infinity, a sort of spark of certainty passes' (p. 525/459).

Of the three volumes of *Being and Event*, the third seems the most intensely exhortative—and insofar as the criteria for exhortation are ultimately philosophical, and based on philosophical assertions, it is not surprising that in this volume, the relationship between philosophy and its several concrete conditions appears more convoluted than it did in the more unilateral formulations of the 1990s, with philosophy, and the philosopher himself, here playing a more openly prescriptive role than before.

This then may be the best way of understanding the difference that separates Badiou from Kant. Kant had to choose between being and practice in order to support his theory of absolute freedom, a freedom that transcends all limits. He opted for practice. Badiou, by contrast, seeking to support the absolute quality of the truths he asserts, rejects the dilemma and instead defends a theory whose foundations are *both* practical and ontological. He is free to do this since his ontology, subtracted from any mediation of experience, absolves him of any need to pay attention to Kantian restrictions on theoretical metaphysics. Axiomatic thought is indifferent to matters of perception or experience. Even if he adapts it from the 'paradigm of objectivity' par excellence, Badiou's mathematical ontology is nevertheless sustained wholly and simply by rigorous subjective practice.

V

I will end this article with three reservations about Badiou's strategy for resolving Kant's dilemma.

(a) First, as Badiou readily accepts, to equate ontology with mathematics is certainly an ingenious and thoroughly 'irrefutable' way of investing ontology with the capacity to say all that can rigorously be said of being as pure multiplicity—but it also and for the same reason limits ontology to the articulation of abstract multiplicity per se. Mathematics may say all that can be said of such multiplicity, but it can say nothing at all about the other dimensions of being that have regularly concerned metaphysicians and ontologists (e.g. the dimensions of materiality, actuality, potentiality, contingency, particularity, vitality, mortality, etc.).[17] In particular, a mathematical discourse of pure being-as-being can say nothing about the relation between being and *beings*, between *l'être* and an *étant* or being in its ontic particularity—i.e. it can say nothing about what is arguably the great ontological question that Kant still shared with Spinoza and Leibniz on the one hand and with Hegel on the other, and the question that more recently Heidegger, Deleuze or Agamben will all explore in one way or another.

By dissociating ontology from any engagement with what can be known of beings in their distinctive ways of being, Badiou doesn't so much answer Kant's question about the apparent gap between knowledge of phenomenal and speculation about noumena as disregard it altogether. As I've tried to show elsewhere, even in the book that most directly and fully addresses the question of the relation between being and appearing (*Logics of Worlds*, 2006), Badiou indeed offers a detailed account of model how the things or beings [*étants*] that make up a world appear more or less clearly and intensely in that world—but the status of an *étant* per se, along with the gap between what set theory might say of an infinite number and what any empirical science might say of a thing or a being, seems itself to be something he takes for granted (Hallward 2008).

(b) Second, even if we accept an equivalence of thought and being in the domain of ontology, i.e. of mathematics, don't we need a fuller and more explicit demonstration of how this equivalence might apply to other and altogether more material and embodied domains of practice, such as politics or love, to say nothing of those all-too-embodied or empirical conditions of experience that preoccupied Kant as he wrote his first *Critique*? I know that Badiou is often confronted with versions of this question, and in this book he responds to them with what he calls 'Cartesian serenity [*placidité*]': 'Since there is a rational and ramified thought of the infinite, it is meaningless to support the thesis of finitude,' however 'empirical' its support might seem to be. For the same reason, roughly speaking, Badiou is satisfied 'that the theory of large cardinals is certainly as real, if not more so, than the Big Bang of the universe, or

global warming' (IdV, p. 280/248). End of discussion, more or less.

When in *Immanence of Truths* Badiou moves from a mathematical demonstration to a political sequence or principle, it is often by analogy, or to offer an illustration. Obviously, he does not mean that Robespierre or Lenin needed to reassure themselves of the existence of complete cardinals in order to strengthen their political confidence. It is nevertheless striking that Badiou spends much more time and energy expounding on the ineffable majesty of these enormous numbers than he does considering those decisions and ultimately those crises of confidence that preoccupied people like Robespierre and Lenin themselves, and so many of those who sought to follow their example.

To put this point another way: if what confirms the quality of a truth is both ontological and practical, and if practice indeed depends quite directly on 'psychological' issues such as motivation, intention, inspiration, affirmation, confidence, etc., it is striking that Badiou seems much more interested in the fruitful consequences of exhorted affirmation than in the psycho-existential drama that must be confronted in order to respond to such exhortation, and thus to affirm a truth in the way its truth or project demands. In their respective practical philosophies, Rousseau, Kant and Hegel developed a whole theory of the will and its determinate motivations; by contrast Badiou has relatively little to say about the complexity of motives or intentions, and often seems content to sketch enticing visions of the happiness awaiting those who, in one way or another, do manage to subjectify themselves in ways that are worthy of the truth that induces them. To evoke the terms of Pascal's famous wager, this sometimes seems a bit like telling someone who may have come to doubt the existence of God that they might overcome their hesitation simply by reflecting on the delightful qualities of the paradise promised to them, if only they could affirm it.

If Badiou avoids Kant's dilemma by upholding a conception of truth that is both ontological and practical (and thus also 'psychological'), the sophisticated elaboration of the former dimension is not matched by a comparable concern for the latter. Rather than address what might be at stake in wanting or willing a truth, Badiou generally emphasises the abrupt and absolute exceptionality of a truth in its being and production. Only if it's wholly at odds with prevailing norms or opinions, it seems, can such a truth really *hold true* in an unconditional, trans-historical and trans-worldly way. 'Absoluteness is produced in a world as an exception to the apparent "truths" of that world, and it is only as an absolute exception that it can be validated in worlds other than the one to whose laws it is an exception' (IdV, p. 63/63).

Such exceptional criteria would seem to narrow the field of truths dramatically, presumably to the exclusion (e.g. in the domain of literature) of works by figures like Sophocles, Shakespeare or Balzac. Rather than demonstrate the utterly exceptional quality of works of truth, however

Badiou tends instead to celebrate 'remarkable sequences' in passages that can sometimes read like the inventory of a museum of great works and revolutionary affirmations. The effect combines a mix of subversion and conservation, of radicality and canonisation. If most attempts at truth are re-covered [*recouverts*] or tossed out as *déchets*, nevertheless great human achievements here endure and seem to speak for themselves:

> There remain a great many exceptions—and after all, in light of the difficulty of absolutisation, there is an impressively large number of them—, exceptions which nothing can diminish and which are the glory of our species, that of the featherless bipeds of the Neolithic era. Astonishing mathematical theorems and famous physical laws; paintings, sculptures, music, poems, novels, films, all of them unforgettable; fragments of communism attempted and experienced, if only for a short time; experiences of love, sometimes as discreet as they were absolute: all this has been forever inscribed beyond re-covery, and under the protection of an attribute of the absolute (p. 460/527).

Unforgettable is one thing but actively remembered is often another, and it's hard to work out just how such experiences might be forever inscribed and protected, without a fuller account of how their inscribing itself occurs and persists. Revolutionary affirmation is unquestionably a world-making power, but so is counter-revolutionary distortion or erasure.

(c) My third reservation is a bit more specific, and concerns the way Badiou refers the absolute quality of an infinite or unending truth to what he calls its *index* [*indice*]. In general, the index 'concentrates the immanence of a truth to the absolute' (IdV, p. 517/452). By distilling its irrefutable and indestructible absoluteness, an index is what guarantees that a work of truth, although finite in its actual practice and its worldly existence and temporality, nevertheless 'ceases to be [finite] in the sense of re-covery or *recouvrement*,' and thus protects, absolutely, any real work from the risk of being eventually discarded or thrown away as the historical equivalent of disposable junk or waste [*déchet*] (p. 517/452). More technically, as we have seen, Badiou defines 'the complete index of a work as that which brings the work into communication with a complete cardinal. This communication, this friction [*frottement*], this subjectivised flash, guarantees the possibility, for the work, of being indefinitely protected against successive forms of re-covery, and therefore against finitude, the ontological form of oppression.' Such is Badiou's definition of 'the absoluteness of a work: it possesses a complete index, and in so doing, it has participated, even if only for a moment, in an attribute of the absolute' (p. 526/459). In other words, indices ensure that a truth is indeed and thus forever true.

To illustrate what he means, Badiou gives the examples of a painting by Vermeer, Dante's love for Béatrice, and 'Mao's creation of a communist peasant Red Army finally promised victory on its own terms [*enfin promise à une victoire qui soit la sienne*]' (p. 526/459). Or again:

> The index, for example, is what literary criticism seeks to grasp as determining the exceptional greatness of a novel, and which is found in the text being analyzed even though it cannot be identified with any of the textual components of that text. It is also what is expressed in the phrase 'I love you,' which, if it is not a lie, encompasses the dynamic totality of love without being reducible to any particular episode. In the case of a proposition of theoretical physics, which can be transmitted in its entirety in the form of mathematical statements, the index is experimental, in the sense that the real 'external' point enveloped by the theoretical formalism is validated or rectified by observation.[18]

In the case of political works or projects, Badiou proposes that the index is provided by the proper names of certain subjects closely associated with the sequence, for example Robespierre, Toussaint Louverture and Lenin, for the French, Haitian and Russian revolutions respectively (p. 675/585). More precisely, via the name of its most commanding leader, the index of a political truth names its practical orientation towards victory or fulfilment, whether or not this is actually achieved in the situation itself. A political index refers to 'the consciousness of a victorious orientation or direction, the demarcation of an historical "path," one that cannot be reduced to any tactical successes, however great they may be (such as the seizure of power), as these remain empirically finite' (p. 517/452). It's in this sense that names like Mao and Robespierre remain the indices of the truths they helped to articulate.

> The left wing of the movement in China used Mao's writings and thinking, and ultimately the words 'Mao' and 'Maoism,' just as my comrades and I used them during the 'red years' after 1968: as an index for transmitting a way of thinking that could be used, when faced with the unprecedented situation of the degeneration of other 'communist' parties, to overcome the impasses and to rediscover, to reinvent, in the real [*dans le réel*], a political orientation that genuinely broke with capitalist domination. That is why I state here that, just as Robespierre and Saint-Just are the indexes of the living part of the French Revolution, just as Toussaint-Louverture is the index of the Haitian Revolution, Lenin of the Russian Revolution, and Castro of the Cuban Revolution, Mao is the index of the Cultural Revolution. This, I insist, is not a question of power or of the cult of personality, but of collective thought of absolute and immortal value,

> even if it was often defeated in its historical moment, as was the case with Robespierre and Mao (pp. 675-6/585).

As usual it's clear that Badiou has anticipated the likely resistance of some readers on this point. Even if tied to a particular individual, what is thus named is presented as a collective capacity and a collective thought; the name per se serves only as a shorthand, a way of referring to a wider work of organization and action that went far beyond the leaders of any given moment. The name 'is not a person but the signifier of a person' (p. 649/562). But why, then, personal proper names, instead of collective names such as *sans-culottes*, patriots, Jacobins, etc., or Soviets, Bolsheviks, Tricontinentalists, Cuban internationalists, etc.? And why *these* names? Why Saint-Just more than Marat on the one hand, why Robespierre more than Danton on the other? Why not all four, along with the famously complicated feelings each held for the other? Why Toussaint rather than Dessalines (or for that matter, rather than someone like Hyacinthe Moïse)?

The point isn't to raise the sort of pedantic questions that can be raised to undermine the selection of any name at all, but to ask more about what is involved in the actual process of such selection. Can the recognition and canonisation of any name be isolated from the consolidation of official histories and state-sanctioned narratives? More importantly, why these proper names as *names*, in the absence of an assessment of what these figures actually did or most *wanted* to do—especially in those moments when an initial and wider confidence in the revolutionary project might have begun to waver?

For my part, I fully share Badiou's admiration for his three revolutionary figures, as well as for many others who appear in the pages of his book. Who could dispute their importance? But if we are to propose, for example, even if only in a rather perfunctory way, that Toussaint's name provides the index of the absolute and therefore eternal truth of the Haitian revolution, it seems to me that in addition to appreciating the obvious significance of Toussaint's contribution to the victories of the revolution, we should also consider his rather complex and sometimes compromised relation to that revolution, and (following the example of C.L.R. James) consider why and how Toussaint, before Leclerc's invasion, and so before Haiti's emancipation from France, had lost the support of many of his compatriots, perhaps especially the support of many peasant farmers and ordinary soldiers.[19] Again, if we are to argue that Robespierre's name is the index of the French Revolution, and therefore of this revolution as an infinite and eternally renewable project, then along with an appreciation of his many inspiring and indeed heroic qualities we should also attempt a critical assessment of what he wanted and what he did in the last and most consequential months of his life. It's easy to acknowledge Robespierre's reputation as a central

figure in the drama that was the French Revolution, and in some quarters, at least, his enormous contribution to that drama duly receives the respect it deserves. I think it's also important, however, to recognise that decisions he made in the last six months of his life helped quite directly to demobilise mass support for the revolution, precisely at a time when the question of how best to continue the revolution had become critical. (I am thinking, for example, of Robespierre's disastrous attempt to eliminate the 'factions' in March-April 1794, and then his indefensible decision, in June, to accelerate and consolidate the work of the Revolutionary Tribunal through the Law of Prairial. It's precisely these measures that make it so easy for Robespierre's many critics to characterise him less as the incorruptible and immortal index of the revolution than as the name most closely associated with its degeneration).

Rather than address the complexity of what these actors did or wanted to do, Badiou's priority is to acknowledge the way the unforgettable names of great revolutionaries testify or indicate the absolute and eternal truth of the revolutionary idea in general. But does the bracketing of the psycho-political or moral-psychological dimension of these actors, in short, really help to clarify the trans-historical significance of this idea? Or does such bracketing serve more to simplify and thus evade the work of political assessment and historical interpretation?

What should we prioritise: the absolute or the relational? If our aim is to remember and embrace the inspiring importance of these revolutionary sequences, should our priority be to secure their *absolute* and effectively transcendent value? Or should we rather participate in both appreciative and critical recollection of them as extraordinary but also constrained and compromised relational projects, projects that can only be understood as relative to their time and place, to the obstacles they faced and the capacities they developed?

Confronted with this sort of question, Badiou has a ready answer. Responding to my reservations about the status of the index in politics (and echoing previous discussions about the 'absolutism of truth' that began some thirty years ago), Badiou writes:

> You would like the index to be more democratic, less exposed to the cult of personality; to evoke *sans-culottisme* more than Robespierrisme. And to be more empirical, ultimately. You ask: what did Robespierre do to deserve his status as an index? Only the index is not a question of fact or deed [*question de fait*] in the sense that you understand it. Entire libraries have been written on what Robespierre did or did not do! But they have never succeeded in removing Robespierre from his position as an index, any more than they have been able to do so for Spartacus, Thomas Münzer, Fidel Castro, Aristide, Lumumba, Lenin, Mao, and a few others. Because the index is a question that relates to a connection between the

> symbolic and the imaginary imposed by the real [*le réel*], and not to the *empiricité* of historical studies. But such is the timeless core of our discussion over these many years, and I am glad to see that this discussion continues.[20]

Point taken, and I appreciate its post-Lacanian connotations, but this line between the real and the empirical, in any historical sequence, seems very difficult to draw. What *really* ensures that some names will forever remain on one side of this line? Can we be confident that counter-revolutionary projects will remain forever incapable of blurring if not erasing the absolute status of any name, no matter how popular or illustrious?

The humbly 'empirical' dimensions of such questions are not easily put to one side. Summarising his definition, Badiou says 'the index of a political work refers to one or two proper names, rarely more, which simultaneously designate: (a) the fulfilment of the universal conditions of a work, in particular the prolonged immanence of a leading intellectual figure in a mass process opposed to the dominant order; (b) the local singularity of the creation of the work in question' (p. 652/565). Even so abstract a definition still raises some unavoidable questions. Why just 'one or two'—why not only one, or many? Why rarely, rather than always, or intermittently? Badiou occasionally hints at some suggestive uncertainty on this score.[21] In the Cuban case, for instance, why Castro and not also if not especially Che Guevara? Given his distinctive association with the futural dimensions of Cuba's revolution in particular, is the latter's omission from Badiou's list of indices deliberate, or just an inconsequential oversight?

Why, in particular, should the trans-historical dimension of a revolutionary sequence imply only one single path to victory, rather than the intertwining of several more or less complementary, more or less contested conceptions of how to advance and how to continue, all of which might retain some share in the truth of the sequence? Is there only one way of pursuing or 'realising' a revolution? What if a great part of the drama and eventual tragedy of the Russian Revolution consists in the fact that *both* the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, both Lenin and Martov, were right about certain things—just not in ways that could 'hold true' at the same time and along the same line? How far might the same be said of Lenin and Pannekoek, or of Bukharin and Trotsky, and so on?

Badiou himself considers the most famously controversial question associated with the Russian sequence, when he asks 'whether Stalin was the index of a political movement [...], and if not, why did millions of people cite him as one for such a long time?' (p. 653/566). Badiou recognises, of course, that if in the 1920s and 30s, and indeed still in the 1940s and 50s, you had asked most communist militants in most places about the enduring names of the Russian Revolution and its international legacy, they would surely have joined Stalin's name to that of Lenin. Insofar as

the emergence of a truth's index is bound up with the determination of its path to victory, surely Stalin's name could make a strong claim for consideration right through to the late 1950s, if not indeed to the late 1980s and after. Why not now, why not forever? If Badiou's consideration of this point is broadly convincing it's only because here—unlike his discussions of e.g. Robespierre and Toussaint—he concedes that it is indeed necessary to address at least some of the empirical complexity of the case:

> In reality, what does Stalin represent? He is the proper name for a process of reversal [...]: seizing the work of truth whose index is 'Lenin,' he transformed it—mainly through violence, and especially from 1936 onwards—into state policy. Stalin's most important statement is undoubtedly that the revolution is 'finished [*terminée*].' What is the real meaning of this assertion in the USSR of the 1930s? It essentially meant that from now on, the driving force of historical movement no longer springs from political debate among the people, so much as the consolidation of absolute unity around the state, which has now become the 'proletarian state,' and, at the international level, around the USSR, which has become the 'homeland of socialism.' The Stalinist process is one of depoliticizing the effects of the political work he inherited. [...] Essentially, 'Stalin' refers to an accelerated development of production, achieved through enormous pressure from the state and the state alone. The support of the masses, their enthusiasm, also existed, there is no doubt about that. But it was in no way a matter of politics, of a political work (p. 655/568).

Yes indeed, Stalin should be credited with leading the national effort, sustained at an incomprehensibly exorbitant cost, to repel the Nazis and turn the tide against fascism. Still, when all is said and done, Badiou concludes, a true 'political work cannot be attributed to Stalin, who, with cunning and cynicism, depoliticised his nation. He can be defined as the statesman who halted and blocked, under the frozen emblem of the "socialist state," the work whose name was "Lenin"—all the while organising the worship of that work, as one might commemorate an ancestor whose artistic legacy you have cynically exploited in the form of a profitable museum, in which nothing is created anymore' (p. 656/569).

Badiou is surely right about the stifling effect of Stalinist repression, but is the line he draws between such repression and state consolidation on the one hand, and the continuation of any true political work on the other, as sharp and as clear as he suggests? Can such a line be clearly established without addressing the nature of *ongoing* mass fidelity to Stalin in all its empirical complexity, precisely, or without addressing the post-1924 rivalry with Trotsky, the later tensions between the USSR and

Mao's China, the relentless Western campaign against the USSR, and so on? Do the stark and emphatically absolute criteria of 'an index of eternity' suffice to illuminate the making and unmaking of such a complex reputation, or help us to account from the process and the timing of Stalin's fall from revolutionary grace, or even to explain why the author of *Théorie de la contradiction* himself retained some respect for '*la pensée forte de Staline*' well into 1970s?[22] Can the difference between Stalin on the one hand and say Toussaint and Lenin on the other be adequately understood within the strictly binary terms that Badiou affirms here? (It's hard not to wonder, in addition, given the circumstances confronting them, whether this indexical question might seem so clear if Lenin and Toussaint had themselves survived to pursue political careers as long as that of Stalin).

In the case of the French Revolution, again, the bare criteria of 'leading intellectual figure' and 'orientation towards victory' might not by themselves be enough to persuade many historians to acknowledge Robespierre as the event's enduring index, rather than say Danton, a name that doesn't appear in Badiou's book. Historians who associate the true 'eternity' of the French Revolution with the proto-liberalism of 1789 more than with the insurgent egalitarianism of 1792 might be more inclined to retain the name of Lafayette—a name widely vilified in the years 1792-94, certainly, but perhaps rather less so, in more conservative circles, by the time some once-revolutionary slogans were revived in 1830. Many other committed partisans of the revolution, of course, in the 1790s and afterwards, might have associated its full realisation, however inconsistently, with that other great figure who proclaimed the ending of a revolution: Napoleon. More importantly, if in the summer of 1793 you had asked the insurgent people of Paris to name the figure they most associated with the enduring principles and ongoing militant practice of their revolution, my guess is that most of them would have proposed Jean-Paul Marat. It didn't take long, however, for a reaction that began the following summer, and that continues to this day via the likes of François Furet and Simon Schama, to scratch his name from the pantheon of revolutionary heroes—and indeed from Badiou's own list of indices. Consider too the symptomatic case of Auguste Blanqui. Walter Benjamin was relatively rare among Marxist thinkers to recognise both his still-obvious importance and its fragility: if 'the nineteenth-century quaked at the sound of Blanqui's name,' notes Benjamin, it only took a couple of decades before the reformist Social Democrats 'managed to erase his name almost entirely.'[23]

More to the point: if Blanqui, Marx, Lenin (and Stalin) were all first and foremost *proletarian* revolutionaries, what happens to such proper names when the basis of their own collective nomination is itself largely effaced, when the very word or name 'proletariat' (to say nothing of the dictatorship that was once associated with it) comes to be obscured

(directly reversing the priorities of Badiou's 1982 *Theory of the Subject*) in favour of the many variations on a sociologically-determinant *working class*? What happens if the revolutionary proletariat comes to be eclipsed by the consolidation, at least in the more privileged and more imperious parts of the world, of a reformist worker-class that in many ways, in the constitutive struggle between capital and labour, so regularly takes the side of capital?

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The more obvious it becomes that 'the "state of emergency" in which we live is not the exception but the rule,' the more urgently do we need to address the full enormity and implications of this rule. Surely nothing is more important, today, than the renewal of collective confidence in that revolutionary path which offers a way out of our ever more pressing state of emergency. From the 1970s through to the 2020s, Badiou's own confidence has remained indomitable, and I have always envied him his 'Cartesian serenity.' The priority of *Immanence of Truths* is to secure the space traversed by this path as indestructibly infinite, as irrefutably un-ending, and thus as effectively invulnerable to counter-revolutionary assault.

For my part I still find it hard to dissociate strategic renewal of the path from the obstacles and the wreckage that have come to obstruct it. Like many people of my generation, whose political experience has been marked by one defeat after another, I find it easier to relate to Walter Benjamin's anxiety about the past than Badiou's confidence in the our future. 'The only historian capable of fanning the spark of hope in the past,' Benjamin famously reminds us, 'is the one who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he is victorious. And this enemy has never ceased to be victorious.'[24] So far.

1 This is a written version of the semi-improvised talk I gave at a conference held in Paris on Badiou's *L'Immanence des vérités*, 1-2 October 2018, entitled 'La Vérité entre l'être et la pratique.' I'm grateful to Kenneth Reinhard and Frank Ruda, and Alain Badiou himself, for their comments on an earlier version of this text.
2 Badiou, *L'Immanence des vérités* (2018), trans. Kenneth Reinhard as *The Immanence of Truths* (2022), abbreviated here as IdV. Page references are to the French edition followed by the English translation, though I have sometimes modified the translation.
3 I explore Badiou's relation to Kant a little more fully in Hallward 2010.
4 IdV, pp. 228-9. Kenneth Reinhard translates *recouvrement* as covering-over; to bring out the dimension of recuperation, in what follows I will render it as re-covery. In our neoliberal era a paradigmatic form of *recouvrement* has long been an acceptance, which continues to this day, of Margaret Thatcher's notorious insistence that 'there is no alternative;' for Badiou an ongoing case in point is the capitalist recuperation of China's Communist Party that began with the end of the Cultural Revolution (IdV, p. 645/559).
5 IdV, p. 284/252. As Badiou goes on to explain, 'proximity to the absolute' as such, named 'V' (with its association with *vérité* i.e. truth), 'is the most important case [to consider], the one that really gives us a glimpse of the relationship between the problem of infinity, the critique of finitude, and the absoluteness of truths' (p. 291/257).
6 Kant is satisfied that 'a human being really finds in himself a capacity by which he distinguishes himself from all other things, even from himself insofar as he is affected by objects, and that is reason'—while accepting that 'reason would overstep all its bounds if it took it upon itself to explain how pure reason can be practical, which would be exactly the same task as to explain how freedom is possible [...]. We do not indeed comprehend the practical unconditional necessity of the moral imperative, but we nevertheless comprehend its incomprehensibility' (Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, AK 4: pp. 452, 459, 463, in Kant 1996: cf. Kant, CPR, Bxxxi).
7 Kant 1997, AK 27, p. 344. Heidegger acknowledges the practical foundations of Kantian morality: 'What is genuinely law-giving for willing is the actual pure willing itself and nothing else' (Heidegger 2005, p. 193).
8 IdV, p. 525-6/459: '*l'éclair qui touche au cardinal complet supposé n'est autre que ce par quoi l'œuvre s'absolutise*.'
9 As Kenneth Reinhard explains in the helpful introduction to his English translation of Badiou's book, 'elementary embedding depends on the positing of an extremely large type of infinite number usually referred to as a "measurable cardinal" by set theorists, and which Badiou calls, using a more intuitive term, a "complete cardinal." Such an "embedding" takes an element of V [the absolutely infinite class of all possible sets] and brings it down into a known lower level or model within V. This involves the "violence" of embedding something absolutely large in something somewhat smaller. And this is the moment, we might say, when, having come into extreme proximity to the absolute, having peered up over the rim of the tunnel leading out of the cave of finitism and having caught a glimpse of the absolute, we go back down. But unlike Plato's prisoner, who, dazzled by the sheer brightness of the allegorical Sun of the Good (or for Badiou, truth) returns to the darkness of the cave with impaired vision and nothing more than stories of some "outside" world, we return from this most strenuous ascent with evidence of the absolute. Not the absolute itself, but some of its attributes, which serve both as witnesses to the actuality of our strange journey and as bits of the real that can be put to work in the finite world of the cave. And it is precisely as illuminating works, or truth procedures, that these newly discovered infinities can operate in our world, as works of art, of science, of politics, and of love' (Badiou 2022, p. 14).
10 I discuss this in a little more detail in Hallward 2003, pp. 33ff.
11 Badiou 1977, 33; cf. Badiou 1982, p. 263.
12 Badiou 1982, 338. Hence the essential lesson of May 68: 'those who, like us, looked first to what was missing (subjective political precarity, the absence of a party) rather than to what appeared full (the revolt, the masses in the street, liberated speech), had what they needed to nourish their confidence [*confiance*], while the others were left only to betray their belief [*croyance*]' (p. 342). If Badiou and his friends are the last of the *soixante-huitards* to be found campaigning outside factory doors, Badiou would go on to say some years later, this is 'not because we're saying and doing the same things as we did twenty years ago.' On the contrary, it is because 'the "others" failed to make and endure the necessary transformation, that they have dropped out' (Badiou 1992, p. 66).
13 I develop this point in more detail in Hallward 2005.
14 Cf. Hallward 2003, p. 116.
15 IdV, p. 285/252. See in particular Quentin Meillassoux's brilliant contribution to the Paris conference on IdV, 1-2 October 2018, entitled 'Polysémie de l'immanence,' and posted online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAHSBQJ57ZY.
16 IdV, p. 281/248. 'Ultimately, we must affirm that *there is infinity*—infinity in the strict sense of the term, i.e., non-constructible infinite multiplicity. That is to say, at least (though we will see that more is needed...) uncountable infinity,

infinity beyond whole numbers [...]. To adopt a non- constructible subjectivity, whatever the order of thought-practice in which it is done, is to assume the existence of a non-constructible infinity, an assumption that will have to be put to work in real life. This means: looking closely at anything that seems like an exception, defending ourselves against re-covering operations, denouncing the superficiality of the definable, going after the trivial pronouncements of constructibility, which are clearly intended to maintain order... It's quite a job. An impossible job if you haven't first made a fundamental choice, that of opting, in one way or another, for the assumption that there is really such a thing as non-constructible infinity. This assumption about infinity serves as a guide in the search for what, in effect, transgresses the dominant constructible order, because it escapes being re-covered or covered-over' (p. 265/234).

17 'The mathematical theory of pure multiplicity,' as Badiou reiterated in response to an earlier version of this question, 'in no way claims to inform the way we might think everything that is presented in the infinity of real situations, but only the thinking *of presentation as such*. This is what I call, adopting the vocabulary of the philosophical tradition, being *qua being*. Whatever else we do, we must not disregard the *qua*. It's obvious (for me as much as for Aristotle) that if you think the planet Mars from within the ontological situation, then you will give priority to determining what grounds a certain identity between Mars and Jupiter, and not to what indicates their differences. We might even say that, strictly speaking, you are thinking *nothing* about the planet Mars. What you are theorising is rather the general possibility of multiple-presentation. Considered '*qua* being', it's certainly the case that the planet Mars activates a possibility immanent to the mathematical theory of pure multiplicities. You will only arrive at the exact nature of this possibility by taking the planet Mars as your starting-point, and certainly not by beginning from mathematised ontology, in which 'Mars' simply doesn't exist at all. In other words, in its being Mars is ultimately a pure multiple, but we cannot determine this singular multiple that is Mars (insofar as we can think it in terms of its being as such) by moving from mathematical theory to the identification of this singularity. We must proceed the other way around; we must move from an acknowledgement of the appearing of Mars in a world (whose scale, or 'transcendental regime [*le transcendental*]', we can establish) to its ontological determination' (Badiou 2004, 233).

18 IdV, p. 517/452. Kenneth Reinhard (in an email to the author) draws attention to Badiou's analysis of Olivier Messiaen's *Blackbird* as an especially good example of an artistic index (IdV, p. 551-60/480-7).

19 See James 1963; Fick 1991.

20 Badiou, email to the author, 4 October 2018.

21 In the case of Vietnam's war of liberation, for instance, Badiou naturally identifies Ho Chi Minh as its index, adding that he belongs 'perhaps in the company of general Giáp' (p. 651/564)—but he doesn't provide an explanation for this uncharacteristic lack of certainty. The concept of an index seems to leave little place for such hesitation. As regards the need for 'one or two' names, and the sort of militant unity or simplicity this implies, Badiou also acknowledges cases in which such unity is never achieved, with fatal consequences. He recognises that 'in the case of an unfinished work, which means one defeated early on by the enemy, its index may be constituted by not one signifier but several. Such is the case of the Paris Commune, for example, which evokes the names of Courbet, Elisabeth Dmitrieff, Dombrowski, Lissagaray, Louise Michel, Vallès, Varlin, and many others. Admittedly, this index's fragmentation also reflects the specifically political weakness of the Commune, a mutilated work, a martyr-work, more intense in the symbolic order and that of creativity in terms of projects than because of its real process' (p. 649/563).

22 Badiou 1975, p. 38; cf. pp. 85-9. Domenico Losurdo considers some of the ways Stalin has been demonised across a broad spectrum of opinion in Losurdo 2023.

23 Walter Benjamin 1940, §12, p. 394.

24 Benjamin 1940, §6, p. 391. Among Badiou's contemporaries, Daniel Bensaïd and Michael Löwy remain remarkable for their perseverance and conviction on this score.

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Cut is a Form of Thinking

Isiah Medina

Abstract: With the cinematic cut, philosophical thinking can be recast in a form that is non-linguistic, while still being able to condition itself via a set-theoretical idea of infinity. A movie-set theory. Working through events in the history of cinema, as well as the idea of "mathematics = ontology" as explored in Badiou's philosophical system, an approach to filmmaking as truth process and philosophy is sketched out.

Keywords: Parmenides, Plato, Lumière, Griffith, Kuleshov, Eisenstein, Godard, Frampton, Mao, Badiou, cinema, philosophy, cut, frame, infinity, nothing, same.

But how does one dictate the law? By writing it down. When it states on your passport: 'Forbidden to enter Russia›, it's not an image that does that. How would an image do that? Images don't do that, because images are freedom and words are prison. An image is necessarily freedom. It doesn't forbid anything; it doesn't permit any thing because it's an ensemble of other things. [...] It's written: 'This citizen is undesirable'. No photograph expresses this 'undesirable'. That's what I mean, that words became—after all, the alphabet is two or three thousand years old, at one time it hadn't been invented. Today it is overused [...]

Jean-Luc Godard at Concordia University, 1978[1]

The way they go about it in the universities at present is no good, going from book to book, from concept to concept. How can philosophy come from books?

Mao Zedong, Talk on Questions of Philosophy, 1964[2]

1. Preamble

Thinking happens, even when it is not written. That philosophy is a Western invention[3] is to say that truth has existed even when philosophy has not. There are truths before their conceptualization, and philosophy simply takes up what is before it. So why is there, sometimes, philosophy at all? It must be because a truth has become saturated and at the point of saturation there is truth's waste, called philosophy. In the real movement of truth there is no distinction between truth and philosophy, practice and theory, they are indiscernible. It is when they begin to split, that we know that we are coming to the end. Philosophy is the history of the end of truth procedures, it is the final point where we left off. We can start again, and philosophy is this shelter where we can start. If philosophy is this shelter it almost means its shape doesn't remain the same, or rather, its form of the

same itself changes with each truth. It's the idea of the same that is held by the philosopher.

For the philosopher Alain Badiou, there are four truth procedures: art, science, politics, and love and philosophy is conditioned by these truths outside of itself. So we have to think that art, science, politics, and love existed before philosophy, before they were named beauty, truth, and the good, they are post-philosophically graspable pre-philosophic. What philosophy does, with its limpid schema, is allow us to continue where we stop. Wilfrid Sellars talks of a manifest image and a scientific image, but with Badiou we can talk about philosophy as a montage that is produced by cutting together four forms of cutting: art, science, politics, and love. And in this cutting we see images. Philosophy creates this montage on the basis of nothing and we live in this montage created by philosophy. Which is to say we live in truth, even if it has been extinguished or obscured, we live in its residue.

But is there a necessity for this residue to be written in language? Or again: why must philosophical thought be thought linguistically? Is there a necessity that philosophy exist in particular languages?

That philosophy be written in language at all is a proof that we have yet to truly exit the age of poets. The age of the poets is not only the 20th century; we have been in its saturation since at least Parmenides. The event of thinking has been written poetically, and for Badiou poetry can write the event. Poetry is evental — it's not that poetry is a result of language but that ordinary language is the debris, the *déchet* of poetry. We use language because it is a finite detritus of an infinite truth. And finitude has no being. For Plato the poem is interrupted by the matheme and this inaugurates philosophy. But still, philosophical labour most often consists of using the imaging powers of language to describe mathematics poetically.

There is no necessity for philosophy, but that in Ancient Greece there was deductive mathematics, democracy, tragedy, and Plato's love for his friend Socrates, all together, we had a thinking of the present. Philosophy thinks the present which is equal to the presentation of truths, at the same time. Without all four we risk saturation. In fact most of us live lives of saturation as it is difficult to live with all four, to live philosophically and in the present of four truth procedures all at once. After the poetry of Parmenides we have the theatrical writing of Plato, beginning with the writing of Socrates' death by the state.

The death of Socrates so affected Plato, and he wrote his trial — there is something of philosophy that responds to those killed by the state. And if we film industrial mass murder by a state, what can philosophy think? The death of loved ones by the state is not to make a point of finitude within philosophy but rather is a proof that death happens and comes from outside. Those we love will die and that is something that is thought. If we didn't love those who die then death would not have to be

registered. For it is a death that is counted as nothingness, as part of what makes the flicker possible between framed worlds possible. It is death as rule. As Godard put it in *JLG/JLG* (1995): "The rule is a question of culture, the exception a question of art. Everyone speaks the rule: cigarettes, computers, t-shirts, tourism, war. No-one speaks the exception. It cannot be spoken. It can be written: Flaubert, Dostoyevsky. It can be composed: Gershwin, Mozart. It can be painted: Cézanne, Vermeer. It can be filmed: Antonioni, Vigo. Or it can be lived, and is thus called the art of living: Srebenica, Mostar, Sarajevo. It is part of the rules to want the death of the exception. It is the rule of European culture to organize the death of the art of living." We can add Gaza and Socrates to the art of living.

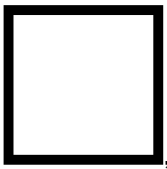
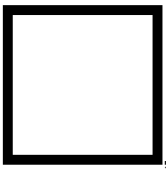
Fredric Jameson has said the 20th century, is as distant, and classical to us, as Ancient Greece. If that is so, is there also a form of philosophical practice that is possible that must be anamnetically retrieved from that century? There are many events of the 20th century, but I want to focus on making present communism, post-Cantorian mathematics, cinema, and love.

Badiou has described human history as Neolithic or we can say in another variation, for a brief period in the communist century, from 1917-1976 there was an attempt at a non-Neolithic form of life. We have proofs of this non-Neolithic period of life, and these proofs are cinematic. If historically philosophy has been written, is there a possibility for philosophy to be recorded, which is to imply, cut? If the art of painting and of music, together with science, are superior and universal then why philosophize with words? Cinema combines the superior arts and science in its cut, directly absolute in its "oneness with humanity."[4] If the work of art is the paradigm by which we think the work of truth, there is no necessity to install poetry as the form that philosophy takes as its model as writing. Instead philosophy should endeavour to take cinema as its form through cutting.

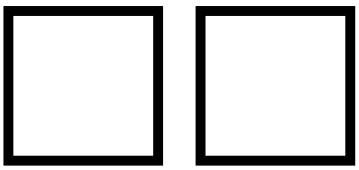
2. Parmenidean Reflection

I like to read Parmenides as if he's writing film criticism because he's describing what I can't see as poetic revelation. And the great writing of the classic era of *Cahiers du cinéma* is like that too. Imagine if you are watching a movie, apparently full of movement, and a critic looks and says, within the duty of thinking: "there is no movement". Imagine if Parmenides made movies and showed it. The power of film criticism is the enthusiasm for what you can't see in words. The passion for non-being. In fact I'd go as far as saying it's almost important that the description is wrong — enthusiasm must take over for it to be evental, screenshot culture has us writing on still photography, not cinema. The wrongness of description is when non-being takes part in thinking. Bad criticism makes the film too recognizable, it should be far off enough, distant and true in

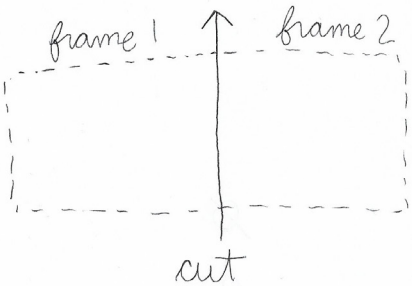
its free association, bad criticism is like gallery text, too on the nose, both writing and object disappear into non-thinking. Great film writing revels in the gap between being and thinking, revels in the cut of its revelation. If Parmenides is a father of Plato it's because he is a poet, and poetry writes the event at the edge of language, but poetry need not be lettered, nor its letters be mathematized, the event can be written in frames and cuts. It's not that poetry is a result of language but ordinary language is the debris of poetry, and in the same way, our manifest image of the world is the debris of cinema. If Plato wanted to think things and not words we cannot blame him for not having a camera but we can place blame after 1896. Truths are the cut in language, all of language is nothing but debris, déchet, trailing description of events in art, science, politics, and love, strengthened and changed by this encounter and always in last place — it is but a trailer for truths. We are the children who will have witnessed the passing from the age of the poets to the age of the auteur — from the law of words to the cut of truth. Imagine a moviegoer sits down in a cinema and sees frames of a film,

 , then  , etc.

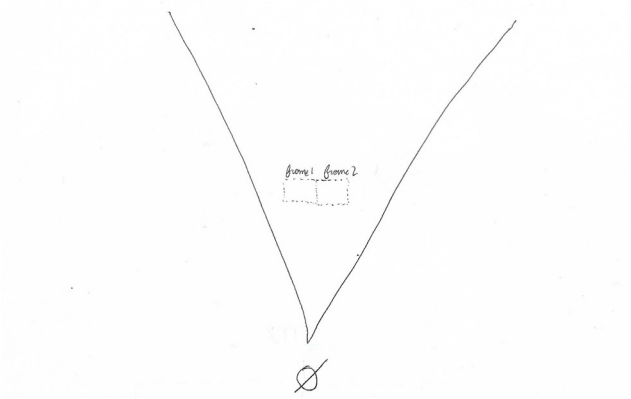
Knowing its form, the moviegoer can imagine the film as a series of marks as one once saw on a film strip.



We can philosophize with cinema because it can cut. There is no cinema without the cut. The hallmark of cinema is its motion via the intermittent mechanism —

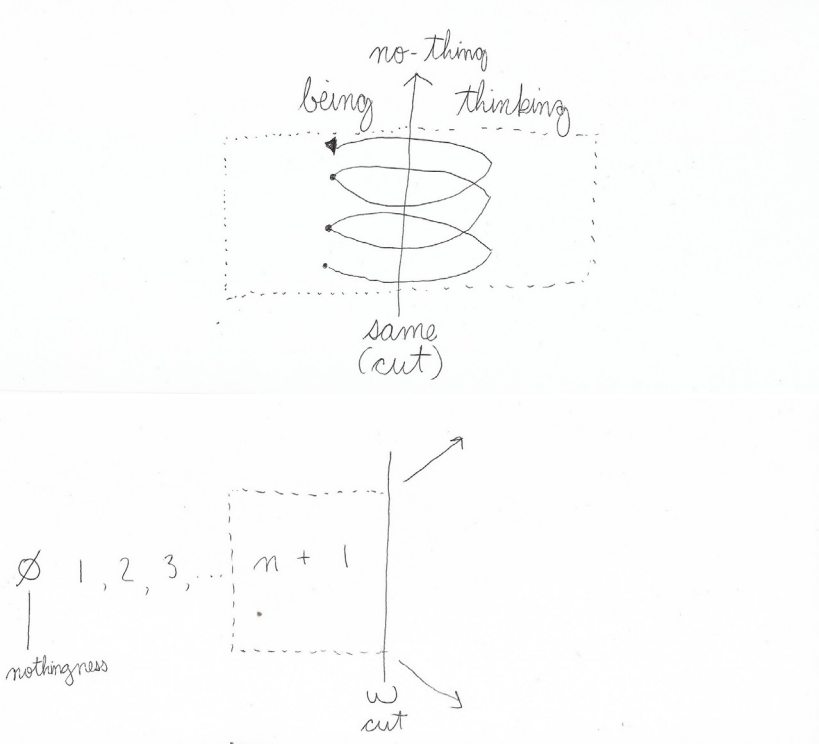


motion is impossible without the cut, you can even say the immobile nothing of the cut is before any movement. Motion does not pre-exist the cut. It seems counterintuitive because in cinema there must have minimally been two frames: with only one frame we are still within the instantaneous painting of photography. On a first approach we think that when there are two frames together, a cut is produced. But in fact we know that on an editing timeline, we have an absolute place where we place our frames. Where are these frames placed? These frames are placed in V. In set-theory mathematics this is the very space where thinking takes place. And we can map this set theory to a movie-set theory. Like the Lumière cinématograph, the shape of the projection from the top looks like this V,



and it is a V that records and projects. All the possibilities of cinema also take place in this V. But we can't see V without making attempts at seeing it via cutting. Both V and cuts inexist. We have to make some sort of model of V. We can call this model M for montage. Because of the world market and enormous pressure by the military, most movies are not seeing V, but seeing L. L is for limited, but also for language. V is the absolute place and in cinema we can say V is for vision and L is for language's finite limitations with a special focus on the visible properties in the picture. As Badiou puts it, "The expressive or participatory function that we are examining here assumes that we start from a 'vision' or a perspective that, at least virtually, is related to the absolute *V* as a whole." [5] Or, as in *Histoire(s) du cinema* (1988), "1a: Toutes les histoires": "the cinematograph never meant to create an event, but a vision."

Within language, Parmenides said: "Thinking and being are the same." Is there a way to see it? As a materialist reading *Theory of the Subject* while editing the *Semi-auto colours* (2010) 16mm workprint on a Steenbeck, it was clear to me that its philosophical table[6] can be seen as a film strip, with a frame for *being* and a frame for *thinking*, brought together and pulled apart by the *same* cut, with the proper retroactions that occur when you watch a movie, the second frame having to appear for the first to appear as first at all.



But let's talk about infinity, and for now, the smallest infinity. To count, let's start with the empty set, ∅ (void) as the beginning of a form of succession and then go { ∅, 1, 2, 3, ... } and then we can say n+1, and it goes on as a form of repetition. Then we make a cut, and start another form of succession, called ω. This is the first infinity. So the natural whole numbers do not build towards ω, because there is no x such that it is before ω. There is a cut. It is decided by an axiom — it is a decision that is not contained in the prior repetition. In the same manner, a shot's frames are the finite repetition interrupted by a cut of infinity. ω immediately recollects all the numbers before it as its limit. In this respect it's like the way cinema recollected all the arts that came before, and allowed us to move forward, +1 from there. When we cut in cinema we immediately, mentally recollect what we have just seen, while seeing nothing. With a succession of cuts of different types, of different sizes, we can recollect not just what we have seen but imagine what we will have seen. Cinema as a form of thinking is a question of recollecting what can be thought in the cut, new forms of anamnesis, thinking how we remember as we remember how to think. From there we are no longer in a space where we compare repetitive pictures that are visible, but those pictures are sharpened by the inexistent cuts that surround them, the mental images that retroactively place them, and these images themselves start to be placed in an intermittent mechanism that gives them motion, until a yet

higher succeeding cut allows us to see their space of placement — and we continue from there. And when we rewatch films, these cuts carry the thoughts we formed the last time we saw them, encrustations even more irreducible to what is seen. When Socrates is told the city he speaks of cannot be seen and exists in Idea only, and he says he thinks there is a pattern of it which he who desires may behold and whether it exists or will ever exists does not matter because he will live in the manner of that city, we should hold to the fact that so many of us are influenced not simply by the movies we see but the cinema of our mind and its pattern of cutting. Since Plato there exists a philosophical ambition to think with "things, not words" precisely because, as Socrates put it: "All I know is I know No-thing." Not until the invention of the cut in cinema did we have such a thing; we are able to see this No-thing. Parmenides said, "being and thinking are the Same" or "it is the Same, to think and to be." I prefer the second phrasing, emphasizing sameness as preceding being and thinking, much like the cut precedes any frames. This Nothing appears the Same, but under particular conditions is in fact different: the cut is the same that is not the same as itself. This non-same is *created*, historically — because reality is incomplete we can consistently invent new cuts. The in-itself in-itself changes with each new infinity, each new nothing, as it is the same. We know some cuts, and there are still more to think. Heidegger asked "why are there beings at all instead of Nothing?" but in fact, all there is is Nothing — we have to parse the infinite infinities of the forms, and create the next -thing to think with. *This* is the meaning of Jean-Luc Godard's phrase "change nothing so everything will be different" that appears at the very beginning of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. His nothing is the same as Socrates'. We can point to this nothing, because it is the part of change that does not change; it makes registration of change possible.

3. Lumière and Griffith

Cinema begins in silence, without language. Gabriel Veyre shot *Repas d›indiens* (1896) in Mexico City and you can see an Indigenous person's face forcibly being made to look at the camera by Claudio Fernando Bon Bernard, director of Lumière operations in Mexico, Venezuela, Guyana, and the West Indies. This is one of the beginnings of cinema. We should be happy this was not edited out. We have a glimpse of the reality of these actualities. The baby's face in the *Baby›s Meal* of 1895 is not forced to look in the same way by Auguste Lumière. But even here we begin to see the need for something like a cut, in order to compare these two meals. We see all these single shots, and identities and differences begin to make themselves visible to us. But there was no cutting yet. In the same year of *Repas d›indiens* there was *Demolition of a Wall* by Lumière. In this film, the first reverse appears, which anticipates the idea of the cut. What is a reverse? It is what makes negation appear.[7] The thought of this cinematic

beginning is the beginning of cinematic thought: in the film there are people using tools on a wall to tear it down and continue breaking it down, and then there is a point of reverse: the wall comes back up, everyone does the same actions backwards. At the point of reverse, we now have what can be counted as two shots. We have the first part of the shot, p, and its reverse ¬ p. Within a world, here, the 'forward' part of the shot constituted by frames of workers being directed to tear down a wall, when put in conjunction with the reversal of each frame, the backward motion, takes the value of zero, the minimum, μ. It can also be marked with Ø, the void, though of course, indexed to this particular world, is the beginning of counting, that makes frames appear as frames. There is a moment when the same frame is seen twice in a row, so, a minimal freeze, before the shot continues. If plucked out, you could not discern the difference between the two frames. Indiscernible, we can already think all that a cut, in its nondescript appearing, is: part of the moving picture, an extension that doesn't add new properties. This not being a cut, the minimal freeze isolates the existence of the flicker that keeps the frames consistently appearing. This isolate marks out that the only element smaller than it is μ. It is an isolated element in the following sense: "no 'complexity 'separates it from the nothing."[8] We can even relate it to the flicker of doubt, which, when itself is doubted, will lead to the cut. So when we look at that V shape, we see Ø at the bottom of the V, that's *Demolition of a Wall*. It's the starting point for thinking. The Ø, the nothingness that is counted for finite multiples, often is not considered or thought of because it is its inappearance that makes appearance consist. It's the first time we see what makes persistence of vision possible.

In the same way we may desire to compare the Lumière film with the Veyre film around the meal because of a similarity, here we have an absolute similarity in two parts. If we cut the two meals together, we may say one shot is A, and one shot is B. And then ideas of comparison appear to us, perhaps related to class, colonialism, racism, composition, et cetera. These ideas only appear to us because the picture becomes marked by the scission in which it is placed. But here, in the first reverse, a picture comes into contact with itself. You can say this first part is A, and after the point of the reverse, we have B. And we can then compare a thing to itself. So rather than a tension between two different shots, we can think of a tension inherent in every shot, in regards to itself. But isn't this what we see every time we edit? When you have a shot on your timeline, do you not run your mouse over the image and as you swing back left to right and back again you see this very motion, this demolition? The empty set is constructible, validating" for any *x*, *x* does not belong to Ø," or, in other words, "*x* has no elements." Ø is also the pure beginning of the hierarchy of constructible levels.[9] And we see the reverse and the reverse of a reverse: this is the beginning of editing. This tension inherent in every shot in regards to itself is why we can say the reverse of the

reverse of a degree is always greater or equal to that degree, *p* £ Ø Ø *p,* or: that double negation does not affirm the first term means we are not in a classical world when we move through the frames but will have been classical when we cut. We see the shift from the appearance of physical laws to that of a picture as picture, the possibility of emptying out the meaning of a picture. This is the movement from something as appearing to have a nature, and a past, and then instead a history in the nothing of the cut. Appearance appears as appearance. Reversals show us that other paths in history are possible. We will talk later of the shot-reverse-shot in linguistic dialogue with the advent of sound, which traditionally is a shot of one person talking, and then a reverse shot of the interlocutor, and a back and forth between them. But there is already a shot-*reverse*-shot here, a shot coming into non-linguistic dialogue with itself. This is also called 'shot, counter-shot' — there are many names. So we can also see this as a shot-counter-shot, which is to say the beginning of counting, in this reverse movement, there is a count-as-shot. The Ø marks nothingness which is not to be confused with no-thing, in the same way the flicker should not be confused with the cut, or the void with infinity. We should also mention it is this reversal that allows us to cognize that what appears intuitionistic, all the degrees of light within a frame, can be reorganized in a classical logic of p or non-p: a frame can be cut, removed, or it can stay. Or the appearance of the minimal, what is included in every shot is the unique intermittency of the void, points towards its reverse, a maximal change with a cut. And we should relish in the logical beauty of the reverse, since, as Badiou put it, "I regard the usual linguistic interpretation of logic as an entirely secondary anthropomorphic subjectivism, which must itself be accounted for by the intrinsic constitution of being-there."[10] This beauty is linked to the fact we can mark the Ø without reference to an onscreen human subject's actions, since this reverse is not related to a close-up, in fact it is a wide shot of people simply working. We can intimate at the outset that the cut, which has yet to appear, will perform its incision without regard to action or necessary narrative: it can happen anywhere at any time.

For Parmenides there is no thinking of non-being, there is only a thinking of being, and the prohibition on thinking non-being founds the sameness of thinking and being. Non-being is reduced to a name, and all experience is simply names. Parmenides founds philosophy by thinking outside of names which is to say language and experience. By thinking outside of names, he is thinking outside of narrative. We can all interpret what's in the frame, and name what's in the frame, but when it comes to the cut, we simply say there is a cut. The frame can only cover in constructive reasoning where A implies B, whereas cutting can begin indirect reasoning, reductio ad absurdum, using not-A to prove A, not-cut (frame) to prove cut, rational cutting, or reasoning which breaks with empirical experience (of the frame).[11] The reversal of Lumière produces

an experience of the impossible and at the point of sameness between two frames produces a minimal freeze that frees us from constructibility, the wall is demolished. Which is to say it's an image that produces its own self-cancellation as inherent in all pictures as pictures. At that point cinema decides itself as a ciné-matheme. That Plato names non-being as 'other' and begins a new use of naming that which is not, which François Truffaut will take to the end: cinema as nothing but names (of the auteur), a metempsychosis of matheme-psychosis. Plato thinks non-being by naming it 'other', and auteurism organizes non-being as being nothing but a history of names of the auteur that mark the other forms of the same.

It is important to mention unlike the films of Edison at this time, the Lumière films have a sense of composition and depth in the image, whereas Edison is often flat. What's also key is that Edison's films were looped, and viewed individually, which is to say finite, while Lumière films were watched as a mass audience and would cut, which is to say infinite. So you already see some beginnings here of a division between a finite social media and an infinite cinema.

And yet in some way today we can say D.W. Griffith is closer to the question of social media than he is to a maker of mass art. D.W. Griffith made 200 short films before he made *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915, which is like the first blockbuster, a film of the democratic type, and these terms come together, because whether box office or voting, the unsaid pressures and institutions around it sully any real idea of the popular, or to be of the people. It is the popularizer of a model of realism, which is to say L. He's credited with either the invention or popularization of the close-up and the crosscut; he combines techniques that came before. The legacy of Griffith to the present can be linked to the axiom of constructibility where in a limited universe things can only be constructed from what already is defined and exists. Today most films are constructed from Griffith's tools, the way he combined what came before him. When films are made from popular extant tools they are described as well-made. Many critics and civilians defend films, even ones they don't like, by saying "we can't deny it's well made," which is really to say it is above a certain budget, or it is a real film with a real budget and works within the style of realism. It is a common inaccessible point beyond critique. Well-made limited realism is the L of cinema.

The Birth of a Nation begins with language, a title saying a "plea for the art of the motion picture" and "we do not fear censorship." 100 years later, Meta relaxed its content moderation in favour of not fact-checking in order to be against censorship. In the same year, Meta created a controversial "AI user", an account that communicates as if it is a queer Black woman. Like Griffith, we have here, blackface, albeit digital, and a prizing of the close-up. Race doesn't exist but racism does. The cinematic realism that the name "Griffith" stands for is a realism that includes blackface — and we can't simply remove blackface from this

style: it is part of its limited sense of what is real. It's not only that those who oppress us want us separated or crosscut from any possibility of mass movement and rather have us socialized into individuals; the type of individuals desired will be invented if needed. Close-ups will be shot: this "AI user" is another form of the close-up, as is an American dollar bill with a close-up of a president's face, and there is a line connecting American movies with the love of the close-up and the star system, and the democratic system of voting, and finally the passport photo demanded by ICE. Privileging close-ups with a name and stated gender are an integral part to the limitations of our world. It creates singletons of all of us so we can be counted.

And we have the famous crosscut. When we look at the crosscut, what do we see? We see the KKK riding on horses on one side to save a white woman who is about to be raped by a man in blackface on the other. The film crosscuts between the two sides, back and forth until the KKK arrive just in time. Crosscuts abound in cinema for different and similar scenes: look at Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* (2008) and we can see rather than a white hood we have a black hood with Batman and instead of blackface we have the whiteface of Joker, and the same crosscutting technique as Batman tries to save Maggie Gyllenhaal. Then there's *Intolerance* (1916), with the subtitle 'Love's Struggle Through the Ages.' Intolerance was not an apology for his *The Birth of a Nation,* which helped revive the KKK, it is its true sequel. The film is four narratives from different historical periods that crosscut together. He wanted to make a film on the idea of intolerance. He worked like some curators do: he had the theme of intolerance, and then he built around this theme. This model is a limitation of cinema as a form of thinking. Here, language legislates all possibilities: we do not start with cuts, frames, images, and sounds, but instead, an external judgment via language. Or we can think of AI prompts in this manner. This is again what I called universe L. Definability *before* creation is the essence of finitude. Invent a theme, invent a race, find the pictures and people after. Most films you see at the cinema use Griffith's tools of readable space, the close-up, the crosscut, narrative filmmaking. We see the development of the crosscut in *The Birth of a Nation* taken to the end in *Intolerance*, crosscutting different stories across time to build a cyclical tension. There's even a character named Eternal Motherhood rocking a baby, purely disconnected from the action in a wide. In one of the narratives, we see an image of the hangman's test, three unequal lines, parallel, to be cut, so no one feels responsible for the death of the person who is hung. So, four stories, without responsibility. Looking at this form is not an antiquated concern. In a time of live-streamed genocide in Gaza, many of us received it on Instagram Stories. Instagram Stories are organized in this Griffith manner: I am here, you are there, parallel stories happening simultaneously, but it cannot touch. So today we still see the world through D.W. Griffith's eyes. He is less thinkable today as an

inventor of mass art than the designer of a user's experience of a social media. The difference between mass art and social media is this: the concept of mass resists the division by the social and forms of art are not reducible to the communication of media.

And when we think of this comparison between different stories we can imagine these stories are all the same size. In a way when we talk about how large the set of all the even numbers is, we know it is the same size of the set of all the whole numbers, or odd numbers. It may seem counterintuitive but the point is we can make that one-to-one-correspondence. It's what Griffith is doing here, making these stories across time comparable. But they all share the same size and the size is ω. This parallel montage is still popular today. And how does *Intolerance* end? We see the abolition of prisons. Really, the maker of *The Birth of a Nation* ends *Intolerance* with the abolition of prisons? But look again: the prison walls become flowers. It is a religious vision, he turns it into a miracle. God literally appears, the only way to bring the parallel worlds into contact. So in fact it is a true sequel to *The Birth of a Nation*: he abolishes the very possibility of abolishing prisons by making it an act of God. And of course all the prisoners are white. So he represents all real change as impossible or more precisely, inaccessible. Today when we see the world through parallel montage, thinking change becomes inaccessible. We have to change our form of change. We need to transform the very form whereby transformation is thinkable. It is important to note all of Ancient Greek mathematics takes place within ω, and so does the editing of Griffith. We should try to move beyond it, modern enough to be in the present. *The Birth of a Nation* begins with an intertitle stating **«[**...] but we do demand the right, the liberty to show the dark side of the wrong, that we may illuminate the bright side of virtue" implies a dark side of virtue and a bright side of the wrong that Griffith cannot think, and finally that we must begin with *negation* to think. An affirmative dialectics allows us to think from an event, affirming an Idea, where negation happens later, to defend this newness. As Badiou put it, "[...] any principle that is based only on a negation, even if a radical one, is ultimately only a somewhat arrogant version of the finite."[12]

4. Kuleshov and Eisenstein

The Kuleshov experiment by Lev Kuleshov was accomplished in 1918, and affirmed a new Idea of the cinema. What is called the Kuleshov effect starts with a face, a human subject that looks like it's looking, then we cut to a bowl of soup, and then we cut back to the face, and then a baby in a crib, and back to the face, and then a beautiful person on a divan. There are variations on what human subject is looking at. It is crucial to note that the facial expression does not change, but because of the juxtaposition, the audience imagines the face as showing nuance, or we project some

minimal idea of what the face on screen is thinking. Not only does the facial expression not change, it can be the same piece of film. This move is also related to what is called suture, so the audience, through this abstraction, 'forgets' they are watching a movie and projects themselves into the situation and point of view or that which looks. But we can also talk about philosophical suture, which is to say a philosophy that forgets that it is thinking through a condition, that its means of thinking comes from a generic condition. So when we cut from the face to the soup, we imagine the face is hungry. The question of conceptual digestion can appear here as well. We can imagine philosophy taking the place of the face, and rather than a bowl of soup, we can imagine a condition, of art, of science, of politics, or of love. And we can, for example, imagine a face that only sees politics. We can also imagine a face that sees all four truths, never suturing itself only to one. This type of cut structures the face as a witness.

The Kuleshov effect functions because there is a sameness that keeps reappearing, in this instance a face. But this is also true with the sameness of the intermittent mechanism, or the cut itself. Which is to say it is sameness that structures itself as a witness, and not the human face. If there is a Kuleshov effect, κ, then $V \neq L$. In fact the constructible continuity of L, especially the shot, reverse shot (SRS), is derived from κ. The objects are removed and there are only faces looking at each other, speaking. Speaking being over thinking being. L only exists if the space is readable and continuous. But where does the Kuleshov take place? What place has this bowl of soup, this crib, this funeral, this wedding, this beautiful person on the divan, et cetera? There is no 'whole' place, no establishing shot (E) that shows where this sequence takes place, and the Kuleshov effect makes it appear undecidable whether what we are witnessing is someone thinking of a bowl of soup in one's head or someone who actually sees it — we are clearly in an imagined absolute place. And this absoluteness of place is never questioned in the experiment; no one rushes into a finite paradise of a constructible place.

If the mark of Ø can stand for something like Descartes' subject, we decide for ω as an infinity-witness, from there, we cross the limit to ω +1, but it is never the same subject, because for Badiou the void is on the side of being. If the void was on the side of the subject all witnesses would share the same form. However, new forms of cutting invent new forms of witnessing and thus subjects. The subject is less the place of witness but the crossing into the +1 itself. It is to say we need stronger forms of witnessing events in relation to truth and their obscuration. If things are seen but not registered we do not succeed, we only repeat, even repeatedly see industrially produced mass murder. To say there are new subjects is to not accept the singleton of the death drive, because the void is on the side of being and not of the subject — negativity isn't everywhere, it is localized, and it is its localization that begins to engender infinite infinities.

In 1929, *after* making *Strike* (1925), *Potemkin* (1925), and *October* (1927), Eisenstein says "the interaction of the Two produces and determines Dynamism. (Not only in the sense of a space-time continuum, but also in the field of Absolute thinking)."[13] Very remarkable, because he makes a separation between the space-time continuum and the field of Absolute thinking. A couple lines later, he repeats this Two in another form: he says, "Shot and montage are the basic elements of cinema."[14] So his idea of the Two is not simply a dualism. As Two, shot and montage are not opposites. We can say the Two is a set and its subsets, a shot and its montage. If we have three shots, think if we had a set S of three elements {a, b, c} and then we have 8 subsets {a}, {b}, {c}, {a,b}, {a,c}, {b,c}, {a,b,c}, {∅}. So there are always more subsets than sets, and the set of the subsets, the powerset, is always larger than the initial set. This is true of infinity as well — the powerset is always larger than the set, even if the set is infinite, which leads to the idea that there are larger and larger sizes of infinity. Let's say if we can imagine the shots in relation to each other in this manner, finite shots producing finite associations, can we think infinite cuts producing infinite associations with each other?
Imagine a shot with racist police violence, and then we cut to a reaction shot, a close-up of a racialized face seeing the action: there are not that many associations one can make. We are still within a finitude of thinking. But we can have a potentially infinite amount of mental associations between cuts when there is a greater equality between the frames when the frames are thought as units not already collected into a "shot". So in my mind someone who cuts like D.W. Griffith is trying to control our associations, in the same way the state in a time of riots will say 5 people together is a riot, controlling our associations with each other. And in Griffith's *Intolerance* he'll allow for 4 or 5 stories. But in a mass movement there are more than 5 stories and potentially infinite associations they can make between each other, the Idea they share, and the situation altogether. So there's this density of associations between people who have meetings, provide self-defence, and other forms of organization that achieve a density that cannot be easily separated. When someone wants to oppress you, they separate: like police at a protest breaking up the mass of people so the masses return to themselves as socialized individuals, or a mass of moviegoers immediately rating a film on Letterboxd during the credits.

Similarity in image allows for this sort of comparison to be made mentally. What does the Kuleshov effect look like if not a person either editing a film, or watching a film? We see the face, and what the face is looking at. You see this in the history of painting too. If you look at Caravaggio's *Boy Bitten By Lizard* (1596), you can see his hand being bitten, but what happens here is in fact the artist painting themselves painting, the hand being bitten you can imagine a paintbrush in it, the raised hand as if it's holding a palette.[15] You also see it in paintings of

a man with a sword and shield, if you look closely you can see that the sword is clearly the paintbrush and the shield is the palette, because artists often paint themselves in the mirror. And this is true in cinema too. We make allegories of our own creation. You see this in *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939) with Cary Grant surrounded by what looks like lights on set when he 'directs' the arrival and departure of airplanes, looking like a filmmaker. So with the Kuleshov effect, we see a face and an object in the same way one thinks of the editor's face looking at the objects on the editing table. If Caravaggio paints what it looks like to paint, Kuleshov thinks what it looks like to think, thinks what it is to think while thinking thinks. And with intellectual montage in Eisenstein, we lose the reference to the face, it's Kuleshov without the face. We just cut to different objects, people, and events. We don't need to always refer to a person thinking these ideas, as the "I think" is implicit in all judgments.

In 1927, Eisenstein's *October* is released. We read Hegel's writing on the French Revolution, but the truth is we still haven't witnessed Eisenstein's *October.* Intellectual montage begins in *October* and we have rarely been faithful to its artistic innovations. Where better than *October* to present not only the idea of revolution but the revolution of ideas' presentation? It is a film made 10 years after the revolution, with many real revolutionary participants taking part in the filmic event. That scenes from the film are often used in historical documentary contexts as newsreels are an index of the fact the film documents the idea of "October" itself for all time.

The revolutionaries were able to resist partition and so does the film's montage form. If there is the Kuleshov effect, there is a subset that is homogeneous to the partition, and there are two parts, we can even say, the face and the bowl of soup, and they come as a pair. The pair resists a partition into two halves and is infinitely higher than the inaccessible infinity of ω, which is Griffith's crosscut. A subset H of κ of cardinality κ such that all the pairs of elements of H are in the same half: $\kappa \Rightarrow (\kappa)^2_2$.[16] What Eisenstein does with his intellectual montage in the God and Country sequence is resist the partition into two halves by removing the necessity of making the face appear, as the "I think" is always included, and the Kuleshov effect was already the speculative identity between the editor and the audience, as audience thinks the cuts, and editor watches the film. He removes the Griffith close-up as a necessary point of suture. If all the finite, repeating pictures, are in one half, which is the looping face that does not change, and all the others are in the second half, the objects of religion, war, and state, et cetera, its compactness is of greater strength than the inaccessible infinity: $\kappa \Rightarrow \kappa_2 < \omega$.[17] A Ramsey cardinal defeats Griffith's God. Griffith has God Himself appear, here we see the idea of God instantiated in different objects that refuse to be separated. The intertitle says "In the name of God and Country" and for "In the name of God" we see various religious objects without the need to cut to a face looking. But even more: the religious

toys take the place of the human face in the Kuleshov effect: we project on both the face and the religious figure a sense of agency and control of our lives. So there's a reversal: rather than a human face in a Kuleshov effect we see the inanimate religious toys' face in close-up, and rather than a bowl of soup and the like, we see military medals on humans who serve as background ("and Country"), like a table the bowl of soup rests on. This is followed by a reverse motion of a dismantled statue of the Tsar whose pieces start to reconnect. Rather than crosscutting at the level of time's passing, this cutting finds a similar shape, in this case across religious objects, to imitate the persistence of vision's compactness that grounds all appearing, and in the absolute difference between the pictures, finds identity within motion (a 'false' animating motion between religious objects) and stillness as such (these objects aren't moving). Rest, motion, what is, the same and its other. We see a match between Kornilov on a horse and a toy Napoleon on a horse, and then Kornilov's putsch via a forced creative geography of a tank that in false continuity crushes the Napoleon figurine on Kerensky's desk in the Winter Palace. Intellectual montage uses different objects and happenings at different scales and links them as if they share the same scale — Eisenstein forces opposition into the appearance of motion,[18] intermittent mechanism becomes intellectual montage. Rather than the givenness of time's elapsing being compared in Griffith, the montage removes it from any time whatever, into the absolute place of thinking where time is decided. Or even stronger, a reversal of the cogito into "I don't think and I am not" — like science that doesn't assume a human observer, Eisenstein often loses reference to a single character or perspective. He sees the event seeing itself. Rather than identify with a close-up of a face, we can find identification in the cut itself, and desubstantialize the thinker thinking.

The ending anamentically retrieves previous cuts: the machine gun flicker during the July Days, the gun's lines at diagonals to the frame that burst, then later the aforementioned religious flicker of the Baroque Christ's halo's beams intercut with the egg-shaped Uzume, which in its movement from egg-shape to star-shape back and forth, also have the burst effect, and finally the the victorious revolutionaries clapping with Lenin, the applause's hands are diagonal and lightly matching the hands on the clock like the beams as machine gun as hands on the round-shape clocks around the world, recollecting all the other burst effects into the burst of eternity. Like the isolate of *Demolition of a Wall*, the isolates that begin to move, or rather, restructure what movement is through its stillness, is eternity's stillness bursting through. We often incorrectly think of the first close-up as being on the face, but these celebrating hands remind us that the first close-up was in fact of hands, shot by Eadweard Muybridge. There's a brief sequence when a soldier of the 1st Petrograd Women's Battalion of Death looks at a Rodin statue of lovers in embrace, herself posing with a hand under her chin ready to defend the

Winter Palace and we are reminded of a later student of Eisenstein, Hollis Frampton: "I will simply invert Rodin's remark (he was, in fact, speaking of Muybridge's work) to read thus: 'It is the photograph which is truthful, and the artist who lies, for in reality time does stop.'"

To repeat Eisenstein: "the interaction of the Two produces and determines Dynamism. (Not only in the sense of a space-time continuum, but also in the field of Absolute thinking)," but this Two as the two different sizes of infinity that produces the dynamism of a finite work or Two forms of the cut can produce an unknown persistence of vision that allows finite pictures to appear as part of a new dynamism of a truth process. Or as Eisenstein put it, "this same principle-giving birth to concepts, to emotions, by juxtaposing two disparate events-led to [...] Liberation of the whole action from the definition of time and space."[19] The resistance of $\kappa \Rightarrow (\kappa)_2^2$ and $\kappa \Rightarrow \kappa_2 <^{\omega}$ defeat Griffith's form which re-popularized the KKK in the United States.

5. Intermission: Auteurs after sound›s linguistic turn

Cinema is of seeing V, a vision of V, rather than a linguistic and limited medium, L. Looking at painting, hearing music, thinking mathematics, all at once: the absoluteness is clear. Adding a title to a painting or a contextual caption to a filmed murder is already to add a narrative to it and destroy our vision in the name of L. The introduction of sound brings a victory for those who see the cinematic universe as that of L. The many advances in the form, clear in silent works by Abel Gance and Sergei Eisenstein for example, come to a halt. The dynamic strength of silent cinema is de-absolutized and slowed down so actors can individually speak clearly into 'hidden' microphones; the universality of a Chaplin picture disappears in favour of particular languages focusing on sync sound, coincidentally around the time Fascism is on the rise. Sound is consolidated with *The Jazz Singer* in 1927, about a man who defies his Jewish family to perform music in blackface, again in the name of realism. Someone's face is always painted unrealistically in the heights of realism, whether its *The Birth of a Nation* or *Hatari!* (1962). We must also think of the use of radio for Nazi propaganda, as another instance of hearing particularist language without an image, Hitler on the radio, a voiceover, a subtitling of reality. Much later we can think of the Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines broadcast from 1993-1994. In the continuity tradition of cinema, often a sound, whether music or words, makes transitions smoother, and we must hear that this is true for attempted political transitions as well. Syncing makes a false equivalence between V and L, we can even say in the cinema, sync sound makes V=L, in sync with each other, a two fused into one in the name of the old one of L. The hallmark of continuity style is the 180 degree rule, popularized by Hollywood, developing shot/counter-shot, or shot reverse-shot (SRS).

Often used for dialogue but not necessarily, it operates within a form of film space that in some sense still belongs to the theatre, all taking place on one side of an imaginary line we cannot cross. The 180 degree rule is finite and intuitionistic, endeavours to stay on one side to make cuts appear as invisible, preserving a continuity of space. The indexation of every multiple to a transcendental of continuity is also linked to the concept of coverage, the covering-over of events with this 'invisible' style, a style that makes cuts appear as invisible. The cut is a discontinuity, and a collection of discontinuities can form its own continuation beyond finitude. Thus, indexation can be divided: a multiplicity can be indexed to the transcendental of the world or it can be be part of the full index as an attribute of the absolute. One can be indexed in continuity to this world, or be marked by inexistence and force discontinuity. One can think the minimum and maximum of a world, but also the minimal and maximal indexing of a truth: if there is a hierarchy of infinities it is to say there is a progressive history of truths; if there wasn't, then the artistic avant-garde would be without points: atonicity would reign. The point of making the cuts invisible puts a primacy on words, language, and narrative — this is coverage in the cinema. But mise en scène maximizes visibility and puts a primacy on image, sound, and truth.

When Marcel Pagnol would shoot his early films, he would stay with the sound equipment, listening on headphones, not watching the scene being shot. He thought that if it sounded good, then the acting was good too. This explicit favouring of language and performance over image shows in miniature what the purpose of coverage is: to cover what is being said and prizing narrative beyond what is being thought. There is a loose charm to the early Pagnol as in *Marius* (1931) and *Fanny* (1932) because he would shoot until the magazine was empty, there'd be simple unregulated wide compositions with unexpected pans, the rules have not set in. The Marseille accent was so thick that the Parisians needed subtitles, so the recording of voice and performance again relates to a realism but this realism is a provincial realism that leads to a scene of in *The Well-Digger›s Daughter* (1940) where a Pétain speech in favour of an armistice with Nazi Germany is listened to on the radio, and later he gives in to classic SRS such as in *The Pretty Miller Girl* (1949). But, even with the SRS structure, what do we see? Two faces looking at each other talking. But SRS is in fact derived from Kuleshov: it simply replaces the Kuleshov effect's image of someone thinking with someone talking. Speaking beings over thinking beings. If we have typical "mise en scène" with establishing shots, E, which can start a scene like Ø begins a count, and then we have different forms of coverage, like 1, 2, 3...n+1, the interruption, however obscured, of SRS, finds a traction in its subtraction from coverage. Not entirely, but enough. Imagine if there was no dialogue and it was simply the faces cutting back and forth, or even better, there was dialogue, but the sound was cut: the dignity of thinking would be

preserved in the image. Thinking triumphs over speaking, or rather, speaking is filtered out.

If Pagnol's sync sound and preservation of accent leads to Pétain on the radio, the fact of Roberto Rossellini shooting *Rome, Open City* (1945), without sync shows that it is by de-linking picture and sound that we attain a realism of the new. It is the gap between sound and picture, a subtraction of language, that allows us to make do with being. Even if the words are dubbed later, the truth that language is always a covering-over, a transcendental that marshals itself, is maintained. The body's attachment to language is imposed. Or again, sync makes it easier to assume there are only bodies and languages, the *and* being a point of unity that counts speaking being as thinking beings, that counts-as-one. Syncing, which links sound at a precise frame of the picture, makes its void, that which separates frames, countable so there is a common root between the frames and sound. Sound is synced to the frame, so there is a primacy of the frame, the world, rather than any evental cut. The picture becomes part of the state of sound, whose unbinding is prohibited. Bound, we also begin to assume continuity, and coverage. Unbound, there is discontinuity and mise en scène. For coverage, there is only the frame that is invisible, but for mise en scène there is a frame that is being framed, a transcendental exposed.

The key thinker of the necessity of this framing is François Truffaut: a thinking that is for the primacy of direction against the screenplay, V > L. That a frame is framed means we see the world as world, returning to *Demolition of a Wall*'s exposition of the void. The reversibility of fiction and documentary is apparent here. Truffaut has said that cinema became an art when it sheds its attempt at documentary. The choosing of fiction rather than documentary is a siding with reductio ad absurdum, the fictitious forcing of Cohen against Gödel's constructible documentary of what exists. Great filmmakers such as Chaplin, Eisenstein, Hitchcock, and Welles continued within sound as if silent film simply continued, with sound. Much later, George Lucas will say his Star Wars films are "silent films with sound." That is, unlike the poem *interrupted* by mathematics, cinema *includes* language without giving it primacy.

So when we look at Alfred Hitchcock, look how he brings back the Kuleshov effect with *Rear Window* (1954). Scott's Theorem simplified states if κ exists, then V is always bigger than L. And for me if Kuleshov exists, then vision will always triumph over language. Again think how cosmic Kuleshov is: it doesn't have a continuous space like the continuity style: where in fact is the soup, the baby, or the beautiful person? It is in one's mind. So the place of absolute thinking, V, is victorious against the space-time continuum of L. And what Hitchcock does here is re-introduce that absoluteness into continuous space. So as cinema normalizes, standardizes into SRS, we can see how Hitchcock repeatedly interrupts SRS with κ, in the same manner the finite succession of n+1 is interrupted

by ω. Hitchcock finds new ways to use κ. If intellectual montage removes the subject from the subject-object cutting of κ, what Hitchcock does is treat the subject-object relation in variant lengths. But as we think of Kuleshov not taking place in time, it is the very suspension of time that builds suspense. The art of Hitchcock is making long events seem short and short events seem long: he is the Master of Suspense, the master of suspending us from space and time. When Thorwald comes into Jimmy Stewart's room and Stewart uses the flash of the camera to momentarily stop him, isn't it clear that this is the same shot of Thorwald taking off his glasses again and again? Time does not pass, it must be decided.

There is a temptation to hold that editing as such will always be the future of cinema and we can call this the leftist deviation, and those who focus on the recording of an actor's performance the rightist deviation. When I say that cinema is a thinking of the cut, I mean also that a director must exist, explicitly saying the word 'cut' on set. It is the word of the auteur that ties the leftist and rightist deviations in a single utterance, that which appears on set to disappear in the edit itself. The director is the actor who says cut for the editor. The left deviation is a sophism of the edit and the right deviation is anti-philosophy of the actor. In fact every antiphilosophy prizes the act and the actor, and this is why if cinema is to be philosophy, there is always its opposing, historical foe which allows it to re-articulate its conditions in the *present*, whether it's the performance of sound, television, or the internet. Philosophy always overcomes the antiphilosophy of its time, as did cinema when it recuperated sound, television, and continues to do battle with the internet's linguistic organization of frames and cuts. The director is that which philosophizes with one word, and one word alone, and it is with the word 'cut'. A word without language linking the cut's being to the being-there of the frame. The problem with both deviations is on its own it cannot treat the problem of coverage, which is to say finitude. Even further, without a director one risks de-linking cutting from the idea of an event. You can edit coverage and you can cover a performance but without direction we risk losing the absoluteness of axiomatic thinking, what is thinkable on the basis of nothing: editing coverage assumes the existence of something to edit as does covering a performance but we know to begin with something de-absolutizes. The name of the auteur is that which is an identity non-identical with itself, as non-identical as the reasons why a director will say the word 'cut'.

6. Godard and Frampton

But 'cut' is not always said, there are times it must be found. The jumpcut was found in the edit of Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* (1960) because contractually he was to produce a 90 minute film, and his initial cut was 2 hours and 30 minutes. Rather than cutting out scenes, he cut within

scenes, leaving the cut itself visible as we jump from frame to frame. That nothingness which is marked out by Lumière's *Demolition of a Wall* appears to return in *Breathless*. The jumpcut is the almost nothing. Godard will eventually die by suicide. There is something of the thought of suicide in the jumpcut but we most be more precise. Life can end at anytime, a shot can end or begin at anytime. As does love. The love story between Jean Seberg and Jean-Paul Belmondo deals with its paraconsistency; "It's crazy, but I love you", "I wanted to see if I'd be glad to see you again", "to make sure I didn't love him anymore" , "I don't want to be in love with you" "I shouldn't be thinking of her but I can't help it" — the film has the terror of all love being paraconsistent at every turn of the intermittent mechanism's void. If I think the cut can formalize the event, when Pasolini says the cut is death he is wrong. So instead, the jumpcut can think the subjective formalism of resurrection without relation to death. Which is to say what it is to live must be subtracted from a thinking of death lest life be naturally finitized. If the cut is death it is because the cut is totalizing, naturalizes death as the horizon of meaning; against (the one) totality, the cut as event thinks infinity as the equality of parts to other parts, sets and subsets. Counterintuitively, infinity is the thinking of equality, whereas finitude naturalizes inequality, of death, social death, and death drive. Here, the cut can happen at any time, there is an equality of any time to be chosen over another. Or to put it another way: the idea of infinity is not intrinsically linked to finitude, though it can be thought to other sizes of infinity. We can think resurrection in relation to other subjective formalisms, of fidelity, reaction, and obscuration, and we don't necessarily need to think its relation to death. Death is not immanent to life, it is external. And if the cut is ontological and can mark the event, death, not being ontological but logical, that is, of the realm of appearances, is more akin to light going out than the absoluteness of the cut. This harbouring of nothingness is spoken of in the hotel scene where Belmondo says "[b]etween nothingness and grief, I choose nothingness", the almost nothing over any grief within L.

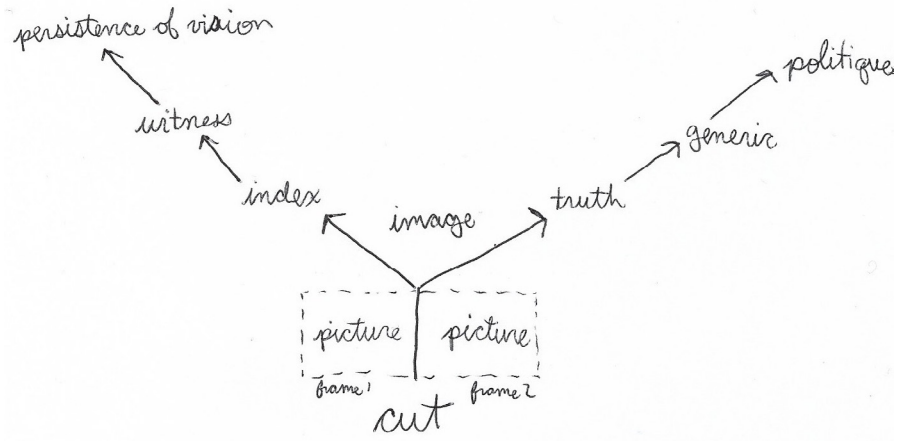
It is both impossible to prove that $0^{\#}$ exists or that it doesn't. But this is true of the jumpcut as well: the intermittency of the flickering void, the 24 frames per second's persistence of vision is always present, the gap between one frame to another always is already abyssal. Neither continuity nor coverage, sticking with $0^{\#}$ rather than 0, and even though analysis can show *Breathless* followed some conventional shooting practices such as SRS, finite coverage is avoided. The jumpcut is "the very first difference from nothingness", it cannot be concealed. It proves that V is larger than L: all attempts at continuity, which makes what appears appear as a one, 180 degree rules, establishing shot, shot-reverse-shot patterns are filled with indiscernibles. Jumpcutting as Skolemization? The 'there is' of the composed frame is removed, instead there are functions: all that is left are cuts, the frames were retroactive presuppositions for

what we are seeing. We do not see skipped frames we see jumpcuts. The jumpcut is what makes the $0^{\#}$ appear as a point: any frame can end in a cut, as isolate, nothing separating it from nothingness. The world is tensed. We see what is not. The constant denial of the non-being that appears, the quantity of cuts against the quality of picture which consists and is covered. Appearing harbours points. That $0^{\#}$ exists is to say $V \neq L$, because only if jumpcutting does not exist can we say that rigid continuity in the last instance is all that can be seen. With the existence of the jumpcut's $0^{\#}$, Griffith's ω_{ω} is regular in L. The realism of constructibility disappears under the realization of all that the jumpcut indiscerns. One can exit the cave, see L, continuity, from the standpoint of V because $0^{\#}$ is "located at threshold of the exit from the cave".[20] Continuity is the endless cave that makes an exit invisible. The jumpcut, $0^{\#}$, reveals each frame a cave, the cut is the sun that you can't look at directly, your eyes have to become accustomed to seeing it. There's also a Copernican side to this: the frame is not at the centre, the frames revolve around the cut, like the earth around the sun.

With Parmenides I endeavour to think the subjectivity of the 'cut' rather than the substance of 'film' or 'digital' in the manner that Parmenides thought 'being' rather than 'fire' or 'water'. Parmenides is a critique of the myth of narrative as Marx is a critique of political economy. And with that, Plato thinks the being of non-being, and Mao thinks the negation of 'negation of negation' — the effects of this idea on Godard and Badiou will have to be looked at another time. However, if 20th century French philosophy deserves to be a cumulative achievement on par with Ancient Greece and German Idealism, I don't think it's simply because philosophy was written, or that it was simply 'French'. The interest in what is called 'French philosophy' is precisely this break regarding what is 'Frenchness' with May 68 and a thinking conditioned by the Cultural Revolution, and how it marked thinkers and inventors like Badiou and Godard in what can be thought in *Cahiers pour l›analyse* or *Cahiers du cinéma*.[21]

In 1964 in Mao's "Talk on Questions of Philosophy" he says "negation of negation doesn't exist at all" and, "[t]here is no such thing as the negation of the negation. Affirmation, negation, affirmation, negation . . . in the development of things, every link in the chain of events is both affirmation and negation. Slave-holding society negated primitive society, but with reference to feudal society it constituted, in turn, the affirmation. Feudal society constituted the negation in relation to slave-holding society but it was in turn the affirmation with reference to capitalist society. Capitalist society was the negation in relation to feudal society, but it is, in turn, the affirmation in relation to socialist society."[22] Affirmation and negation? A classical logic. And we know if we admit the Axiom of Choice we admit a classical logic, a classical world, the same world as ontology. In 1970 Hollis Frampton made the film *Zorns Lemma.* Zorn's Lemma is equivalent to the Axiom of Choice. The film itself can be said to present

the Axiom of Choice.[23] Its middle section shows, for one second, each of 24 letters from a Roman alphabet where I/J count-as-one as does U/V. Then we see words alphabetically sequenced within an environment that starts with such a letter (like on a store sign), one second each, which can be interpreted as if being chosen from bins of that letter, and then these signs are replaced with pictures, which can be interpreted as if being chosen from bins, until all we are looking at are pictures. It is suggestive that there are 24 letters in the way there are 24 frames per second. The choice of picture exceeds the finite ordering and name of the bin: there's a retroactivity which allows us to think this very ordering as contingent, since, even the alphabetized words are pictures that only so happen to have words in them. It wasn't just words: for example, we begin with a picture of a hand holding the letter A for the first "A" word. So one has to choose to find letters within a frame, but anything can serve the function of a letter, it need not be a letter. The choice function was with us at the beginning: every picture will have been chosen by the artist, including the Roman alphabet we began with. It being Roman is another clue. Or rather every frame is chosen from an infinite bin and the finite letters and words are results of this choosing. What is implied then is within the persistence of vision, each framed picture can be decided. Pictures side by side produce the illusion of repetitive movement, or allow us to think a new form of succession. Perhaps there was the possibility of each of the 24 frames per second being replaced in this manner, but technologically with the film strip such a frame by frame cutting would come apart at the splices — maybe it can be realized digitally. But what was seen is this ordering via letters only proved that not-letters, cuts, reign supreme. In the cut that is unpictured, anything can be chosen, anything can be thought in the anonymity of the cut as generic subset.



7. Badiou and Godard

But an image doesn't exist. This is not an image, it's a picture. The image is the relation with me looking at it dreaming up a relation at someone else. An image is an association.

- Jean-Luc Godard, interview with Gavin Smith, 1996[24]

—The finitist skeptic: I'm fed up. They abound and you can't even show me one. That's the way it always is with the Axiom of Choice. The thing exists, there are tons of them, but you can't show a single one!
—Me: That only proves that there's a major difference between what is and what can be shown. Show infinity? Hard to do. Think it? Experience it? Subjectivate it? Create it? Yes, a thousand times yes. Down with the finitude of showing! If we stop thinking that thinking equals showing, that to be is to be able to be shown, we'll all be a lot better off.

- Alain Badiou, Immanence of Truths[25]

An image doesn't exist, it inexists, and cinema is a passion of inexistence. At the press conference for *King Lear* (1987), Godard quoted Picasso as saying that if he were in prison he'd paint with his shit because that'd be all that he has. Every time we make a picture we are doing it with all that we have. *King Lear* takes place in some sort of future where all art has disappeared after Chernobyl, so William Shakespeare Jr. the 5th must somehow re-create the work of his ancestors. But are we not in such a situation today? With all that AI slop, unsearchable Google, (and we must also say the original search bar was invented by Sergei Eisenstein, intellectual montage was the first real search and it was better because it was without language and you had to really search with images, and shoot your search, nothing was given), et cetera, or the opposite, all these paintings are owned by museums and rich losers who want to act like their eclecticism is a sign of culture, if you want to make a film and use your favourite song that defines your life you must pay 100 000 dollars perhaps to the rights holder. So we are in fact always like William Shakespeare Jr. the 5th, we are in this wasteland with no access to art, no real access to our ancestors, so we have to invent. And it seems funny because sure you can download this and that, but you can't see the films anymore, you must see it at home, and if you can't see it in a theatre we only see a hint of it, its reproduction. We only have the shoebox of cinema and not the cinema itself at instant access. There is no history of movies. Nothing is given, or rather, as an intertitle in the film has it, NO THING is given. When we make a picture, all of the history of art has the possibility

of starting again. The entirety of the history can be retold, re-ordered, or resurrected. What we find in this film is that in thinking there are no births, there are only resurrections.

So when we see the intertitle of NO THING, there is another truth, not only does thinking begin from NO THING but art in general begins like that because the tradition is never given to us, it is only given to us in pieces at most. There is a character, played by Godard, named Professor Pluggy and he is working on making an 'image'. What is seen on the monitors on the set is what his later *Histoire(s) du cinéma* will look like. There is a sequence (and these next endnotes will be related to what is seen on screen) where you hear his voice say over Molly Ringwald lying down with a Gustave Doré book's cover adding a light pattern to her face, "[a]n image is not strong because it is brutal[26] or fantastic but because[27] the association of ideas [28] is distant and true. The result is obtained immediately and controls the truth of the association. Analogy is a medium of creation[29] . It is a resemblance of connections. The power or virtue of the created image depends on the nature of these connections. What is great is not the image, but the emotion it provokes. If the latter is great, one esteems the image as its measure. The emotion thus provoked is true because it is born outside all imitation. All evocation. And all resemblance." [30]

In 1988: the first part of the *Being and Even*t trilogy and the first two episodes *Histoire(s) du cinema* appear around the same time. This is as moving in its truth as the dual appearance of Jules Janssen's *Passage of Venus* and Georg Cantor's first diagonal proof in 1874. The point is to see both at once, and in seeing it, do more than separate out what is already there, and instead think something larger, a net that can catch both, a witness that sees the image they may produce together, an image that will have retroactively produced them.

Badiou says "'Ultrafilter' is actually just the name of a mental device for 'measuring' what a very large set of large subsets of a given set might be."[31] Imagine an image as an ultrafilter. An image that does not contain the empty set, it contains the set E, contains the intersection of parts A and B, and if the image contains subset A and A is in subset B then B is in the image because B is larger than A, and with regard to any subset of E, it is either in the image or its complement, its negation, is in, and finally an image that can be described as a non-principal ultrafilter must be without the singleton, which means quite plainly that the association produced is not only one association. If it is one association, we have a singleton, that is, we are still linked to the One. In *Demolition of a Wall*, if the reverse counts as a cut then the image that appears to us is the picture we just saw: the forward motion as comparison to the backwards motion we are now seeing. A single image.

Gavin Smith asked what Godard was trying to evoke in the first part of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* when he "intercut two shots very rapidly, cut to the rhythm of a word processor" and Godard said "it was only to try to

meet the images without cutting—very fast superimpositions so that there is only one image but we understand there are two."[32] The cutting to the rhythm of the word processor can be thought of in the opposite way, that cutting produces the writing that separates out what is presented. This is because language separates out from a given existence[33], it does not induce it and struggles with such simultaneity. Language will always be a smaller infinity than image, music, and mathematics, and when something like cinema thinks with all three, there will always be a trailing behind (which is why the subtitles are necessarily incomplete in these videos)[34]. What cinema can do that language can't is swim in this simultaneity of painting, music, and cutting. Language makes things smaller, while cinema projects things to be larger. Belonging to an infinity of worlds we participate in many truths at once and language makes what appears as more complicated in its separating gesture. With cinema it's obvious and clear that you can hear music and see a picture and hear dialogue and see an image without any difficulty. The simple simultaneity of cinema allows us to think, and to be, conditioned by multiple truths at the same time, the time of the same.

And to meet images without cutting is to imply the only way to 'meet images' is via cutting, except here we see either very fast superimpositions or very slow dissolves, so we can see the intersections of A and B, and they are both in the image, and if they are pictures of pictures, pictures from other films, they come with other associations, and the image will contain all those associations, and when there actually is a cut, the association will not be a single one. The complement or its negation is in, or as Godard has it, all the films either made or unmade are part of his history. Even more, if the person who watches the film does not know what painting, photograph, movie, et cetera the movie is showing, there is even less a relation to the One of origin, or of reference; this lack of reference brings us closer to the absolute reference. Smith then says the rhythm reminded him of the "24 frames per second effect of persistence of vision in film" and Godard agreed that he was trying to "elaborate on that". Which is to say the fast/slow superimpositions transform the given appearance of the 24 frames per second, allowing us to think of other ways the pictures/images can be received. And if the image constructs a huge cardinal κ, a witness that is almost absolute, one can imagine there is something like V that (in)exists.[35]

Imagine a family of images that form "a network of subsets whose links with each other, as well as what they exclude or constrain, show that most of them are at any rate so "large" that they can be said to be "almost" equivalent to the initial situation, to the set of which they are subsets."[36] The situation? Cinema itself, what Frampton called 'the infinite film.' Now think of the classic picture of a film strip, and all its frames, think of the being/thinking frames, and now think of a fish net. The ultrafilter functions like a fish net with large holes that keeps what is large.

If movies were only their pictures, we would never catch large ideas, but if cuts are distant enough, it forms a net to catch the greatest associations, the images of the largest size. The equality of images to each other and the associations they can themselves make changes the nothing of our vision. This fish-net is calendrical.

And what is it to watch a movie? We have called our medium 'moving pictures', but pictures are not images. In pictures we have an intuitionistic becoming that must be also paraconsistently what it is not, and a classical decision is made, there is a cut. Then another picture, another cut. An image is not the same as a picture. An image is an association without pictorial resemblance to what is seen. We can think of two pictures producing an image, but there is a retroactivity, where the visible pictures are nested in these invisible images. These images themselves can collide to create a higher order association. It is in this spark that we see almost all the possible associations. It is less that we witness this infinity than the fact the infinity witnesses us. It is that these images can be looked at without being seen that escape the laws of constructibility and instead are generic. These associations are always included even if they do not belong to the pictures. Truth is a process of anamnesis: attempting to remember what you saw, you will have been forcing yourself to look at what you imagine. These images bear the mark of the *politique des auteurs.* This image itself can be cut: there is an immanence without identity that maintains a gap between the absolute referent and the place of absolutization of singular truths which is to say: no image makes V, as vision, itself appear, since it inexists, but it can make a new persistence of vision inappear to structure the appearing of pictures. If we can go from V to V it would mean I can simply see what there is to see. But there is nothing to see, and seeing what is invisible has its freedoms. And once you can look at the image produced by the cut, it is an image that will be included. The finite frame has no being which is to say that the picture we see is not, and exists only as result of two infinite cuts of different types and sizes.[37] That the finite frame has no being is also to say that until we find out new ways of cutting, everything will remain in some sense invisible to truth while being visible to the world as it is, the weakest form of negation, paraconsistent.

In a 2004 conversation with Elias Sanbar, Godard said "[i]n regards to the counter-shot, I've read this anecdote about the physician Niels Bohr, who liked cinema a lot and who said, while watching a western with Tom Mix, that 'the rogue's elopement with the young girl was logical. This is how it always happens. That the bridge collapsed under their carriage is improbable, but I readily accept it. The heroine hanging over an abyss between the skies and the earth is even less probable, but I accept even that. I even accept as true that at this very moment her saviour rides past on his horse. But it is beyond me that at the same time somebody with a camera happens to be on the spot and films all this idiocy," [...] And

the presence of this cameraman gives the impression of a real counter-shot."[38] Compare it with Badiou, "[i]ntuitively, we understand that *if* there can exist an elementary model M of V, and if there is an elementary embedding [j] of V into M, and if M is extremely large, then M will really be very close to V and will contain, as a witness to its large size, a new type of infinite cardinal. That's a lot of "if's" . . . The trick is to put together a "suitable" class M, which, assuming that there exists an elementary embedding of V into M, reveals in its construction the need for a new type of infinity to exist."[39]

This new type of infinity that is witness to this large size, is what 'films all this idiocy', a 'real counter-shot'. In a way we can say that these filmed events which are so improbable appear as impossible because one cannot imagine a cameraperson was there to film all of it. So in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* "1a: Toutes les histoires", Godard says: "And if George Stevens hadn't used the first 16mm colour film in Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, the happiness of Elizabeth Taylor would never have found a place in the sun. 1939, 1944, Martyrdom and resurrection of the documentary. How marvellous to be able to to look at what we cannot see. What a miracle for our blind eyes." Somehow, George Stevens shot both the 16mm colour film in Auschwitz and Ravensbrück as well as Elizabeth Taylor on 35mm in *A Place in the Sun*. To escape the cave and find a place in the sun, is to look at what we cannot see in the flickering shadows. In another context, Badiou said the image is a reverse of the shadow. That there is a link of resemblance between Elizabeth Taylor holding Montgomery Clift in her arms and images of bodies in concentration camp, at one point as if she's holding the bodies, cannot be exhausted, made finite, because it does not appear: it inappears.[40] The idea is not indexed to the transcendental, but is immanent to an index of absoluteness. How far can the images be from each other, what is the maximal distance, maximally just? Like a jumpcut, one is forced to see the continuity, the intermittent mechanism will always have been there, the continuity between these pictures, that *A Place in the Sun* would be able to follow the concentration camp pictures from Ravensbrück as simply as going from one frame of Muybridge's horse to another, hooves leaving the ground. And he who jumps into the void owes no explanation to those who watch. Images of images. How far from what is before us. When we are dealing with the idea of intermittency in the cinema, we see that a jumpcut from Jean Seberg twirling on the curb and then appearing right beside Jean-Paul Belmondo's car door, or Elizabeth Taylor is about to open her mouth and we cut to a mouth agape of an emaciated face show that in cinema the continuum hypothesis is false. Looking at cuts relieves us of the perceptual relativity of the large and the small in pictures. We can talk of cuts of different sizes. A "localized system of power zones, their possible overlapping, that characterizes a real infinity"[41] can be seen in the overlapping between Elizabeth Taylor holding Montgomery Clift and the concentration camps, a

real infinity, so large that it is almost equivalent to the situation of cinema. We see Elizabeth Taylor's hands reach for Montgomery Clift like Mary Magdalene for Jesus Christ from Giotto's *Noli me tangere* (1304) which is superimposed to almost match the hands. "Martyrdom and resurrection of the documentary" — what is documented is the resurrection of the image from pictures altogether real, indexed to a world, and yet with the Giotto, the history of representation, is also included, and seen in the present, all we know of these stars, this cinema, and this resurrection of pictures of genocide today.

And what follows? A real counter-shot: a Palestinian boy holding a burned American flag with a hole in it and in that hole is a superimposed face from the Cameron family to fight in the Civil War from *The Birth of a Nation,* with the words HIS / TOIRE / (S) on the top part of the picture. Such moments invite us to imbue what we see with a new level in our persistence of vision. Are most of us minimally George Stevens? Who has not seen the moving pictures of the genocide against the Palestinians perpetuated by Israel and its allies? Who has watched films with Elizabeth Taylor and other stars who have in their personal lives declared their support of Israel? You have seen these pictures, and encounter the associations, and then you take iPhone video of winter's first snow; you are George Stevens. Working on your film, you will be witnessed.

In *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* "4b: Les Signes parmi nous" (1998) we see Godard (quoting his own film *JLG/JLG*) recording a picture off of a television with his video camera, seeing how he works, self-portraiture, and thus we see the picture twice: once on television and in the monitor of the camera — and during this we hear: "an image is not strong because it is brutal and fantastic" and atop the image, some text DE / L'AUTRE / CINÉMA / QUI / DEVINT / AMI / DU / MONDE / ENTIER then "but because the association of ideas is distant and just." The quote is carried from *King Lear* to *JLG/JLG* to *Histoire(s) du cinéma* and the association carries not only what is present but the other times it was quoted. Its sameness assists in its travel, allows us to recall its other associations, and a cut functions in the same way but it quotes nothing. There is a distance between a picture on the TV and on the monitor of the camera, but it is the same picture. The picture will always be in at least two frames, to merely think of a picture appearing is to split it. There can be a maximum distance between a picture and itself by its grace of appearing in multiple worlds. The other cinema, a friend to the world entire, that is, a friend, like Plato to Socrates, who witnesses what has happened to him. Philosophy begins in friendship, minimally, for those that do not know love will never know philosophy.

A little further on, the word ALLEMAN and black and white moving pictures in shades of grey showing an emaciated body in a concentration camp being dragged, then the word JUIF appears, then we hear "when philosophy paints its grey on grey" then the word MUSULMANN, "a

manifestation of life finishes growing old" and then a black screen with gray letters L'ESPÈCE / HUMAINE, "we cannot rejuvenate it with grey on grey, only understand it." (This is referring to the story of a German prison guard at an extermination camp calling a Jewish person who was completely emaciated and near-death, a Muslim). If an elementary embedding, j, can cause new types of infinity to emerge, should we think the embedding of V into V itself or is the lack of a non-trivial embedding of V into V, as Kunen proved, equal to a triviality of philosophy's grey on grey? Or rather if *philosophy* paints grey on grey, minimal difference or otherwise, is the problem that it cannot be understood as a picture that is painted? It must be thought via an image?

And further than that, a cartoon cat by Tex Avery is vignetted by a picture of a page in a book, and as the words MONTAGE / INTER / DIT appear in frame we hear "with a turn of the screw put reality into reality." The turn of the screw of reality into reality is another way to say 'elementary embedding' of V into M, or as Badiou calls it "the way you drive a nail into the wall",[42] *demolished* or otherwise, a very large infinite cardinal emerges as witness. Elementary embedding forces what is large into something that is smaller. An image is larger than a picture, and what is thought in the image is invisibly encrusted on to the picture. So what is higher in V plunges itself into M by a relation j.

Truth never happens all at once, if it did we would only need one cut, rather than the resultant weaving of what marks the persistence of vision with the cuts in question. There is not only one persistence of vision as there is also not only one class, because the 24 frames per second is not the only form of frame rate, but at the same time, this persistence is not reducible to the frame rate, because each frame can be in different relations to the cuts, each frame's interactions and retroactions with the cut deregulate where an idea begins or ends in what counts-as-one shot. There are "shifting projections"[43] regarding singular truths and absolute terms — we need a concrete analysis of the cuts and their relation to the flicker and back, in question. We do not see a framed movie-set S as belonging to V, S Î V, but j(S) Î M. It must operate with j for the 'shifting', without j we have a static projection, a copy of V.[44] A pure projection is without the localized difference of M, which is trivial, which means there is no complete cardinal κ. That it is non-trivial means that the κ appears obligatory, because "truth's taking-place operates in a continuous temporal relation with the absoluteness underlying it. Only infinity attests, by an actual local existence, to the fact that the absolute tolerates being differentiated, in order to finally be, as Hegel's fine phrase has it "with us"[45] Very simply: the flicker in its 'continuous temporal relation' is not the same as the cut, but there is not only one cut, and thus the flicker itself can be placed differently. Yes, in any cinematic writing of motion, there is a nothingness separating the frames. Obvious in film, somewhat declared in digital. Yes, if we believe we are in Griffith's limited universe

of L, or Lacan's psychoanalysis we can only go as far as ω. But if we risk differentiating between different cuts, different infinities, in the dialectic between motion and stillness, cut, flicker, new persistencies, M, emerges. V as such cannot be seen but each cut marks its place within it. And if M, this model of Vision, which as Montage, can montage forms of montage, cut together cuts, that form forms higher and higher persistencies of vision which enable us to see new images in our mind. There can be a picture, set S, but j(S), is the elementary embedding, the turn of a screw of reality into reality, that gets us closer to seeing V. And if j exists, so does a witness, κ.

So again, this turn of the screw to put reality into reality: somehow, no amount of pictures has put reality back into reality regarding genocide. We can see directly but we cannot look at it. An image ≠ picture (and we can also say again that V ≠ L), the picture is what we see, and the association of pictures can push us to make an association in the cut, and this is called an image. What's distant and just is a picture in regards to itself, that its image would not be the same as its pictures of itself. It is the Same, to think and to be, and this sameness of thinking and being is the ultimate montage interdit. And thus it is a cut to be made, especially if it's not well made. Do we dare such comparisons between painting grey on grey to the calling of an emaciated Jewish person a Muslim, as a j that allows to see V in M? The banned edit, the comparison one must not make, is a comparison that does not hold a minimal determination, the void indexed to a world, a comparison without a world. What is at stake is the comparison between two infinities, two no-things. Two different no-things indexes the fact that being and thinking are the same only insofar as the same is not always the same as itself. Thus we cut in order to actively participate in the local infinite differentiation between the absolute and the singularity of a truth that, when saturated, becomes a world with a new minimal determination.

Today we have so many pictures but haven't created a persistence of vision to see its image. We cannot see the pictures in relation to the entire situation. If we did, we would know how to live differently. Or rather what is live? What is live recording, live-streaming, of such pictures, what is life living under the aegis of images? In *In Praise of Love* (2001), Berthe stands in front of a sliding door with framing green and yellow-orange leaves, her face covered by her hair, and she says "the image, sir, alone capable of denying nothingness, is also the gaze of nothingness on us". I'd force the sentence to say 'is also the gaze of nothing on us' — because, yes, the pictures which are the waste of an image, still deny nothingness as all there is, since it does witness what happens, but, the gaze of nothing on us, is the gaze of an infinity: we do not witness infinity, it does not show itself, but we think it, and in thinking it, it witnesses us.

The intervallic place where truths are received forms a dialectic with the absolute place and as picturemakers and moviegoers we think with

both at the same time. The interval κ-j(κ) registers the equality of images absolutely, and differently from the absolute place, changing the nothing of our vision. Their interaction jam-packs the cuts with associations, creating an immanent measure of what can be seen. Thinking being possible it is imperative we continue to think which does not imply continuity with the world as it is. There are infinite cuts to see and think in equality with each other intervening equal to its world frame and cut. Persistence of vision must be persistent enough to change its form of change lest we fall into the problem pointed out by Kunen regarding the finitization of infinity. Without new forms of infinity, without new forms of cutting, our infinities will fall into the repetitive forms of intermittent mechanism. Or to put it brutally, orthogonalizing the same method of infinity will be like simply changing the frame rate of the regular mode of appearing. Changing the frame rate is not a form of cutting as repetition itself is not a form of succession. For example, endless SRS can begin to be its own persistence of vision. When we see the reverse that puts a picture in tension with itself, when we think a generalized parallelism with Griffith, the separation from the world of Eternal Motherhood, the Kuleshov subject as separate when looking at a bowl of soup, the coming together of the different scales and the 'bursts' in *October*, which can be collected in thought, its own persistence of vision, whose scission reorients the other persistencies that surround it, if they belong to a smaller infinity's +1, that even if it exists in 24 frames per second, changes the appearance of the intermittency, or the jumpcuts of *Breathless*, the frames even when they return to their regular motion retains a mark of what was out of place, out of frame, yet constitutes their dynamic placement, and this place may appear the same, but is not: it happens on different levels in V, or again, *Zorns Lemma* is like *October*: its sequential appearing combines the crosscut, Kuleshov, and intellectual montage and if we focus not on the pictures but the images that can be seen, the very choice of image becomes an image of choice, of what to see, and what the continuum of images may look like as what follows this discrete lettering of pictures. There are the +1s of repetitions and the limits of what succeeds. The appearance of a new persistence's phantom is the appearing of an attribute of the absolute. These forms of persistence are models of the absolute place. But we can never close the gap between the absolute place and the attributes, because there always new cuts to make, and that there are persistencies of vision means there is no vision of vision. All that we see may be constructible. So when you wake up do you frame your world or do you see the persistence of vision and risk a cut?

What is j, such that $j(\kappa) > j$? In the case of Godard I think it is the attempt to see an image of the constructible concentration camps of the Holocaust, within M, witnessed by κ. Slavoj Žižek made a key remark regarding Badiou's settling of accounts with the Cultural Revolution, as he was surprised that the lesson was negative: neither within nor

without the state, but subtracted. Badiou would say through the Cultural Revolution we learned that emancipatory politics cannot be thought "under the paradigm of revolution, nor remain prisoner to the party-form. Symmetrically, it cannot be inscribed in the parliamentary or electoral apparatus." One must ask a similar question regarding Godard and the cinema. Must we begin neither under the paradigm of the camps, nor the prisoner of Hollywood form, neither the box office nor the studio nor its schools, where in "sombre genius [...] prescribed for the decades to come, an *affirmative* realization of this beginning. But their fury was still so enmeshed in what they were rising up against that they only explored this beginning from the standpoint of pure negation."[46] So, affirmation and negation. For Godard, we were missing both pictures and images, a cinema, that would witness the camps, but today we see so many pictures, though perhaps not an image that would allow us to witness genocide happening today, live. But is there another elementary embedding that doesn't have its fury enmeshed in what is being risen against, a mesh, that ultrafilter, that catches what is large in the first step of witnessing the beginning of an affirmative dialectic in all its non-constructible glory?

In 2010 I asked Badiou what is the link between the fact that at the level of being, there are subjects and human animals, and on the other hand, at the level of being-there, there are faithful, reactive, obscure, and resurrected subjects. He said that 'human animal' is a name invented by the obscure subject. Today I understand it in this manner: within ontology we use a name derived from obscuration within it, something of appearance that is discovered in a truth process can find its support-set in being and this can assist us in our continuation of treating points. In the process of truth we risk an absolute ontology, *‹histoires avec un s›* a forcing that allows us new decisions in the point by point embedding of an event, and in this we risk becoming obscure in our defence of ontology over truth. But it is always better to risk a disaster over non-being. At any point one can move from any of the subjectivities towards resurrection, a non-trivial embedding of fidelity into resurrection. That there is something to retrieve even from the obscure disaster is part of the infinity of thinking as long as our adventure does not become a waste. Which is to say what will be resurrected? When it comes to Socrates, what was important was not only that he died but that he thought. Not only the footage of the many human beings murdered by states worldwide but images of their experimental emancipatory politics. Resurrection and martyrdom of his documentary: we should think what these thoughts can be while we are alive, and through this we can think the distinction between what is to live, what is live, what is recorded, and what is cut. "Withering away the state" is another way to think the class struggle of the cut's autonomy against the frame.

8. Final Remarks

To know nothing — to begin with things, not words. What is thought and not what is named. What is a cinema that starts from there? Godard once remarked that, "During the New Wave we always spoke of the politique des auteurs. What we were interested in was this word politique, not in the political sense. What ended up enduring is the word auteur."[47] Perhaps there is a clue in focusing on 'politique' rather than 'auteur' in order for cinema to find what a non-principal image can be and what is the non-principal production model that can create it.

There are infinities in mathematics that we can map to extant cuts in cinema. There are many infinities that perhaps we have yet to map to the cuts. But let's say we map extant infinities to extant cuts, or make the cuts that will map to the infinities. What's next? To invent cuts mathematics, as written, hasn't yet thought, cuts that exceed that one-to-one correspondence. The index is what maintains the dynamism of the image. We can be prompted to make almost any picture today, we can have proofs of so many atrocities, personal and historical, and even the indexical relation of cinema to reality appears to be losing its hold. But cinema's relation to reality is in the cut, not pictures. We can produce images that are proofs of our loves, mathematical beatitude, new sensibilities structured by artworks, and violent political justice — we can decide if the image produced is worthy of being part of such filiation and filtration. The infinitization of our lives as lived, imagined, and classed must continue beyond all continuity through the transformation of the intermittency of the Idea via cutting. Or as Socrates put it in Roberto Rossellini's *Socrates* (1971): "And how do you class those who escape death? They are classed as immortals." What is is cut and cut is a form of thinking.

1 Godard 2014, p. 149
2 Mao 1964
3 Badiou 2025, p. 24
4 Badiou 2022, p. 475
5 ibid., p. 347
6 Badiou 2009b, p. 117
7 Badiou 2009a, p. 384
8 ibid., p. 444
9 Badiou 2022, p. 216
10 Badiou 2009a, p. 173
11 I reconstruct arguments from Session 7-9 from in Badiou 2025b.
12 Badiou 2022, p. 268
13 Eisenstein 1977, p. 46
14 ibid., p. 48
15 Fried 2010, p. 10
16 Badiou 2022, p. 286
17 ibid., p. 288
18You see this in an earlier form in *Potemkin* (1925) when the stone lion looks like it is moving because we cut to three different stone lions.
19 Eisenstein 1977, p.58
20 Badiou 2022, p. 400
21 In his book *Post-Europe* (2024), Yuk Hui wants to think a post-European thought, as if it hasn't *already began to happen* with the historical experience of French Maoism. It is symptomatic that he talks of the 'Israel-Hamas war' rather than genocide, and of course will not think of the way Palestinian revolutionaries have been inspired by Mao, and the pressure this put on European filmmakers like Godard. For Hui, thinking only happens in Greece, Germany, and France, and the thought of the 'post-' happens with a 'two fuse into one' with the Kantians, Hegelians, and Heideggereans from Japan and China, sometime in the future. But thinking marked by 'one divides into two' will know post-European thought already happened, and not only at this 'cultural' level, but at the level of writing which is not writing: via the cinema. When Godard visually quotes *Rear Window*'s windows of one's neighbours all in one frame in *Here and Elsewhere* (1976) but rhymed with TV screens to ask how we are responsible for what we see, we know cinema will always be ahead of the philosophers trapped by language, waiting for a thinking outside of language, when we can point to what is already here, a thought has been conditioned by a cultural revolution, one that is incomplete, the cultural revolution of the image over words, the no-thing that thinks. Or we can talk about the ridiculous detail of Nishitani enjoying "Japanese rice" for the first time in a year while living in Germany and how this is linked to *Heimat,* spontaneity of mother tongue and its relation to fatherland, taste and language...as if this "Japanese rice" is unrelated to the fact Korea supplied 98% of Japan's rice imports. There are many 'four olds' that remain to be destroyed and the idea that thinking only happens 'at the top' is one of them. The question of 'who thinks' needs its non-principal ultrafilter. A great example of what's called 'philosophical oppression'.
22 Mao 1964
23 Enns 2016, p. 158
24 Smith 1996
25 Badiou 2022, p. 319
26 (a lighter's flame making a painted face visible, and we also hear birds on the soundtrack)
27 (toy dinosaurs in a shoebox with a lightbulb making them visible)
28 (two video monitors with matching pictures on the right rhythmically fading into 'unrelated' pictures that share similar shape and his acolyte Leos Carax standing in the middle, with sound controls to the left, we hear trains on a track)
29 (the two monitors show a fast back and forth fade between Henry Fuseli's The Sleepwalking Lady Macbeth (1784) and the eye being sliced in Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí's Un chien Andalou (1929)
30 (we see a lightbulb in a shoebox imitating a cinema with what looks like cut-out human figures)
31 Badiou 2022, p. 291
32 Smith 1996
33 Badiou 2005, p. 47
34 In *Film Socialisme* (2010), which coincidentally also has Badiou in part of the movie, has another example of language separating out what is presented: we would hear on the soundtrack "Money is a public good. Like water? Exactly," and we see this over sharply pixelated black/white greenish water whose frame rate accentuates the images digital nature so it doesn't flow 'naturally', but the subtitles themselves say "money public water". One can end up with money public water, but cannot induce the scene we have seen with just 'money public water' in a screenplay. The entire film is presented in 3 or 4 word subtitles.
35 Badiou 2022, p. 313
36 ibid., p. 292
37 ibid., p. 41
38 Kantcheff 2006
39 ibid., p. 263
40 The importance of pictures of the concentration camps lies in the fact that if you don't have the pictures there is the threat of revisionists, but also if we are going to have a total history of cinema, its V, it must be included. To not include those pictures is to repeat the logic of antisemitism: as if the history of cinema would have been 'perfect' without them. Part of *A Place in the Sun* is this idea that Montgomery Clift's life would have been 'perfect' without Shelley Winters.
41 Badiou 2022, p. 291
42 *ibid*. p. 262
43 *ibid*. p. 361
44 *ibid*. p. 351
45 *ibid.* p. 362
46 Badiou 2009a, p. 518
47 Dargis 2004

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Logics of Choice and Equivocations of the Absolute[1]

Quentin Meillassoux

Abstract: We are interested, here, in the criteria of the "crucial choice" set out in *The Immanence of Truths* between the ontology of consistent multiples and that of inconsistent multiples (between Gödel and Cohen). After having set out what seem to be the aporias of such a choice since Being and Event, we attempt to identify a possible answer to this question by turning to the notion of the Absolute as Badiou first thematizes it in *The Immanence of Truths*. This interpretation then leads us to hypothesize a possible "neoplatonic turn" in his philosophy.

Keywords: Badiou, The Immanence of Truths, choice, Absolute, neoplatonism

The Immanence of Truths[2] takes at its centre a position: "the work against waste". This involves the establishment of a choice of two terms and no more: "the formula of my happiness," said Nietzsche, "a yea, a nay, a straight line, *goal*...".[3] To reach - in a confused situation, be it philosophical or political - the understanding of a choice - simple, upon which rests the whole affair - is without a doubt one of the most difficult things, and the mark of a victory of thought. Nietzsche, the thinker of Dionysian multiplicities, or Badiou, the thinker of mathematical multiplicities, both, alike, know it: resolving the excess of a dark age which seems to assault you from everywhere and nowhere into a remainderless alternative, extracting an "either/or" from a tangle of obscure virtualities, is at once the most complex and the most liberatory task. For, whether I win or lose myself in the attempt, something is restored to me; I stop struggling in quicksand, and can henceforth, at the very least, *decide* on a path, be it formidably uncertain.

To constitute a duality, which is a dual, is something other than to think in a binary way. The latter begins from two terms which are supposed to explain all things - thus the purified principles of good and evil in whatever Manicheism - and that thus carry on from the start sheltered from the complexity that it always-already explains by its initially posited doublet. Thinking duality, on the contrary, seeks simplicity over complexity, through its traversal being accepted before it is crossed, the result of which is an alternative which is open to our decision-making, rather than a theoretical pair in which all is always-already resolved. This is why *The Immanence of Truths*, but also the whole of the *Being and Event* trilogy, is open for the reader as a monumental undertaking of the difficult quest for choice, even more difficult, perhaps, than to reveal itself as simple at the end of the journey. And - one knows it - this choice is ultimately made, for Badiou, in the following way: either there is an ontology of the *non-constructible*, that of the infinitisation of works by their index, or there is an ontology of the *constructible*, that of the ideological recovery of works, and therefore that of their finitization which

reduces them to their waste products. Put otherwise, within set theory, either there is the path of Cohen, or that of Gödel.

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Here, we want to attempt the explanation of this choice. But to explain a choice can mean two things: on the one hand, explaining the selection of one of the terms of the choice, and on the other hand, explaining how the terms of the choice themselves have been constituted. I've emphasised the fact that the quest of the dual choice - "a yes, a no" - already assumes a form of success for a philosophy. This is why I would like, firstly, to linger on that which, for me, constitutes the most problematic aspect of *The Immanence of Truths*: namely, the decisions that allow Badiou to gradually, even very gradually, to establish the two terms of his final alternative: constructible and non-constructible ontologies.

In this regard, the interest of the third volume of Being and Event consists of the fact that, in coming thirty years after the first volume of 1988, it offers us a remarkable deepening of the field about the hesitations that have punctured Badiou's progress since his masterwork, in particular in the elaboration of what he names the "crucial choice", between Cohen and Gödel.[4] These errances regarding the constitution of choice merit questioning, since Badiou does not ever, to my knowledge, explain them, leaving to our own questioning the reasons as to why he made these decisions, or returned to them at particular times in his career. However, as we will see, it is the deep relationship of philosophy to ontology that is at stake in the understanding, or misunderstanding, of these equivocations.

The Six Steps of Metaontology

We know that the "ray of light" from which the whole of Badiou's project springs consists of the statement that: "mathematics *is* ontology".[5] This statement on ontology is itself philosophical, and not ontological. Philosophy, as we know, is a "meta-ontology", and this has two primary meanings. In the first place, philosophy states the *that there is*, and *where* there is of ontology, not in itself, but nowhere else than in mathematics. Mathematicians are "unaware ontologists", and cannot, at least as mathematicians, state the "there is" that is inherent within their own formulations. Ontology thus requires an attestation of itself from the outside of itself that is philosophy - powerless to produce it, and yet alone in the ability to point to where it is found. In the second place, philosophy is responsible for deploying the meta-ontological discourse (made up of inconsistent multiples, of intervention, of fidelity, and of generic truth) inherent in the axiomatics which express being in our era: namely, for

us, contemporaries, the set theoretical axiomatics (ZFC) of the non-constructible.

In these two operations, philosophy is "bordered" by mathematics, which curbs any possible arbitrariness in its decisions. With regard to the first decision, to maintain that ontology takes place in mathematics itself is a hypothesis that can be justified by the old acquaintance of this discipline with the rational exigence of philosophy - particularly in its Platonic foundation and Cartesian refoundation. And above all, the identification "mathematics=ontology" can be justified in the final resort not by a principle from which it derives, but, in the manner of an axiom, by the fruitfulness of its philosophical results - as the *Being and Event* trilogy attests well. In the second place, once it is determined that the true ontology of our time proceeds from the non-constructible axiom, the philosopher leaves the initiative for the production of truths to the theory selected as thought of being, and thus controls his own conceptualisations by the strong constraint of the formulae that he must transpose into the meta-ontological sphere. Here, the philosopher is orientated, step by step, by the axioms and theories of the mathematician. In these two cases, the theses are debatable, as ever, but the justifications are firmly posited.

On the other hand, from one to the other of these two theoretical gestures - that of the initial "there is" of ontology, and that of the final transcription of the non-constructible in meta-ontological concepts - we find a series of intermediary decisions concerning the construction of the terms of the crucial choice, for which the logic appears much more opaquely once the stages of their elaboration have been reconstructed. During these intermediary phases, a multiplicity of operations are, in effect, carried out, as we have said, to limit the final choice to two ontologies and no more, and, on the other hand, to determine, from this choice, what the superior ontology is between the constructible and non-constructible. However, these operations of the philosopher do not offer us in any clear way the criteria which may have guided their implementation, as we will see, and even less so regarding their reversal in this or that moment in Badiou's evolution.

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How did Badiou arrive at the point that the decisive choice of his philosophy reduces itself to two ontologies, and not one more? Just as it is philosophy that decrees the identity "mathematics=ontology", so too we discover that it is philosophy - and not mathematics - which permits Badiou to arrive at this ultimate duality of the crucial choice, and this, through a series of decisions that are anything but linear. During his long peregrination, which began with *Being and Event*, Badiou, in effect, had to

determine if, for his era, ontology was solely located in set theory, or if it could not also be present in another theory, this time logico-mathematical, namely, category theory. However, Badiou has for a long time hesitated on this question, considering across many years, between the writing of *Being and Event* and that of *Logics of Worlds*,[6] whether category theory can be thought as a rival ontology to set theory.

This approach has taken diverse forms. Thus (particularly in the context of his university seminar held in the 1990s at Paris VIII), set theory was thought as a specific ontology, close to those of Bergson and Deleuze: "The ontology prescribed by category theory", he then wrote, "determines being as act, relation, movement."[7] Nevertheless during this same period category theory was more readily considered as an "onto-logics", which is to say a logic of diverse thinkable ontologies. But this last option was not itself without ambiguity; for this logic of ontologies was situated within the heritage of this or that determined ontology: the Aristotelian equivocity of being, or the Leibnizian plurality of possible worlds.[8]

Next, Badiou, in *Logics of Worlds*, completely reverses these theses, this time to make category theory a logic of appearance, and no longer a thought of being; no longer a logic of thinkable ontologies, but a logic expelled from all ontology and reduced to being-there, which is to say, to phenomena. A logic certainly mathematized; but he will then say,[9] a mathematised logic does not cease to be a logic and nothing but a logic, just as a mathematized physics does not cease to be a physics and nothing but a physics. Categories - a rival ontological moment of set theory, and proposed as such as ultimate choice of the philosopher as the (at least eventual) thought of being - have been excluded from ontology, at the same time as mathematics. Sure, they have been "with honours": for Badiou, in *Logics of Worlds*, has constructed for them a sumptuous Baroque palace which seemed entirely devoted to their glory - but this palace is also a gilded cage. For those who knew what their former status was, knew that their reign over the logic of appearances resulted, in truth, from their long fall from the Heaven of being qua being. Categories found themselves dismissed from ontology, but with the manners in which one would for an eminence sacked by an apparent promotion. In this case, the choice is thus simplified by an operation of *placing*: the categories were "placed" in the field of appearance, and thus dis-placed, dislodged from their claim to say being. In this way, we no longer had to choose between category and set theory to know where true ontology was: it now resided firmly only in the multiplicities of the standard model.

But on the other hand, in set theory itself, ontology posited as truth - another simplification has taken place. Indeed, in *Being and Event*,[10] Badiou distinguishes *three* possible orientations of the thought of being - and not two - between which it is a matter of choosing: the constructible of Gödel, the generic of Cohen, and also the "doctrine of large cardinals"

- a doctrine which he places in opposition, along with the constructible option, to Cohen's generic approach. At that time, Badiou characterized large cardinal theory the ontology of "classical metaphysics", thence the ontology of "communist eschatology".[11]

In 1988, Badiou considered that the doctrine of large cardinals was merely a doomed attempt to demonstrate the continuum hypothesis: that is, the hypothesis according to which the infinite cardinal of real numbers must come "just after" the cardinal of natural numbers. According to him, this attempt consists of going right "to the prodigality [of infinities]", to try to construct a set of such power that it would arrange below itself the sequence of infinities which would belong to it according to an order as univocal as that of the finite in relation to the first infinite (that of the natural numbers).[12] The proliferation of infinities within this theory, which will be the continued object of praise in *The Immanence of Truths*, precisely for its immanentist scope (the doctrines of finitude being fundamentally always complicit in a dull religiosity), was previously considered nothing but a "logic of transcendence".[13] This logic aimed to abolish the errancy of Being (the de-relation of infinite numbers) in favour of an absolute order, fundamentally divine, no less constraining and mutilating, with regard to generic truths, than the positivist and grammarian orientation of the axiom of constructability.

However, in *The Immanence of Truths*, such triplicity of orientations within set theory has become duality, no longer, this time, by an operation of placement (as for category theory), but by an operation of alliance. One of the most astonishing novelties of this final volume of the trilogy rests on the fact that Badiou has associated, in the same ontology, the non-constructible and the large cardinals, in the form that the clash of orientations no longer contains more than that of Gödel and that of Cohen, augmented by the hierarchy of the most powerful cardinals.[14]

Long-time reader of Badiou that I am, I have never found a trace of any rigorous reasons for which this latest [work] has, in a spectacular fashion, reversed his claims about categories, or the large cardinals. One thing is sure: this cannot be because the mathematical theories at play - the contestants for ontology - had been in the meanwhile modified. If Badiou's positions are, each time, supported by determined reasons, we are hardly enlightened as to what may have determined his changes of position, particularly in the progressive constitution of the dual choice. In *The Immanence of Truths*, Badiou claims the "maximal principle" - which does not reject the existence of a set except for the logical reason of contradiction - because this principle is favourable to the proliferation of grand cardinals whose movement he espouses. But why did this same maximal principle not, in this case, justify, since *Being and Event*, adherence to this theory which was then rejected, in spite of his will to go straight to the "prodigality of being in infinite presentations"?[15] Similarly,

in 2006, in *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou refuses to make the logical theory of categories an ontology - since, as we have said, for him, this is a logics and not a mathematics. But the fact that category theory is fundamentally a logic was not unknown to Badiou before 2006, and this did not stop him from making of it an ontology - perhaps, since it acted as a logic, a logic of possible ontologies, overlooking set theory, which temporarily became one thought of being amongst other equal possibilities.

These reversals give the impression that Badiou, to progress towards his ultimate theses, had used opportunist reasons rather than being really constrained by the mobilised formalisms. In other words, over time, we discover that the philosopher, far from being the simple recipient of mathematical ontology, can according to the moment, accept or reject from the thought of being vast swathes of the theories he has engaged. From which, the persistent impression that Badiou is not so much determined in his decisions by the mathematics given to him by his era, than he is decisive with regard to that which, ultimately, he wishes to promote.

He himself seems to agree, in *The Immanence of Truths*, that his decision, concerning in particular the rejection of categorical claims, succeeds from subjective conviction more than from the mathematical field. Badiou records that the category theorists, like John L. Bell, refuse to consider set theory as "absolute"; other theories, particularly dominated by non-classical logic, can equally be legitimate candidates for the title of the "true" set theory. Bell notably argues, to demonstrate its functional "indetermination", for the incapacity of the standard model to resolve the continuum problem. Yet, in response, Badiou says he "believes" that set theory will one day demonstrate that the continuum hypothesis is false. But, to substantiate this faith in the resolutory capacity of standard theory to the title of true ontology, he cannot do any better than to mobilize, in the mathematical field, the *proposals* (and not the theorems) of the mathematician Hugh Woodin, in favour of the future absoluteness of this theory. Remarks that are no more than "prophecies" - according to Badiou's own terms - and not scientific conjecture. And, which, what is more, Woodin now seems to have abandoned...[16]

If philosophy delegates the care of ontology to mathematics, this delegation in no way means that it ceases to be active in this field. For Badiou, for reasons that wish to be philosophical - albeit as yet indeterminate - has de facto multiplied his verdicts on ontology. Let us, indeed, recapitulate the results of our analysis:

1. Philosophy, and philosophy alone, decides whether ontology exists or not.

2. Philosophy, and philosophy alone, decides on the place where ontology unfolds -- in mathematics instead of, for example, in poetry.

3. Philosophy decides in which part of the mathematics of its time there is ontology -- in set theory instead of in category theory.

4. Philosophy, equally, decides how many orientations are legitimate within set theory, between which the choice must be made -- two orientations and not three, as the large cardinals ultimately ally themselves with the non-constructible.

5. Finally, philosophy, always and again philosophy alone, decides which of the two remaining ontologies it must choose -- that of the non-constructible instead of the constructible.

6. It is only then, this time together with the mathematical theory that it has identified, that philosophy "co-produces" the concepts inherent to the axioms chosen as the thought of being.

These six steps of meta-ontology cannot be reduced to the same "logic". As I have said, the two first do not raise any specific problems: philosophy is within its rights to postulate that mathematics is ontology, and to evaluate the consequences of the validity of this hypothesis. The final step, as we have seen, also has a coherence that guarantees its legitimacy -- the philosopher is "orientated" in his successive contentions by his chosen mathematical theory.

It is theses 3 and 4 - with their restriction to two of the terms of the choice between ontologies - which raise the question of the knowledge upon which criteria the philosopher can decide, within the proposed mathematics, what are or are not legitimate ontologies. Yet one cannot overestimate the importance of these intermediate decisions which allow the number of pretenders to ontology to be pruned down, for they have a double influence on the final choice:

a) Reducing the finalists to a couple allows a choice that, being rarified, is "mechanically" more favourable to the non-constructible than if the terms would be multiplied, since it would be necessary to reject each of these pretenders from the running for as many different reasons.

b) One of the terms of the final choice, specifically, the one selected, sees its own nature modified, since the axiom of non-constructability is added to one of its ancient rivals (the large cardinals).

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But it is step 5 that is at the heart of our interest, that which structures the whole of *The Immanence of Truths*: that is, the choice of the infinite work over that of its finite waste. For the suspicion concerning the meta-ontological steps which have constituted the terms of the crucial choice have repercussions for the stage [*étape*] of choice itself: if we do not understand exactly why the choice comprises only two terms - and precisely the two terms that we know - we risk not understanding even more exactly what determines, for Badiou, the choice of one of the terms (Cohen) over the other (Gödel).

Understand that the problem that persists in arising for us concerns the means of philosophy as meta-ontology. Badiousian philosophy deals with equally coherent mathematical theories, but does not cease to operate from selections which ultimately result in the selection of selecting the theory of inconsistent multiples. The final step is the only one which explicitly gives to the reader the exercise of choice that has been proposed to them: all of the anterior steps have deployed selections and groupings for which the logic has remained sibylline, such that the choice "freely given" to us boils down to two options. But the final choice itself, once given as a strict alternative, obviously does not present its two terms in a neutral manner: Badiousian philosophy once more intervenes to justify the selection of the way it regards to be superior. But, this time, the "reasons" for which one theory is chosen by philosophy over another as the true name of ontology ought to be given to us; perhaps we will better understand what allows Badiou to eliminate or select what is worth, for him, the thinking of being at the heart of the mathematics of his times. We are now in apparently known territory: as, in 1988, Badiou presents several ontologies conceivable for the time (two, and no longer three), and indicates why each must lead us to adopt one amongst them. But our prior analyses of the implicit decisions already at work in this final choice demands we focus all our attention, perhaps our suspicion, on that which might seem obvious.

However, it seems that Badiousian philosophy, when looked at closely, does not de facto possess any resource of its own to motivate, by itself, a decision in favour of one or the other of the two ontologies put in opposition. On the one hand, as was the case with prior selections, it is evidently impossible to rely on mathematics itself to prefer the theory that is the true ontology - and, besides, this is what guarantees the choice as such, the freedom of the decision proceeding from the fact that there is no demonstration which necessarily allows one over the other of the theories to be invalidated. But that the choice is free does not prevent that it should be determined by an exigency that makes of it something other than a gratuitous or arbitrary decision.

To approach what could, here, be the type of reason sought for, let us proceed by elimination. In the first place, the choice cannot in any way be considered a wager that is of the same nature as that which is summoned by an event. One may indeed have the temptation to consider that the crucial choice denotes an undecidable wager, comparable to that which an artist or a politician, for example, might have to make when faced with a break whose meaning must be decided as either a true revolution or merely a simulacrum of an event. This analogy is untenable, since it involves choosing - or refusing - an ontology which allows to think, precisely, the possibility of an event in general, as that which opens onto an infinite truth (of which being is a generic multiple). It would be circular to wager via a so-called event in favour or against the truth of an ontology that allows to think the event as purveyor of truth. Philosophy, for Badiou, as we know, thinks the event, but it does not think *according to* the event, because it does not produce truth, and therefore does not have the means - contrary to science, art, love, or politics - to engage with a decision of such a nature between consistent and inconsistent multiples. This is, doubtless, a convenient illusion of step 5: we think it is obvious because we have the tendency to "overlay" on this the wager of the event, as if philosophy is a truth procedure. But if philosophy can think the ontology of evental choice, it cannot think, according to the same model, the choice in favour of such an ontology, and this simple observation forces us to look elsewhere for the criteria of this "meta-choice" made by meta-ontology.

Can we then defend the decision in favour of the ontology of inconsistent multiples by the fruitfulness of its consequences, in taking for our model step 2? The meta-ontological axiom, as we recall, holds that mathematics is ontology, and is indeed judged by the resultant theoretical gains. Admittedly, this latter decision is linked to the interest of meta-ontology in general, which is to say the power of the mathematical elucidation of the *two* conflicting ontologies inherent to an age of the history of being. But it is tempting to see the same type of logic at work in the crucial choice of one between them, as Badiou openly insists on the much more *interesting* character of the chosen option. He thus highlights that the mathematicians themselves, including Gödel himself, largely prefer the non-constructible to the constructible universe, even though the latter is more simple and more convenient.[17] It is a truism to highlight that a risky and uncertain universe is preferable to researchers to a universe that is policed and overly predictable. We recognise in the mathematician's choice of the non-constructible the decision-making process that we can find in all domains of thought. A decision that, in sum, pits the audacious against the partisans of the clear and assured existing order. Yet this type of choice - through the risk encouraged, and the creative interest - seems each time to bring us back to the thinker of the alternative from whom we began, namely, Nietzsche.

In fact, striking for a reader, one can find many Nietzschean resonances in the prose of Badiou's final volume, particularly in the passages on recovery:[18] praise of what is new in the face of the conservatism of the dominant discourse, consisting in its entirety of well-known ideological debris of the present order, and aims to make us believe that nothing authentic can happen; the struggle between the two ontologies presented as that of invention and disorder against sanity thirsting for calm clarity; the recurrent appeal, as I have said, to that which is interesting, risky, uncertain.

Thus it must be said that if the struggling ontologies are equally rational, that it is not reason, but life, a certain form of great health, which must choose between the opposing rationalities. More precisely, one could say that, for Badiou, the struggle becomes one between *two forms of truth*: truth as objectivity, promoted in particular by positivism - on the side of the constructible - and generic truth, made of events and militant fidelity, on the side of the non-constructible. Nietzsche certainly rejects the primacy of the truth in favour of that of life, but one could say that Badiou's Nietzscheanism, like that of the author of *Beyond Good and Evil*, consists in choosing the most dangerous form of truth for life itself: generic truth opposed to objective truth. In fact, how could "the" truth determine the philosopher's choice, given that his choice must concern the *type* of truth engaged by two ontologies? To speak of the "true ontology", as I have done, is an abuse of language, for the truth is present in the two ontologies, whether objective or generic. The philosopher selects an ontology in which *a certain sort* of truth looms before our eyes. From this we can understand that as in Nietzsche the choice is based on a certain agreement with "one" truth at the uppermost intensity of existence - the richest life determining the regime of truth that best agrees with it.

Could we be, ourselves, satisfied with this solution, which would ultimately make of Badiousianism a "Nietzscheanism of militant truth"? No. Undoubtedly not. This third attempt to clarify Badiou's crucial choice once again fails to unravel the enigma of his deep logic. Why? Because if Nietzscheanism inserts itself in the heart of the choice between the ontologies, all Badiou's theses will be counteracted, and, essentially, abolished. Badiou does not cease to maintain that he is not only a philosopher of truth, but also that the truth, moreover, is devoid of sense. In this way he takes a position against all the thinkings of sense, as much hermeneutics - which goes from Heidegger to Ricoeur - as vitalism and its qualitative multiplicities - which goes from Nietzsche, specifically, to Deleuze. What is more, Nietzsche is clearly thought of by him as an antiphilosopher.[19] To try to understand the crucial choice as a sort of mix between a vitalist criterion and determined by the senses, understood as orientation of life - and a truth maintained, but as result of a choice determined by an other criteria than truth, would be to destroy the whole enterprise of his philosophy and to deliver him into the hands of the

one who amongst his contemporaries remains his favoured adversary - Deleuze.

A Persistent Suture?

It is important to understand the fundamental problem posed by this uncertainty of the meta-ontological criterion of crucial choice. It's that the real risk in this case is not, for Badiou, to be accused here of a simply subjective arbitrariness of decisions made, but more of a hidden, or denied, logic at work behind them. For what do we most readily suspect in Badiou, if it is not that his philosophy is entirely determined, under the guise of an austere submission to the matheme, by his political engagement? Yet this suspicion would find the means, here, of its precise formulation, by uncovering unsaid or unexplained operations at the source of its crucial choice, and more again by the reduction of its terms to one of the two. Manoeuvres that I've previously intentionally described through an elementary "Machiavellian" lexis: the overturning of alliances between generic and large cardinal theory, or exile beyond ontology disguised as celebration, in the case of category theory. With, at the end of the process, the promotion of the appropriate ontology - generic, inconsistent - which appears as the sought-after justification of a political militant. If the criterion of the choice is neither philosophical truth, nor scientific objectivity, nor the intensity of life - it is that it is quite simply the emancipation of communist politics.

We would then be faced with an ideological illusion, as the true logic of things, as in a camera obscura, would be reversed: politics would covertly choose the ontology which, supposedly by the virtue of its rationality alone, would give in return its seal of approval to the militantism from which it, in truth, originated. Concealed within the chess-playing automaton of philosophy, we find the "hunchbacked dwarf" of politics, the true source of the functioning of the whole dispositive.[20]

But on a more serious note, perhaps, this problem would ruin one of Badiou's most fundamental requirements: namely to liberate philosophy from the era of sutures that, according to him, has dominated it since the 19th Century. We know that the suture consists in philosophy "delegating" its operations to one of the four truth procedures (love, art, science, politics), and that as a consequence it "is carried out in the element of its own suppression to the great benefit of that procedure".[21]

However, the most complex form of suture, and perhaps the most decisive when it comes to self-emancipation for Badiou, is that of Marxism. The most complex, because it does not engage one, but two truth procedures: science and politics. Marx and his heirs, "dependents on the dominant positivist suture", indeed believed they could raise revolutionary politics to the status of science. Whence the fact that Marxism as known two articulations of the suture: the domination of

politics over science, whose name is "Stalin" and his claims to legislate on "genetics, linguistics, or relativistic physics"; and, conversely, the domination of science over politics, in Althusser's attempt to renew historical and dialectical materialism - with the nevertheless deleterious effect of delegating politics to the apparatus of the French Communist Party (PCF), which would break asunder in May '68.[22]

What, then, is at stake here is Badiou's claim to desuture philosophy, and more specifically, to liberate it, from the Marxist articulation of the two sutures through science and politics. It must even be said that if the prior suspicions are confirmed, Badiou would be replicating the most retrograde form, the "Stalinist", of the political domination over science. Naturally Badiou's current thought is entirely opposed to Stalinism as the achievement of the politics of emancipation in the form of the Party-State. But he has retrospectively defined the Maoism to which he adhered in "the red years" as a politics marked by historical ambiguity, which is to say, a "partially intra-Stalinist attempt to emancipate itself from Stalinism" - which results, he adds, in "its intrinsic contradiction".[23]

The question ultimately boils down to this: has Badiou really overcome, through his philosophy of the event, the contradiction of his initial Maoism - an antistalinist Stalinism - or has he done nothing except, voluntarily or not, and in any case in an occulted way, to transpose it into such a philosophy?

Three Gigantomachies

Before attempting a reply to this difficulty, we are tasked to place it in a broader perspective. To grasp the amplitude of the problem we can show what distinguishes the Badiousian crucial choice from other apparently similar fundamental philosophical alternatives, present in the work of the philosophers he considers himself to be disciple or inheritor.

We started with the alternative between Gödel and Cohen. What are these the names of? For that which, if we start from the standard axiom of sets, does not produce contradiction, whether we support that all sets are constructible - what Gödel has demonstrated - or if we conversely assume that non-constructible sets exist - which is what Cohen, this time, demonstrated twenty years later.

Badiou's inaugural statement - "mathematics is ontology" - does not mean that mathematics provides, according to eras and in particular our own, true ontology and nothing else. Rather, it means that the great ontological conflicts of an era, even if they are addressed by the philosophers, can only be rigorously formulated in mathematics. Said otherwise, mathematics is the only rigorous formulation of gigantomancies.

Gigantomachy, as we know, refers to the myth of the struggle between the giants against the gods that Plato, in the *Sophist* (246a),

through the voice of the Stranger, reinterprets as a struggle between giants. More precisely, between two giants, which is to say, two forms of thought which clash in a timeless way, so to speak: those of the "Sons of the Earth", who affirm that all existing reality is a body (*soma*), and those of the "Friends of Forms", who affirm the ideal being (*eidos*) of these same realities. But a fundamental difference exists between Plato's gigantomachy and what takes place in Badiou. This is that Plato, as a philosopher who accords himself the capacity to produce truths, refuses the one and the other of the positions of the fighting giants, and attempts a synthesis of each by extorting from both sides an agreement on one truth supported by their adversary. The Sons of the Earth, materialists - the "Somatists" - must admit that alongside bodies always in motion, rest must also exist; the Friends of Forms, "idealists", must recognise that alongside the rest of the Forms, motion must also exist. From this, a third position results - that of the Stranger, who makes of being a power to act and to suffer (246a-249d).

But Badiou, evidently, cannot proceed thus: for if, as a philosopher, he were to produce an ontology which surpasses both that of Gödel and that of Cohen, he accords to philosophy the capacity to produce a truth, in this instance, ontological. His philosophy therefore does not fight the giants by putting itself in the place of the gods (which is essentially Plato's position), it chooses one of the giants over the other, knowing that there are no gods to subjugate either of them. Philosophy no longer produces the terms of its ultimate choice, but builds the reasons to choose one of the terms forged outside of it. It hierarchises the true without forging it any more.

Philosophy is therefore, in terms of ontology, of the order of intervention and not of production - which can also be put in this way: it does not have an object, but conditions. But these denominations return us to a second version of the gigantomachy, that of Althusser, from whom we know Badiou inherits this substitution of a relation of condition for a relation of object - at least for the relation of philosophy to science.

With Althusser, indeed, as with Plato, the struggle that traverses history is, according to evidently different modalities, that of materialism and idealism, which has become the confrontation between science and ideology.[24] For Althusser, philosophy, at least after the turning-point of its own "Self-criticism" [*auto-critique*], produces no knowledge and therefore *a fortiori* no metaphysical knowledge which can replace the sciences. The sciences are not even an object whose truth conditions are reflected by philosophy: philosophy "intervenes" only to trace a line of demarcation between an idealism always looking to appropriate science from an ideological perspective - ultimately relating to class interests and their practice - and a materialism, which shares with all science the category "objectivity". It is this trans-historical struggle between idealism and

materialism that incessantly reproduces itself in philosophy, in different ways according to the era, but according to a history that is only relative to that of the sciences. Nothing thus happens in philosophy except the repetition of its outline of the empty space that it draws between the two ever the same adversaries.[25]

Here again Badiou cannot subscribe to this version of the gigantomachy: certainly Althusser's thought, like his own, enjoins philosophy not to produce a truth that comes from itself - Plato's version of the struggle of the giants - but to choose between the two protagonists who confront each other outside of it. However, by the very determination of the struggling adversaries, Althusser already offers to the philosopher, little though he merits his name, the criterion of choice: for what philosopher would openly choose ideology and its idealistic illusion and not science and its objectivity? But Badiou enjoins us to choose between two thoughts of the multiple which one as much as the other belong to the queen of the sciences, mathematics. What is more, in *The Immanence of Truths*, ideology is thought by means of a logic of covering over the work of the infinite by the finite which is based rigorously on constructivist axiomatics.[26] Upon which, ideology, in a very paradoxical way for an Althusserian, becomes a part of science: but the part of it that the "crucial" choice enjoins us to reject. Certainly there is, in Althusser, a possible science of ideology - for the science of History is just as much the science of the effect of ideology in history. But if ideology is the object of science, it is not in this latter part of science, any more than a myth can transform itself into a scientific statement to have become the object of mythology.

Of the three gigantomachies that we have isolated, it is thus Badiou's that is the most enigmatic, since for him the crucial choice cannot be supported either by philosophy's capacity to produce its truth itself according to its own dialectic, as in Plato, nor by a configuration of the terms of the choice, within which one of them (science) is, so to say, by itself the sign of its truth, as in Althusser. We find summarized here the principle of our aporia: philosophy, in Badiou, does not produce any truth capable of justifying his choice while giving an eminently rational truth to each of the two terms between which the choice is made. The challenge is to derive the nature of the thought which is nevertheless capable of discriminating between paths, beyond these obstacles, and without returning to eliminated propositions. By which detour not yet taken must the forking of the good Titan pass?

By, as we shall see, the detour of the Absolute.

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We would now like to demonstrate that there indeed exists a way to read in Badiou something other than a "sublimated" contradiction of his political engagement. And this passes by what is said about the Absolute in *The Immanence of Truths*. But in truth it is not so much this Absolute itself what will allow us to respond - or to sketch out a response - to our difficulties, as much, paradoxically, as a new aporia encountered upon this occasion.

Being in Nothingness

It is in *The Immanence of Truths* that Badiou, for first time in a central way, approaches the question of the Absolute. What, for him, is the Absolute? The place [*lieu*], he says, where all the possible forms of being "reside" - thus "all" the sets of ZFC theory. Following mathematics convention, he names it "V" - suggesting that the letter just as well symbolizes the V of "Vérités" (Truths) as the V of "Vacuum".[27] Why this latter term, coupled with that of Truth? Because there is a paradox of the Badiousian Absolute: it identifies itself with that which, in its own ontology, *cannot be*. Because V, supposed to contain all sets, cannot be a set. It is a fundamental result of set theory that a set of all sets cannot exist, since such a hypothesis results in a contradiction.[28] This is the reason why, in Badiou's prose, V does not cease to produce precautions and even, as I will demonstrate, embarrassment.

When I said earlier that V contains "all" sets, this should be understood with inverted commas - since no such totality of sets exists. As a matter of fact, this would, in this case, be a set, which cannot be. I also said that V "contains" sets - but inverted commas should also be placed around the verb "to contain". For a set can only be contained (belong as an element of or be included as a part) by another set. Since V is not a set, no set is an element of V, and no set is a part of it. And yet V is indeed the absolute "place" "in" which all sets must be. One thus says that V is the strict class of "all sets": a class being a collection of sets having the same property, and a *strict class* designating a class which is not a set - because, as a set, it would be contradictory.

All these precautions do not prevent the impression of being confronted with a philosophical antimony, produced by the identification of the Absolute with V. For Badiou goes so far as to argue that the Absolute *is not* - not being a set - and that the Absolute *must be*, since it is that in which all that is (the multiples) must reside. From a strictly mathematical point of view, the problem can certainly be resolved by the use of formal symbols allowing V to be treated "as if" it were a set. This is an expedient form of writing which has been established to pose no risk to theory.[29] But for the meta-ontologist, things do not seem so sure. For V becomes much more than a simple sign in his discourse: it passes

- through the philosopher's decision - into the sphere of being qua being, of which it reveals itself to be the absolute referent at the same time as it contradicts its consistency. The Absolute is at once pure nothingness - an empty inconsistency - and a nothing "in" which, however, all the forms of being, further than ad infinitum, proliferate.

How does Badiou tackle this situation, unprecedented in his trilogy, since he had never before as directly identified the nothingness of the Whole with the eminence of the Absolute? He seems, in fact, to clearly accept both sides of the matter. On the one hand, of course, he reminds us that since V is not a set, one cannot say that it "is" in the proper sense of the term, since all his ontology maintains that to be is to be a set. But on the other hand, he just as resolutely defends that one must deduce from this that V is nothing but a being of language, a fiction, a sign to which nothing corresponds. However, if V is not, and if V is nothing more than a fiction, how can we think its ontological status?

Clearly, this is no simple matter. Thus, evoking the infinite quantities which are construed in the theory of large cardinals, by successive approximations of V, Badiou writes: "Infinity is thought of as the approaching figure of the Absolute, ultimately identified with Nothingness or with the unthinkable itself".[30] Put otherwise, the most significant infinities, the most "gorged with being", if we might say so, soar toward the ultimate summit of the Absolute that contains them all - but which itself is nothing but Nothingness. All being, as gigantic as desired, seems engulfed in a place that is nothing, yet nevertheless subsists in this nothing. All the thinkable is held within the unthinkable. The path of approximation to the Absolute-Nothingness by the large cardinals is then compared, by its hierarchical progression which goes from one monumental infinity to another even more monumental one, to the hierarchy of angels who approach ever more closely without ever reaching God, and it concludes in Badiou by an unexpected appeal to mysticism: "[...] mysticism expresses in poetry the experienced forms of ecstatic self-annihilation to which the hierarchy of angels points. This is the reason why Rilke was right to write that "every angel is terrifying": it is indeed a degree of being that measures our proximity to nothingness".[31] V is Nothingness, but one cannot say that it is not - it is unthinkable, but constitutes the term of a thought ready to annihilate itself in it. Such an appeal by Badiou to mystical annihilation, which exacerbates rather than resolves the antinomy under consideration, obviously leaves the reader more perplexed than enlightened.

Previously, Badiou also attempted to understand the status of V by analogy with the Platonic Idea of the Good: "Plato would say that V is the Idea of form (of the multiple) as such, and therefore the Idea of an idea. Note that "the Idea of the Good", which for him was indeed the Idea of the ideas, was not, for Plato, an idea. Much in the same way that V, which

contains the thought of all the possible forms of the pure multiple, is not itself such a form."[32] In other words, to account for V, which seems to be, in one sense, and not to be, in another, Badiou refers to the Platonic Idea of the Good, which is an Idea, in one sense (since it is called the "Idea" of the Good), but is also, in another sense, not an Idea. Here, we seem to be explaining an obscure mode of being by another mode of being which, notoriously, is no less so. And since at the same time Badiou takes somewhat of a distance to this analogy - as he says that the Platonic thesis is no more than "a little" like his own - he adds the fuzziness of his own comparison to the opacity of the terms compared.

A third aspect of his analyses of the Absolute shows the difficulty which Badiou seems to encounter with this question. As I have said, he critiques the thesis which reduces the reality of V to that of a sign as being a linguistic thesis, a part of contemporary relativism. But Badiou himself does not stop calling on linguistic artifice to speak of V. He writes that sets are "metaphorically" in V;[33] that we "symbolically" use the language ZFC to see that V is "the union" of all levels Vα which hierarchise sets;[34] that the formula "x belongs to V" is "flawed" or purely "analogous".[35] Metaphor, analogy, symbol - equally poetic figures, or rhetorical ones, typical of the language uses of postmodernity to derealize the reference. To which is added, as we have seen, a systematic use of inverted commas to excuse the incorrect and yet inevitable use - "necessary and impossible", Derrida would say - of expressions like V "is", V "belongs to", etc.

We get the impression that we cannot speak of V - in ontology, in at least - except in catachreses, that is, figurative expressions without literal equivalents: thus the "leaf" of paper, inevitable vegetal metaphor. Yet this is typical of one of the possible versions of "linguistic relativism" as Badiou understands and critiques it: that of a language which is originally figured without universal, or underlying literal, signification. A thesis precisely defended by the young Nietzsche in his course on rhetoric of winter 1972-73[36] with a view to dissolve all ideas of truth.

Regarding these difficulties, Badiou seems unjust to himself when he says that he has participated in this linguistic relativism by arguing in the past that V is nothing but a being of language.[37] The Badiou of *Being and Event*, the "1988-Badiou", seems to me to have done nothing of the sort. He simply maintained, with consistency in respect to his ontology, that a class, not being a set, could not be in any way. And he even seemed to rejoice in this, for authentically materialist reasons. I cite: "Just as the set of all ordinals cannot exist - which is said: Nature does not exist - nor can the set of all cardinals exist, the absolutely infinite Infinity, the infinity of all intrinsically thinkable infinities - which is said, this time: God does not exist."[38] V, in 1988, for Badiou, is thus God. And in fact, in 2018, V is not far from being so again, for Badiou who thinks analogously to the God-Nothingness of mystics and angelology. The "1988-Badiou" could thus argue, in response to the criticisms of his contemporary double,

the "2018-Badiou", that the alliance with the grand cardinals, an option burdened with "classical metaphysics" and a still "eschatological" communism, has logically produced this rehabilitation of a God now existing and annihilated at one and the same time.

But "2018-Badiou" would certainly also have some things to respond to his double of yesteryear: for the Absolute has now become, as he demonstrates in detail, the condition of the thinkability of the index of the work. The index is in fact the mark in the work of its relation to the Absolute. It is the index, supernumerary to the always finite elements of the work, that attests that this belongs to the dynamics of a truth process, and thus guarantees it will resist the recovery which seeks to reduce all novelty to opinions of an era. It corresponds, for example, to that which makes a novel a great text, even as this grandeur is nowhere to be found in any of its parts.[39]

It is the "non empirical" element of the work which lets it escape from all relativist judgement, and allows it to be resuscitated in other forms, from era to era, in the manner of the ancient tragedy of the 17th century, or Archimedean mathematics in the moment of the discovery of infinitesimal calculus. As a consequence, if the Absolute is nothing but a being of language, a fiction, then the index would become one in its turn, and the work ever reduced to its empirical part, the sum of textual or pictorial facts, for example, which would have no more value than any other cultural fact.

As we have said, we are dealing with an antinomy of the Absolute: we fall into trouble when we say it is, and we fall just as much into trouble when we say that it is not. And as for saying anything else about it than it is or it is not, *The Immanence of Truths* certainly attempts, by a succession of analogies and by an accumulation of stylistic precautions, to do so - but all this without really managing to overcome the aporia.

In fact, we have the feeling that, however large, the range of theoretical instruments called upon by Badiou does not contain any with the potential to get us out of this matter. In this respect, this evokes, in his latest book, the importance for his thought of paraconsistent logic, which allows to conceive of a logic compatible with contradictions.[40] Could we not conceive, using this logic, that the Absolute can at the same time be and not be? No, because set theory requires, in an imperative fashion, the use of classical logic. Badiou also mentions the dialectic of *The Sophist*, who tries to think of the being of non-being. Is this not a possible Platonic way of thinking the being of Nothingness that is the absolute V? Once again, no, for the dialectic of *The Sophist* leads to the category of the Other and not of the Absolute - and what is more, Badiou himself critiques its insufficiency.[41] V is, but not in the manner of a set. Could we not, then - third attempt - mobilize Aristotle's statement: "Being is said in many ways" - and claim: a strict class "is", but in a different sense from the set? But

notwithstanding the strangeness of finally submitting Badiou's Absolute to one of Aristotle's theses - his longstanding adversary - this does not resolve the fundamental problem at all, namely: what can the mode of being of V be, that which is at once Nothingness and the Place [*Lieu*] of all things? We are faced with a radical ontological opposition that Aristotle himself never envisaged resolving thought the equivocity of being.

Finally, we cannot get out of this matter by pointing out that the "empty" set does not pose a meta-ontological problem to Badiou, the Vacuum of absolute Place would have no reason to pose anything more to him. The two cases are not related: that one set contains nothing poses no ontological difficulty, because it is a set that by that fact, exists. That a nothing "contains" all sets is, on the contrary, the source of all the preceding difficulties. Badiou cannot but be aware of this evident difference: proof of this is that he never seeks to mobilize the case of the empty set to clarify the case of V.[42]

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We have decidedly reached an impasse. But it seems to us that, this time, it is possible to make this second aporia bear fruit, so as to make of it a response to the first one we encountered: that of the possible resources of philosophy as meta-ontology. Let us try to demonstrate this by introducing more clarity into these questions through the very confrontation of these two difficulties.

Towards a Neoplatonism of the Multiple

A section of *The Immanence of Truths* is called "The Reprisal of Parmenides"; one could very well write it in another way: "The Reprisal of *Parmenides*".[43] In this Platonic dialogue, after having challenged Socrates' theory of forms, the Eleatic philosopher deploys all his virtuosity to expose the aporias of the One. In particular, Parmenides exposes those aporias that result from the hypothesis "the One is", and equally for the contrary hypothesis: "the One is not". In *Being and Event,* Badiou already started from this Parmenidean dialectic and its "turnstiles", to cut the Gordian knot of its impasses by maintaining firmly that the One is not - that all multiples are inconsistent, which is to say constituted in turn of multiples. But it is as if thirty years later he rediscovered the aporias of *Parmenides* this time no longer applied to the One, but to V. One could conceive of a dialogue no longer opposing the old Parmenides to the young Socrates, but the 1988-Badiou to the 2018-Badiou, both discussing the aporias of being and of non-being proper to the strict class V: if V is, that which is not a set can be, which is absurd, recalls 1988-Badiou; if V is not, the index is not, and the work is not, which is just as absurd, retorts 2018-Badiou. The

hypotheses “V is” or “V is not” lead to aporia - just like the hypotheses on the One in the *Parmenides*.

Yet the *Parmenides* plays a decisive role in a well-known philosophical tradition. This philosophical trend, which takes the aporias of *Parmenides* to represent Platonism, is Neoplatonism. That Neoplatonism, in particular from Plotinus to Proclus (thus between the third and fifth century), reinvented the legacy of Plato starting from the aporias of the One, and, attempting to resolve them in a manner that was, it seems, completely opposed to the Badiouisan way. To put it vulgarly, if the One, for Proclus or his master Syrianus, routs all forms of predication - if nothing can be said without falling into aporia - it is not because it is a chimera - a being of language - but because it is the unsayable condition of rational discourse - of that which Plato named *dianoia*. The Neoplatonists identify the One with the Good of the *Republic* - as Badiou, as we have seen, in a hesitant manner, himself attempts to do for V - but in in saying clearly according to themselves that the Good, no more than the One, is not an Idea, since the Idea is sayable and belongs (like multiples for Badiou) to the realm of being. For Socrates says of the Good that it is beyond being, *epekeina tès ousias* (*Republic* 6, 509b) - therefore, in the interpretation coming from Plotinus, beyond the Ideas accessible to the *nous* by dialectical ascent.

The Neoplatonists therefore seem to develop a reflection on the One in which is the germ of Badiou’s thinking on V: of the One, as of V, one cannot say if it is or is not without falling into aporia; and the One, as V, is not a linguistic fiction but a condition of the thought of being. This is something for this reason that strikes me as vertiginous in Badiou’s trajectory: he seems, indeed*, to have traversed the full history of ancient Platonism* in thirty years - one thousand years from Plato to the last Neoplatonists, from a triumphant theory of Ideas to a reflection on the condition of this theory, which escapes the usual laws of philosophical discourse. But while ancient Platonism realises itself in the aporias of the One, Badiou begins again from the One, which he negates, to arrive at the aporias of V. These thus echo the Neoplatonic aporias, but in the context of contemporary mathematics - which is made of the void and infinity and no longer of the Monad of the Greeks, understood as the elementary unity of number.[44]

I thus posit as a hypothesis that the later Badiou tends, not intentionally but by the constraints of his system, to a form of “Neobadiousianism of V”. I am not saying that the theses are the same except in a change of object - from the One to V. Badiou, for example, claims to say, according to him, things about the absolute referential that is V: it is immobile, it is non-atomic, etc.[45] But I believe that, on being, he encounters a difficulty of the same kind as that with which the Neoplatonists were confronted: V seems beyond being and non-being, like the One is beyond discourse on *eidos*. In this way, V raises the question

of the type of thinking that can reach it, since ontology, or meta-ontology, manifestly, are clearly not fully capable of so doing.

Admittedly, Neoplatonism rarely has a good reputation with the materialists - but after all, up until Badiou, Platonism did not either. The reason for this is because Neoplatonism is considered as the philosophy *par excellence* of transcendence, even as a "mysticism", that claims to detach itself from *logos*. I would like, not to cancel but at the least to attenuate this bad reputation, to show that it would not be so absurd for Badiousianism to take an analogous route.

The history of Neoplatonism is primarily interesting because of its successive adversaries.[46] Platonism, in the form of the Ancient Academy, had to defend Plato's works against the critiques of Aristotle, then against the Stoics - two theoretical adversaries listed by Badiou, who considers Stoicism in particular to be the thought "always suited to subjectivity submitted to passive finitude".[47] In this first period, a struggle of the Idea against its traditional adversaries thus unfolds. Nevertheless, in the First Century BCE, opposition arose against the New Academy, Plato's own School, which had in the meantime converted to probabilism, a sort of skepticism tempered by the search for judgements that, if not true, were plausible. The partisans of the Idea now had the Academy itself against them, which had returned to a philosophy of the probable, and claimed to follow a Socrates who knew nothing except that he knew nothing. There was then in reaction the wish to consider Plato as disciple of Pythagoras - to re-idealise him, in some way, by emphasising the mathematical lineage of his philosophy. But it is much later that Plotinus would produce the long-lasting gesture of Neoplatonism, by supporting that the One is beyond being. From then on, and very quickly, this "philosophy became a scientific theology, with the second part of *Parmenides* becoming the exposition [...]".[48] Writing in the wake of this gesture, Proclus, several centuries later, fought against rhetorical or "neo-sophistic" interpretations of *Parmenides*, which made of it a purely argumentative exercise without ontological content: according to these readings the dialogues were simply practice to refute all forms of thesis, using an approach which was not without its similarities to Scepticism. It was once again in support of the metaphysical range of Platonism that Proclus, following Plotinus, made of *Parmenides* a way to think the One beyond being.

Aristotle, the Stoics, the "renegade" Platonists who became partisans of a simple thought of probability, the sophists, the Sceptics. We can see by this reconstruction, be it brief, that whilst they did not agree with Badiou on the theses of the non-being of the One, the Neoplatonists broadly did share with him the same adversaries. Their fierce defence in favour of the speculative scope of the Master, in a context marked by multiple attempts at dissolution is, I believe, in profound consonance with the struggles of the Badiousian trilogy.

We might object that any reconciliation of Badiou with the Neoplatonists would lead him to fall into a thinking of transcendence, which would be outrageous, just look at the title of *The Immanence of Truths*. But what must be understood concerns the term transcendence, which harbours a profound equivocation. For I believe he understands it primarily in two very distinct ways, unduly confused, notably by Nietzsche: religious transcendence, and philosophical transcendence. I call "religious" the transcendence where all initiative of Revelation, of the infinite God to the finite, human, subject returns to God alone. Thus in Christianity it is God, and he alone, who decides to confer grace upon a chosen one - and that is why the chosen one cannot "merit" this grace, by virtue, or any sort of asceticism: Paul knows his road to Damascus while persecuting the first Christians. Before being chosen, the chosen one does not need to raise himself towards God nor attempt to understand him, even less prove his existence: without any preparation required he receives the refulgent grace of a transcendence which remains unfathomable in its nature, and absolutely imperative with respect to what it reveals. Philosophical transcendence is utterly different: it first of all depends on the discipline of the subject and not, or not only, on the action upon him of the Principle which he attempts to attain. What is more, this discipline is anchored from the outset to a conceptual approach. But it is precisely by the most demanding exercise of the *logos* that the philosopher concludes by acceding to a condition of that *logos* that cannot belong to the rationality that it makes possible. It is not the dazzlement of grace, nor indeed the poetic mysticism of Rilke - who, as evoked by Badiou, seems to be furthest from his philosophy than this ascent by logos beyond logos. Philosophical transcendence refers to the rigorous work of the concept, up to the non-conceptual encounter with the condition of the concept. In what form does this encounter occur? Well, according to Syrianus, followed by his student Proclus: in the form of an *experience*. An experience which one can without a doubt call mystical - an experience of fusion with the One - but which is above all *non-empirical*.[49]

However, if we remove the dimension in this encounter of the fusion with the One, we find a very important aspect of the encounter with the Absolute in Badiou - this is to say, the index of the work, understood as work of truth. Admittedly, Badiou says that there is no experience of the Absolute, but this is a rejection of ordinary, empirical, experience: the Absolute, he says, "is radically non-empirical".[50] On the other hand, I believe that there is in Badiou a *non-empirical experience* of the Absolute, about which he regularly speaks in his book, and which must precisely precede, as its condition, all exercise of the *logos*. A significant example is when he mentions a visit to a museum filled with "daubs and turkeys" of Seventeenth Century Dutch art, amongst which one or two masterpieces shine out. This is an experience anyone can have, without

needing to be an expert of the painting of this period, and which renders futile all attempts to reduce a work of genius to its cultural context.[51] This experience reveals that the Absolute can impose itself on you before all knowledge, and therefore *before all discourse*: for it is, not the result of a knowledge of the work, but the condition from which any desire to deepen this knowledge proceeds. The Absolute, here, does not, as in Plotinus, complete an ascent of the concept beyond itself: it initiates the start of a philosophical desire for infinite works without however participating in its reactivation with a view to producing new truths. The philosopher's course through the Dutch exhibition of the seventeenth century is not the same as that, in 1906, of Picasso in the ethnographical museum of the Trocadéro, amidst African masks in which the eternal truth would be actualized anew in the origins of Cubism. The philosophical stroll, contrary to that of the painter, is sterile: but it offers to the ignorant as it does to the learned the ante-theoretical realization that certain, rare, chunks of experience, contain infinitely more than their empirical finitude.

I can now return to my initial question: what guided Badiou in his constitution of the crucial choice, in two terms and no more, between Cohen and Gödel - between the work which resists all recovery, and the waste destined to be buried in the archive of the obsolete and unknown? In my view, this is indeed an experience that the philosopher can have when confronted with truths, be they political or scientific, amorous or artistic. But an experience which is *neither that of a fact, nor that of an event*. It is an experience, rather, of the index of works. Yet, if this experience is not empirical (does not concern a fact), neither is it evental. The philosopher is not someone who must necessarily have experienced an event: he is someone who, "coldly", maintains that there are truths, and therefore *there have been* events, without tiring of attesting to their existence by the non-empirical trace of the index. He navigates between all the truth procedures, and for this reason prepares everyone for the future reception, always possible albeit unforeseeable, for future events - what Badiou calls "corrupting the youth".

The experience of the index is therefore, indeed, a resource *internal* to philosophy. But this experience, in another way, is no stranger to ontology. The index is indeed part of ontology: mathematics is sufficient to deal with it, albeit at the cost of a highly complex theory of infinities, as *The Immanence of Truths* endeavours to demonstrate. But where does philosophical experience itself, through which the index presents itself, situate itself? I believe that it resides *precisely in the necessary ontological aporia of the Absolute*, itself indispensable to the being of the index. For this aporia discloses the ontological and non-ontological character of V, which one cannot say is nor say is not, and which in this way is graspable as *condition* of saying being without its own involvement. To put it otherwise: the truth procedures (love, art, science,

politics) advance according to the rhythm of the event and the patient work of faithful investigations to attest to them in the situation. But the philosopher, he, who does not have to traverse these events in the field of their own thought, assembles them through *retrospective* experience of the truths that *have-taken-place*. Non-empirical experiences of their index, which, as experiences and not as discourse, condition the very birth of the logos without belonging to it. And this experience, although outside of being [*hors-être*] (outside of the concept [*hors concept*]), is not without relation to being, because it consists of the only adequate mode of access to the Absolute: not being, nor non-being, because it is anterior to finite or infinite sets, and makes them possible as their Place of unfolding.

This experience of the index could therefore clear the Badiousian philosopher from the suspicion of arbitrariness or of political suture, because it is indeed an experience of the thing itself: namely, that there is *manifestly* something of the Absolute - past masterpieces that truth procedures could eternally re-actualize. And from that, neither category theory, nor the axiomatic of the constructible, nor a non-constructible separated from the theory of large cardinals, can deliver its full ontology. There would therefore be in this thought, at the end of its course, something of a form of transcendence, but philosophical and not religious. For although the grasping of the generic (more exactly: of its *there is*) precedes discourse, it is indissociable from a patient discipline of past truths which will make it ever more exacting as to the detection of future truths. The philosopher starts out from this manifestation of ancient truths, which he collects without ever being chosen.

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It may well be that there is in Badiou a non-empirical experience of V as condition of the concept, just has there existed in his forerunners a non-empirical experience of the One as condition of *logos*. If this were the case, Platonism, in the *Being and Event* trilogy, would very well have known, as we have supposed, a second complete cycle of existence after that of ancient Neoplatonism - from the Idea to its non- discursive and even non-ideal Condition. A cycle summarized in a unique work which has passed from the multiple of being to the Vacuum of truths. A Neoplatonism of the multiple that experiments with and celebrates the infra-conceptual Void of past splendours, to rise up towards the contemplation of all eternally incomplete works, from fallow loves to the communism of the Idea.

Translated by Heather H. Yeung

1 Author's Note: this article is from a conference of the 1st October 2018 at the Théâtre de la Commune (Aubervilliers) at the time of the study days on the *Immanence of Truths*' (Journées d'études sur *L'immanence des vérités*).
2 Badiou 2022 (Badiou 2018). Translator's Note: all references insofar as such translations exist are first given to the English versions of a work, with QM's reference to the French version of a work preceding parenthetically; any discrepancies arising from translation salient to the argument of this essay are duly noted.
3 Nietzsche 1911: 9 (Nietzsche 1974: § 44).
4 Badiou 2022: p.232 (Badiou 2018: p.262).
5 Badiou 2005: p.4 (Badiou 1988: p.10).
6 Badiou 2006 (Badiou 2008a).
7 My tr. (HY): "L'ontologie prescrite par la théorie des catégories, détermine l'être comme acte, rapport, mouvement." Badiou 1994: p.4. QM's note continues: Page 8 indicates an explicit reconciliation with the ontology of Bergson and Deleuze with regard to the notion of categorical identity, thought as an "interruption of movement" (morphism of a term to itself). A version of this course has also been published as Badiou 2024.(Tr. note: another (English) version as Badiou 2014)
8 Cf. Badiou 1995. Here, Badiou affirms that "if set theory is an ontological decision, topos theory is a logical description of possible ontologies [...]" (p.76, HY tr.). However this "logic", he adds, "is limited to philosophical options of either the Aristotelian or Leibnizian type" (p.73, HY tr.).
9 Badiou 2011: p.176.
10 Badiou 2005: pp.281-285 (Badiou 1988: pp.311-315). Meditation 27.
11 "All of classical metaphysics conspires for [this orientation], even in the mode of communist eschatology" Badiou 2005: p.284. (Badiou 1988: p.314).
12 Badiou 2005: p.283. (Badiou 1988: pp. 313-314).
13 Badiou 2005: p.283. (Badiou 1988: p. 313).
14 Cf. Badiou 2022: pp. 238-236 (Badiou 2018: pp. 257-277).
15 Badiou 2005: p.283 (Badiou 1988: p.313).
16 Badiou 2022: pp. 66-68 (Badiou 2018: pp. 67-70).
17 Badiou 2022: p.232 (Badiou 2018: p. 262).
18 *Cf.* Badiou 2022 (Badiou 2018), Section 3, chapters C8, C9, and C10.
19 *Cf.* the seminar of 1992-1993: Badiou 2015 (forthcoming Badiou 2026).
20 This is to trace Walter Benjamin's first aphorism in "On the Concept of History", where the chess player is historical materialism, and the dwarf theology. Benjamin 2003: p.389 (Benjamin 2000: 427-428).
21 Badiou 1999: p.61 (Badiou 1989: pp.41)
22 Ibid, pp.63-65 (pp.42-44).
23 Badiou 1996: p.6. HY tr.
24 Cf. Althusser 1971 (Althusser 1968).
25 See also: Althusser 1990: 75-78 (Althusser 1967: pp.15-19); and 'Elements of Self Criticism' in Althusser 1976: pp. 105-150 (the titular section of Althusser 1972).
26 Badiou 2022 (2018): Section II.
27 Badiou 2022: 43 (2018: p.40)
28 This demonstration is recapitulated in the three volumes of the trilogy: Badiou 2005: 275-277 (1988: pp.304-306), 2008a: 109-111 (2006: pp. 119-121), 2022: pp.60-63 (2018: pp.59-60).
29 Badiou 2022: pp.261-262 (2018: pp.296-297).
30 Badiou 2022: p.252 (2018: pp.284-5).
31 Ibid.
32 Badiou 2022: p.61 (2018: p.60).
33 Badiou 2022: p.43 (2018: p.40).
34 Badiou 2022: pp.61-62 (2018: p.61)
35 Badiou 2022: p.258 (2018: p.292).
36 Nietzsche 1989 (Nietszche 2008).
37 QM footnote: "Dans le contexte du "relativisme langagier" qui a marqué l'entrée du XXè siècle dans le relativisme culturel, on a pu dure que V n'était qu'une fiction un être du langage. J'ai moi-même flirté avec cette facilité" [In the context of the "linguistic turn" that marked the 20th century's entrance into cultural relativism, it was suggested that V was nothing but a fiction, a being of language. I myself sometimes flirted with that facile characterization]. Badiou 2022 p.43 (2018: p.40). Tr. note: QM modifies "tournant langagier" to "relativisme langagier" here.
38 Badiou 2005: p.277 (1988: pp.305-306).
39 Badiou 2022: p.452 (2018: p. 517). On the definition of the index: ibid pp.451-452 (p.516).
40 Cf. Badiou 2022: p.115-119 (2018: pp.124-130), "[From the dialectic of the Same and the Other to] the theory of the three types of negation".
41 Badiou 2022 pp.109-110 (2018: pp.118-119)
42 Badiou 2005 (1988): Meditations 4 and 5.
43 Tr. n.: translation modified from Badiou 2022, which renders Badiou 2018 "La revanche du Parménide" as "Parmenides' Revenge" (p.405) which neater translation nonetheless obviates the aspects of *revanche* QM quietly mobilizes here - as reprisal, requital, vindication, or rematch, as much as of eye-for-an-eye vengeance.
44 Badiou 2008b: pp.7-8 (1990: pp.17-18)
45 Badiou 2022: pp.39-40 (2018: pp. 36-37).
46 On this history, see, for example Brisson preface to Fauquier 2018: pp.11-14.
47 Badiou 2022: p.39 (Badiou 2018: 36) Tr. note: I have translated QM here ("adéquate depuis toujours à la subjectivité soumise à la finitude passive"), which corresponds in Badiou 2018 to "la résignation stoïcienne, laquelle, depuis toujours, est la subjectivité adéquate à la finitude", rendered in Badiou 2022 as: "stoic resignation, which has always been the subjectivity that corresponds to finitude".
48 My tr (HY). Brisson preface to Fauquier 2018: 12.
49 Fauquier 2018: pp.179-180.

50 Badiou 2022 p.40 (2018: 37).
51 My tr (HY). Badiou 2022: p.96 translates “[de] croûtes et de navets” (Badiou 2018: p.103), colourful pejorative words for dud artworks, as “second and third-rate paintings”.

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Badiou's Symptom: The Subject of Science and the Shadow of Capital in the Descartes and Lacan Seminars

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Abstract: The article examines Badiou's materialist dialectic of knowledge as evidenced in Badiou's 1983 Descartes seminar and in the 1994-1995 Lacan seminar. I do so not to take this materialist dialectic as an end in itself, but to turn Badiou's readings back upon the object that constitutes the unarticulated Real of this thought, Marx's *Capital.* My contention is that, first, attention to Badiou's silence regarding status of science in Descartes can tell us much about Marx's repeated assertions that *Capital* is a "scientific" [*Wissenschaftlich*] work, and second, that Badiou's distinction between the matheme and the mathematizable in the Lacan seminar can clarify the increasing formalisation of knowledge of the capitalist social form in Marx's revisions to *Capital*.

Keywords: Badiou, Descartes, Lacan, Marx, *Capital*, Science

> "Science, synonyme de *savoir*"—André Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*
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> "Il n'y a pas de route royale pour la science"—Marx, 1872
>
> "Il n'y a pas question de s'y connaitre [dans le réel], mais de le démontrer"—Lacan, *Radiophonie*

I wish to argue in what follows that aside from any intermittent discussion of Hegelian dialectics, Badiou's theoretical project constructs more broadly a materialist dialectic of knowledge that proceeds from the Cartesian and Spinozist scientific protocols (as evidenced in Badiou's 1983 Descartes seminar) to constitute what is perhaps the ultimate development of that scientific revolution in its theorization of the Lacanian subject of science and the matheme (in the 1994-1995 Lacan seminar), the latter a radicalization of the post-Cartesian, axiomatic scientific demand for the formalization of knowledge without a subject.[1] I do so not to take this materialist dialectic as an end in itself, but once again to turn Badiou's readings back upon the object that constitutes the unarticulated Real of this thought, Marx's *Capital.*

Simply put, I wish to propose here that while Marx repeatedly informs his reader that *Capital* is a work of science without specifying what he understands by the concept,[2] the apodictic presentation Marx constructs in *Capital* is clearly and evidently (even simply) Cartesian-Spinozist in its provenance, and, furthermore (and less evidently), to argue that Badiou's post-Cartesian understanding of Lacanian concepts such as the subject of science and the matheme can push the reading of *Capital* to encompass the impossible Real of the capitalist social form.[3]

In this manner, I will continue to read Badiou symptomatically, as Althusser wrote, to "relate [Badiou's texts on Descartes and Lacan] to a different text [*Capital*], present as a necessary absence in the first," present, that is to say, in the form of a silenced yet insistent symptom that must be constructed. I wish to ask Badiou's texts to provide answers to a question they do not pose, and, indeed, uncannily—for this Marxist philosopher who never in his vast corpus explicitly reads *Capital*—repress: What is the logic of the capitalist world?[4] This would require reading Badiou not for the manifest content of his texts, but instead to construct *Capital* as the repressed symptom (in the Lacanian sense) of Badiou's general logics of worlds, the better to read *Capital* itself.[5]

Badiou's insistence on tarrying with his philosophical influences in the seminars (here those treating Descartes and Lacan) continuously and intensively resounds not only on those thinkers themselves, but decisively as well on the work that Badiou's silence steadfastly ignores, one that long ago constructed and presented the logic of our world: Marx's *Capital.* In the current conjuncture in which science and knowledge are provocatively, even catastrophically called into question and debased, initially at stake is a return to Badiou's presentation of Descartes and Spinoza's scientific revolution and critique of the subject of knowledge, to argue anew for the fundamental parameters of certain, apodictic knowledge that Descartes and Spinoza first put forward, to proceed then to consider the radicalization of this scientific protocol and subject in Badiou's reading of Lacan. My contention is that, first, attention to Badiou's silence regarding status of science in Descartes can tell us much about Marx's repeated assertions that *Capital* is a "scientific" [*Wissenschaftlich*] work, and second, that his distinction between the matheme and the mathematizable in the Lacan seminar is even more revealing when brought to bear upon *Capital* in a way Badiou himself never does.

Materialist Dialectic *selon l'ordre des raisons*

Unlike the specific, experimental scientific procedures of Galileo or Bacon, linked to specific domains of knowledge, Descartes' novel method and return to the most basic and fundamental problems and procedures for knowledge was revolutionary in its universal scope, as Lacan's close friend and mentor Alexandre Koyré famously argued, potentially applying to all human fields of thought. Coupled with Spinoza's jettisoning of the Cartesian requirement for a proof of God's existence in favour of an axiomatic form of demonstration, Badiou argues, this scientific revolution, coupled with its corresponding critique of the subject, continues to articulate into the present the most basic parameters of apodictic human knowledge, knowledge procedures potentially applicable to any domain beyond the hard sciences. As such, the Cartesian-Spinozist scientific revolution is not merely of antiquarian interest to scholars of

the 17th century, but constitutes the basis of certain knowledge and radical subjectivity for the two modern cases to I consider here: Marx's "scientific" critique of political economy and Lacan's reinvention of the Freudian science of the unconscious.

To speak of a materialist dialectic is quite simply to inquire into the fundamental parameters of any adequate knowledge of the real and the regime of necessity that governs a given world.[6] The apodictic, mathematical proofs without determinate negation with which Alain Badiou constructs his demonstrations in the three volumes of *Being and Event* testify to this level of generality, one that refuses (all the while of course continuing to grapple with Hegel) to reduce the concept of 'dialectic' to the Hegelian metaphysics of totality, contradiction, and sublation, to the negation of the negation, to the knowing Subject of that knowledge (via instead what Badiou calls an "asubjective phenomenology"), nor even to traditional Marxism's understanding of the materialist 'inversion' of this Hegelian, contradiction-based logic.[7]

Badiou begins his 1983-84 seminar, the first third of which is dedicated to a close reading of Descartes' *Meditations*, with the indication that his interest will lie in "the question of the subject." He immediately stipulates, however, that the Cartesian articulation of the subject "is unthinkable outside the context of the Scientific Revolution." Aside from a passing, oblique evocation of Koyré's *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*, however, Badiou's interest indeed remains focused in these pages on the problem of the subject, as he prepares the first volume of *Being and Event* for its publication in 1988.[8] Indeed, Badiou immediately indicates that he will treat Descartes as a philosophical rather than scientific figure: "Descartes ushered in the modern age of philosophy: his work was truly a revolution in philosophy."[9]

These initial comments already suggest a strange entanglement in Badiou's analysis, that of the problem of the subject with the distinct domain of apodictic, scientific knowledge (*savoir*), an entanglement that should be carefully parsed. On the one hand, and this can be briefly summarized as the manifest content of his seminar, Badiou proffers a Lacanian reading of the Cartesian subject, which he rejects in light of Descartes' reliance on a guarantee for scientific truth in the form of the (in)famous Cartesian proofs of God's existence. At the same time, Badiou repeatedly invokes Descartes' materialist dialectic, which famously took the form of an analytical demonstration according to what Descartes himself called *l'ordre des raisons* (the order of reasons), but without ever indicating the qualities of that dialectic.[10] So what we find in Badiou's presentation is a familiar dismissal (of the Cartesian subject) coupled with a strange silencing regarding the actual parameters of Descartes' revolutionary invention of the modern scientific materialist dialectic.

The latter silence is odd, if not quite symptomatic, in that it is Descartes who puts forward—minus the proofs of God—a set of basic,

modern scientific knowledge-procedures to which Badiou, Marx, and Lacan continue largely to adhere, including: the rejection of sensuous empiricism as a basis for adequate knowledge; the priority of theory over empirical experimentation; the initial clearing away of inadequate received knowledge; the demand then to proceed systematically via initial intuition and subsequent deduction alone; the necessity of abstraction in this process; the corresponding exigency to proceed from the highest level of abstraction sequentially to greater degrees of concretion; minus any pretensions to totality, an implicit adherence to the Cartesian proposition of a *mathesis universalis*, in the sense that all domains of knowledge—including political economy and its critique for Marx, and psychoanalysis for Lacan, and not merely the hard sciences—stand subject to mathematical formalization; and, finally, the consequent assertion of mathematical formalization as the ultimate and necessary form of apodictic knowledge.

Here it is Alexandre Koyré whom both Badiou and Lacan repeatedly reference as having articulated the essential coordinates of Descartes rationalist scientific revolution.[11] For Koyré, the status of Descartes' scientific revolution becomes perfectly clear and distinct not so much in his monumental, dauntingly footnoted and meticulously argued studies of Galileo, Newton, and Descartes himself, but instead in a small 1944 volume published in French in New York, made up of the text of three lectures Koyré gave in Cairo in 1938, the "Entretiens sur Descartes."[12] This condensation of Koyré's intensive research on Descartes offers an eloquent summary of the radical originality of Descartes' scientific revolution.

In the first lecture, Koyré argues that it is Montaigne's critique of superstition, fanaticism and error that brought 16th century European modernity to a point of despair and 'renunciation', finding firm ground neither in the empirical world nor in human experience itself. "Faced with this void," Koyré concludes, "what will Montaigne do? He will do nothing at all. He admits his failure.". Koyré then proceeds to reject outright the consequent empiricism of Bacon: "Pure empiricism leads us nowhere. Not even to experience [*l'expérience*]. This because all experience presupposes a theory [*une théorie préalable*]. For an experiment [*l'expérience*] to pose a question to nature implies a language in which to pose it."[13] This rejection of empiricism in favor of the autonomous construction of scientific concepts will form a constant from Descartes and Spinoza through Cavaillès, Althusser, and Macherey, and this systematic rejection of empiricism holds true as well, I argued above, for the Marx of *Capital* as well.

The core of Koyré's argument, however, lies in his splendid second chapter, "The Disappeared Cosmos," where he himself renews the prototypical Cartesian gesture of the *Discours* and *Méditations*, clearing away centuries of commentary on the text, to focus with perfect clarity on the fundaments of Descartes' scientific revolution. Given Descartes'

methodical rule—to discern the true from the false in the wake of the clearing that is the imposition of a rule of systematic doubt— Koyré identifies the consequent problem as the identification of an appropriate, axiomatic starting point: "But what are these ideas, ideas so clear and so distinct that present themselves to the mind so clearly and also so distinctly that there is no longer any reason to place them in doubt?" If the senses can only provide unclear, "obscure and confused" ideas, clear and true ideas—and here is the crucial point for Lacan and Badiou:

> are above all mathematical ideas ... This because it is in mathematics alone that the human mind has attained clarity [*l'évidence*] and certainty and succeeded in constituting a science, a true discipline, in which it progresses with order and clarity from the simplest things to the most complicated constructions. (Koyré 65)

The point is familiar and simple, yet far-reaching. Yet the problem Koyré identifies for Descartes and his subsequent metaphysical inquiries, and which consumes the third his Cairo lectures, lies in the ensuing issue of identification: clear and distinct ideas in the wake of systematic doubt, all fine, but *which* ideas?

The problem of scientific knowledge, Badiou observes in light of Koyré's analysis, takes the initial form for Descartes (as it will for Marx) of the difficult search for a "point of certainty" from which to begin, one that cannot be deduced but must instead take the form of a free yet certain intuition.[14] Descartes famously finds this intuition in the certainty of the self's existence. Since Descartes begins from a point of radical doubt, such that any possible statement remains subject to doubt as a mere fiction, Badiou insists throughout his presentation on the Lacanian distinction between statement (énoncé), any possible statement, and enunciation as such (énonciation):

> The point of the One, my original truth, is prediscursive; it is prior to the general sphere of statements, which is undermined in its entirety by doubt. The point of the One is necessarily of the order of the immediate and does not tolerate the mediation of the statement. The totality of what is mediated, the whole of the statements, may be pure semblance. Only something extra-discursive can act as a limit to the fictional and to meaning. [...] The calling of everything into doubt had posited that there is nothing, that nothing that is sayable exists. It had posited that no "thing" exists. What is thought here as "something," that which is, is pure, unqualifiable, unsayable existence, with respect to which no statement is possible.[15]

The Cartesian subject, in Badiou's reading, is thus no substance, but rather an empty, ineffable point that grounds and initiates the possibility of

all statements. "The central statement," Badiou continues, "might be put like this: 'I cannot be nothing given that I think there is nothing.' It is this 'I cannot be nothing' that Descartes calls 'something.' The 'something' that I am is the only possible point of excess over nothingness, that is, the expression of nothingness." It is this "point of excess" that constitutes, Badiou argues, the Cartesian point of the real, the being there of enunciation, that there is enunciation as such (*il y a de l'énonciation*), the ground from which all possible statements arise.[16]

Given this proposition of the transient truth of this evanescent, empty subject in the moment of an enunciation at the very limit of the real, how then, Badiou continues, can this truth find its guarantee and criterion that Descartes manifestly requires to ground a universal science? Only, he observes, through an illegitimate *suturing* of this pointillist I to the big Other that guarantees it and all other statements: God.[17] The suture, Badiou argues, occurs between the void that is the subject of enunciation, "the immediate existential," and the infinite, from which can be constructed a theoretical space within which the order of reasons will hold. Badiou understands this Cartesian project, the foundation of all possible science, as the articulation of a field for the constraining truth of all possible statements: "Descartes's project is as follows: to establish a place of truth in language. For if there is a guarantee, a place of truth with regard to language, then the statements that constrain me cannot deceive me."[18] God, then, is the traditional name Descartes gives to this novel guarantee, that the mathematical statement constrains and forces my thought to accept this as true:

> Descartes's fundamental approach will be to guarantee by God the self-evidence of statements of the type 2 + 2 = 4, and, more generally, by the existence of the big Other, to establish a transcendent site of the truth of language, and in particular a guarantee for answers in conformity with the order of reasons, to the fundamental question, "what I am."[19]

Having clearly articulated and rejected this limit-as-suture of the Cartesian project, Badiou reaches a fundamental point of inflection, between a refusal of the Cartesian demand for guarantees, and the subsequent post- and even anti-Cartesian Spinozist axiomatic procedure to which Badiou himself holds. It is Spinoza who for Badiou inaugurates the modern, axiomatic truth procedure as a rejection of all guarantees, proceeding instead from the contrasting position that there simply are truths, *il y a de la vérité*.

Perhaps the key moment in Badiou's presentation of the subject of science in these lectures, the passage is worth citing at length:

> Spinoza has a very different position from Descartes on the question we're considering here, a position that, in its own way, is evental.

> In his *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, Spinoza says "we have a true idea," and that's all. This means that there's no problematic of the guarantee of truth, no foundational problematic of the question of the guarantee of truth. We have a true idea: this is a situation, not a foundation. Spinoza ushers into the history of philosophy what I call the evental figure of the problem of truth, namely that the problem of truth ultimately results in a "there is." Truths have occurred, and we can't go back prior to that time. On this basis, Spinoza develops an entirely different approach from Descartes's, an approach consisting in determining the conditions under which we are in some way in fidelity with this "there is truth." He will study the system of effects of truth rather than the question of its guarantee.[20]

For Descartes, the truth of statements requires that God exist as guarantee of their truth. For Spinoza, one proceeds instead from a truth which is there and that we already possess, to follow through its consequences with all possible logical rigor. These two positions—one of which constitutes among the most archaic and feeble features of Descartes' revolutionary philosophy,[21] the other inaugurating the modern axiomatic of a materialist dialectic for thinkers including Marx, Lacan, and Badiou himself—each construct a dialectic of knowledge subject to the order of reasons, but do so in opposing manners that Descartes famously contrasts as the analytic vs. synthetic modes of demonstration.[22]

This Cartesian/Spinozist contrast brings us then from the manifest content of Badiou's presentation to its silences. For although Badiou begins these lectures by invoking the intensive imbrication of the Cartesian subject with the scientific revolution at stake in this philosophy,[23] he has very little to say about the contents and nature of this revolution. Focused on a critique of the subject, Badiou remains relatively uninterested in the criteria of modern scientific knowledge (*savoir*) that Descartes initiated and to which his own philosophical work remains subject. Badiou, in other words, is what *Logics of Worlds* will call a faithful subject not of the Cartesian subject, which he resoundingly rejects, but of modern science from Descartes to Cantor as a set of asubjective formalization principles for knowledge, a general procedure or methodology in which, as Lacan says, the subject supposed to know "*fait défaut.*" This faith, however, remains unacknowledged and implicit in these lectures, in contrast to Badiou's constant readiness to contrast his own nascent philosophy of the subject with that of Descartes.

It is perhaps nothing more than the banal familiarity of these Cartesian criteria I listed above—in contrast for example to the Cantorian scientific revolution regarding which Badiou is so prolix—that explains this silence. Badiou does nonetheless address in these lectures two aspects of Descartes' novel method of analysis and presentation: its strongly anti-

empiricist character and the Cartesian decision to present knowledge analytically rather than synthetically.

For Descartes, Badiou observes, existence is not a matter or object of experience, but of apodictic proof:

> Descartes is profoundly antiempiricist: existence is in no way a complex given of which there is supposedly experience. [...] There is ultimately no experience other than the "I am," which is in a sense an empty experience. God himself is not experienced but proved. [..] For Descartes, existence is a phenomenon of discourse rather than of experience. To assert existence is either a matter of the enunciation—this is the case of the "I"—or of a deductive procedure, to which no experience corresponds. [...] In this way, Descartes initiated a radical antiempiricist tradition [: ...] The being of discourse, which is the eclipse of the subject, is in no way an object of experience. As for the second existent, God, there is no experience of him; there is no Cartesian mysticism. God is not experienced but concluded.[24]

Spinoza will sustain and amplify this Cartesian anti-empiricism, and it will remain a constant feature of French thought into the Twentieth century in thinkers including Cavaillès, Bachelard, Koyré, Gueroult, Canguilhem, Althusser, Macherey, and Badiou himself.[25]

More importantly for my argument here, post-Cartesian anti-empiricism is also a fundamental feature of Marx's scientific procedure in *Capital*. There, the critique of political economy, while materialist in its analysis of a real and not ideal object—the capitalist social form and the discourses that constitute it—nonetheless remains from start to finish the construction of a knowledge of this social form within the attribute of knowledge itself.[26] No matter how far back one may consider its contents and their origin, *Capital* derives from no originary sensuous encounter with or experimental observation of lived capitalism on Marx's part, whether of lived acts of commodity exchange or social violence and injustice (though such experiences and anti-capitalist convictions obviously *condition* its critique of political economy), but at every moment from a critical analysis of discourses and concepts. Descartes' radical and novel anti-empiricism, then, indicates a first and crucial sense in which *Capital* is a specifically Cartesian "scientific" work (as opposed, say, to a Baconian one).

Secondly, Badiou stresses throughout his presentation the Cartesian distinction between analytic and synthetic modes of presentation. If Spinoza would famously choose to present the *Ethics* "*ordine geometrico demonstrate,*" he did so in opposition to Descartes' concerted and repeated affirmation of the contrasting analytic modality as that best suited to philosophical questions (as opposed to mathematical proof). Commenting on Descartes preference for the analytical method as that which "follows the movement of [philosophical] invention," Badiou

observes that the distinction analysis/synthesis tracks a second distinction, between truth (*vérité*) and knowledge (*savoir*):

> Descartes, for his part, explains why he is not very much in favor of a synthetic method, since it doesn't convey the actual process of truth but instead reconstructs it in a figure of knowledge. Underlying the analysis/synthesis distinction is thus the truth/knowledge distinction. Analysis is closer to truth, synthesis to knowledge, insofar as it is the putting into knowledge of something whose truth process is hidden, concealed. For Descartes, any systematically presented knowledge partly conceals the processes of its truth.[27]

Now, given that the distinction between analysis and synthesis is not simply the essential methodological distinction between Descartes and Spinoza, but furthermore, that the corresponding distinction truth/knowledge will prove the key distinction Lacan and Badiou after him will draw in an analysis of the analytic act or event and the constitution of a subject of science, there is clearly something crucial at stake in the analysis/synthesis distinction. Badiou, however, merely notes this as a question of the Cartesian style or preference, remaining steadfastly uninterested in questions of method.

I would argue, however, that the radical Spinozist break with the Cartesian subject-based philosophy and its corresponding dependence on truth and the proof of God as guarantee is consubstantial with the decision to construct his argument analytically. One sees this for example in Descartes' famous fragment of a geometric proof in the *Réponses aux Secondes*, which crucially relies on the guarantee of a series of subjective "demands" Descartes places upon his reader: that they "consider how feeble are the reasons previously given to have faith in their senses and the corresponding judgements," that despite this, "[Descartes asks] that [the reader] consider their own mind [*esprit*]" and its capacity to conceive [*concevoir*] ideas clearly and distinctly, etc., etc.[28] Spinoza in contrast makes no such subjective demands on his readers in the attempt to guarantee their agreement with his demonstrations, but simply proceeds from an initial true idea or axiom to its consequences.

Spinoza soundly rejected all Cartesian fealty to truth, priority of the knowing subject, and dependency on God as big Other and guarantee of truth. Freely accepting the logical consequence of Descartes' extension of the principle of sufficient reason to God himself, Spinoza places God in a position of immanence, *Deus sive Natura*, and begins his demonstration *more geometrico* not from the Subject, but from Substance, only to arrive at his subject of beatitude *ex post demonstrate*, as a consequence of his ethics.

Though in his *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons* he explicitly speaks only of Descartes, Gueroult is nonetheless much clearer and

more radical on the consequences and necessity governing the analytic/synthetic decision in Descartes and Spinoza (one constantly thinks of Spinoza, whose thought Gueroult knew so intimately, in these passages), and his commentary crucially expands on Badiou's scant analysis of this key distinction:

> The order of analysis is the order of invention, thus that of the *ratio cognoscendi*; it is determined according to the demands of our certainty, and the chain of conditions that make it possible. The synthetic order on the contrary follows the order of science and its results. [...] It is thus the order of the *ratio essendi*, that according to which things are disposed in themselves [*en soi*] in their real dependency. [...] Thus according to the analytic order, one must begin from the certain knowledge of my self as first knowledge for the subject (*Cogito*). [...] If in contrast one takes the point of view of the order of things in their real existence [as does Spinoza], the first reality for me (*Cogito*) is subordinate to the first reality in itself (God [or Nature]) as the real cause of all things and from which one proceeds to the diverse works of creation: me, essences, the existence of bodies.[29]

The contrasting methods of presentation in Descartes and Spinoza are inextricable from their contrasting philosophical positions. Explicitly and repeatedly siding with Spinoza against Descartes, Badiou nonetheless remains resolutely uninterested in drawing out the implications of the subject-based versus axiomatic method of presentation that subtends the analytic/synthetic distinction.[30]

In a lengthy note to Chapter 15 of *Capital I* ("Machinery and Large-Scale Industry") regarding the distinction between animal and machinic power, Marx explicitly refers to "the method [Descartes] introduced in philosophy," before going on to cite from the *Discours de la méthode*.[31] While nothing in the passage indicates that Marx himself adheres to this Cartesian method—in fact, he agnostically contrasts it with the empiricism of Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke—and whether he gleaned its aspects directly from Descartes or via their general diffusion in the theoretical, anti-empiricist vein of modern science, this footnote is telling: it is simply the case that Marx wholly adheres throughout *Capital* to the fundamental protocols Descartes first introduced to modernity in his scientific revolution.

Before moving then in my second section to Badiou's reading of Lacan and its implications for a reading of *Capital* that Badiou himself never initiates, I wish summarily to propose in conclusion that the scientific status of Marx's *Capital* holds simply from its adherence to the fundamental Cartesian criteria governing the production of clear and distinct knowledge. This in at least seven respects, in addition to the

rejection of sensuous empiricism and the corresponding priority of theory over empirical experimentation:

> 1. Descartes begins, of course, not simply by doubting the veracity of all empirical sense impressions, but also by clearing aside all acquired bodies of knowledge, "to be rid of [*me défaire de*] all the opinions I had come to believe, and to recommence everything anew from the foundations, if I wished to establish something firm and constant in the sciences."[32] This means not a total rejection of acquired bodies of knowledge, but rather implies that a reflexive scholasticism should never replace one's own autonomous critique: "We must read the Classics [*les Anciens*, ... but] their teaching can never suffice."[33] Marx, having worked through and critiqued the entire corpus of classical political economy and French socialist thought in his initial enquiry starting in 1857, proceeds analogously, beginning *Capital* not as a critical dialogue with that tradition, but from the single Archimedean point of certainty he has identified in that enquiry: the pure, nonexistent abstraction of a single commodity as such (as opposed to any particular, concrete commodity), devoid of all relations and particular qualities.
>
> 2. Above all, both Descartes and Marx adhere to the theoretical demand to proceed systematically via an initial intuition or axiom followed by subsequent deduction alone. For Descartes, this followed first from the proposition that "only two actions of our understanding [*entendement*] allow for the knowledge of things: intuition and deduction."[34] If intuition indicates for Descartes "the conception by the mind [..] of the clearest and simplest ideas," those which are not derived from others, deduction is simply "the necessary conclusion of one thing from [an] other known with certainty." If Marx's materialist critique begins not from a pure concept but from a real social fact—the actual predominance of commodities and their exchange—he nonetheless begins his analysis at an extreme level of abstraction, analyzing the characteristics of a single, isolated commodity without specific relations or qualities.[35]
>
> 3. From this it follows that a demonstration must proceed only "from the simplest [idea]" to the more complex, initially "abstracting from everything." [36] A demonstration must then proceed sequentially such that each deduction will be without exception the "necessary conclusion [following from] others known with certainty, [...] never joining one [deduction] to another without seeing the conjunction between them as absolutely necessary."[37] An apodictic demonstration will thus consist in the disposition of these deductions "in a series" such that each "can be known from another

[from which it is directly deduced]."[38] For Marx in *Capital*, this procedure entails beginning from a certain minimally true idea or intuition of the capitalist social form as an "immense accumulation of commodities," and to advance step by step to deduce from this the nature of the basic, simplest "cell-form" given in this intuition, the commodity, proceeding from its highest, initial degree of abstraction, to ever-more complex degrees of concretion.[39]

4. For Descartes, the starting point of a demonstration, its "absolute" beginning point, must be "the simplest and easiest, [..] abstracted from all superfluous representations" with the entire secret or "art" of a science consisting not in the inherent difficulty of this starting point, but rather in its identification, ascertaining "what is this most absolute term" appropriate for the demonstration.[40] For Marx, the initial difficulty in beginning *Capital* correspondingly lay in the identification of the proper starting point and concept, which he only belatedly identified at the very end of the *Grundrisse* notebooks: the commodity, and its corresponding simplest, universal attributes of use value, exchange value, and value as such.[41]

5. Descartes understands apodictic demonstration positively, as the construction and conjugation of minimally simple, non-contradictory units linked together as in "the links of a long chain," with "these simple natures each known by itself [...] in its entirety and containing no falsity."[42] While Spinoza developed this aspect of Cartesian method to the utmost perfection in the *Ethics*, Marx in turn intensively constructs his demonstration in the first chapters of *Capital* in precisely this Cartesian-Spinozist fashion, positively articulating one concept in its entirety—use-value, say, in the first four paragraphs of *Capital*—before moving to the next concept linked to it—exchange-value, in this case—without this movement being by impelled in the least by logical contradiction, sublation, reflections of determination, or other constituent features of the Hegelian negative dialectic.[43]

6. An adherence to the universalist consequence of the Cartesian *mathesis universalis*,[44] such that *all* domains of knowledge—implicitly including not merely the hard sciences but both political economy and its critique and the psychic apparatus and its psychoanalysis—are subject to mathematical formalization as the ultimate horizon of absolute, apodictic knowledge. The various aspects complexly composing any object can each be "abstracted [and] reduced to the point [...] of certain quantities [*grandeurs*] to compare with one another." Analysis thus consists in "nothing else than the reduction of these proportions to the point at which there clearly appears

an equation [*une égalité*] between that which is sought after and that which is known [...] as a proportion."[45] Marx at various points throughout *Capital* condenses his analysis in a mathematical formalization of his natural language argument; the best example of this process as the culmination of Marx's positive method of demonstration is undoubtedly the formula he constructs and inserts only in the 1872-75 French translation of Chapter 11 of *Capital I*, the final edition of *Capital* Marx personally revised, the extreme reduction of the book's first ten chapters to a single formula:[46]

$$S = \begin{cases} \frac{s}{v} \times V \\ P \times \frac{a'}{a} \times n \end{cases}$$

7. As such, this means nothing less, in Lacanian terms, than that the desire of *Capital* is a desire for mathematical formalization, a desire for the matheme.

Reading *Capital* after Lacan

The anxiety *du vieux* is palpable as he stands before the room of 20-year-old prodigy *normaliens* at the opening session of his seminar on November 13, 1968, Lacan's first since the events of *mai.* Anxious not to be thrown in the dustbin as yesterday's speculative *déchet*, Lacan dusts off his dog-eared copy of *Le Capital* to brandish before his audience, muttering something about how he would read it on the metro when he was their age.

Now, Lacan has not just been re-reading *Capital*, but makes clear that this sudden intensive reinterest on his part has arisen from his reading of Althusser reading *Capital* in the 1965 *Lire le* Capital, and its corresponding construction of a certain structuralist Marx.[47] The tonic of this anxiety has also paid off, most obviously in the novel concept of *Mehrlust* or *Plus-de-jouir* that he immediately introduces for his audience and future readers to gnaw over.

That said, and despite Lacan's periodic but longstanding engagement with Marx and capitalism in the seminars—an engagement that only intensified after May '68—as well as the intensive creativity of crucial Lacanian concepts such as *plus-de-jouir* and the matheme of capitalist discourse, it must be said that Lacan does not in fact read *Capital* itself well or even much at all. In short, when it comes to reading *Capital*, Lacan déconne.[48]

As a case in point, it is shocking for even the most casual reader of *Capital* that Lacan would actually elect to publish in *Ecrits*, in the carefully crafted and resoundingly brilliant essay "Kant with Sade," the following assertion: "The exploitation of man by man, definition of capitalism, as

one knows."[49] By this measure, one would be hard pressed to identify a time and place in the history of *homo sapiens* in which capitalism had not existed. Marx, in contrast, clearly and carefully indicates that the object of his critique is historically limited to the predominance of the capitalist social form, and moreover, clearly, if minimally, defines capitalism in the first sentence of *Capital* as the social predominance of commodities and their exchange (as "an immense collection of commodities"), a social situation whose "locus classicus has been England [as opposed to the existence of the human species]."[50] The most charitable thing one might say about this Lacanian "definition" of capitalism is that he penned it some years before returning to his old copy of *Capital* upon joining Althusser at the ENS and subsequent events of May.

More problematic than what is admittedly a mere one-liner in an otherwise brilliant essay, when he does turn to *Capital* after May '68, Lacan, ever the Monsieur Jourdain among readers of *Capital*, appears not to see what's right plainly before him and which is (also) perfectly obvious to any mildly attentive reader of the first chapter of *Capital*. Since the *Discours de Rome* and throughout the 1960s, Lacan never tired of repeating to his listeners variations of the proposition that "A subject is what can be represented by a signifier for another signifier [*Un sujet est ce qui peut être représenté par un signifiant pour un autre significant*]." Now, in the present context, this should immediately remind any mildly attentive reader of the first chapter of *Capital* of Marx's famous discussion of coats and linen. There, Marx analyzes how one commodity (coats) materially represents and embodies the otherwise "spectral" value of another (linen), giving it existence as a commodity-subject.[51] In Lacan's terms, one could say then that the value of the subject "linen" can and must be represented by another signifier (X value of linen) in another signifier (X concrete number of coats).

Lacan, however, never seems to notice this quite obvious parallel, leaving the impression that he has followed Althusser's notorious advice to skip the theoretical intricacies of the first chapter of *Capital.* Instead, he goes on to offer the following confusing and incorrect gloss:

> Is this not drawn from the fact that, in what Marx deciphers, which is to say economic reality, the subject of exchange-value is represented by use-value? [*le sujet de la valeur d'échange est représenté auprès de la valeur d'usage*]?[52]

While Lacan's meaning is ambiguous, the subject of exchange value is in any case emphatically not represented in Marx's analysis by the use-value of the *same* commodity ("auprès de la valeur d'usage" of the *same* commodity), but by *another commodity*.

Even more suggestively in this vein, again without Lacan ever noting the obvious parallel in Marx's argument, he observes in Seminar XVII that:

> Mathematics is not constructible from what the signifier signifies in itself. The [variable] A that you have written once [cannot] be signified by its repetition as A. This position is strictly untenable, it constitutes an infraction of the rule regarding *the function of the signifier that can signify anything, except, assuredly, itself*.[53]

If anywhere, this would be the moment to cite Marx's analysis of the commodity, as for example when he describes how in the simple form of value:

> Two different kinds of commodities [...] play two different parts. The linen expresses its value in the coat; the coat serves as the material in which that value is expressed. [...] The relative form of value and the equivalent form are two inseparable moments, which belong to and mutually condition each other; but at the same time, they are mutually exclusive or opposed extremes. [...] *I cannot express the value of linen in linen.* 20 yards of linen = 20 yards of linen is not an expression of value. [...] The value of linen can therefore only be expressed relatively, ie. in another commodity.[54]

Here Lacan expresses the same idea as Marx at a greater level of abstraction, that any object A (including the subset of all commodities for Marx) must express its value or equivalence in another object (B), A=A being a tautology.

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If Lacan has little to say about the reading of *Capital* in his manifest discourse, his structural, analytic science of the necessity governing the psychic apparatus nonetheless has many important implications for understanding Marx's scientific critique of political economy. The first of these is the materialist status of Lacan's specific domain of scientific knowledge, the psychoanalytic analysis of a discourse as the analysis of the (unconscious) necessity governing the manifest material statements of an analysand.

That Lacan's is a materialist dialectic is clear through his unsparing critique of traditional material*ism* as a superstitious dogma based upon "an ideality [idealité] of matter," an extreme form of idealism, whether that of Bossuet or the Soviet monist Marxists such as Plekhanov, whom Lacan calls "the only true believers".[55] In place of this monist faith in totality, Lacan continues in *L'envers de la psychanalyse*, "It is just, for us, that that's not enough. This because we have quite precisely *logical needs* [*des besoins logiques*]".[56]

Lacan's is a materialist logic of the signifier, a materialism without matter that desires to replace idealism with a symbolic materialist science,

one that studies and constructs the logic of the unconscious via analysis of its matter, signifiers and their order and relation in discourse. To be a materialist, for Lacan, "consists in only admitting as existent material signs [*des signes matériels*]," to focus on what the word says, along with its corresponding and often uncanny associations, rather than pursuing a vain hermeneutic of its meaning. Lacan's is a materialist science in which the general matter of signifiers generates necessary effects, possessing their own singular causal efficacity.[57]

In the case of Marx, a crucial aspect of his materialist critique is an analogous analysis of discourse. While his biting and absolutely decisive critiques of classical political economy and nineteenth century socialism are well-known, rarely are these regarded as inherently *materialist.* Though this materialist discourse critique constitutes the general matter of the *Theories of Surplus Value* and innumerable footnotes throughout *Capital*, its densest formulation perhaps lies in the *Critique of the Gotha Program*.[58] There, Marx savages the Gotha socialist platform for its "unscientific" expounding of vague idealist principles, "ideological nonsense," "loose notions," "faith in miracles," "empty, pious wish[es]," and "moral phrases," in place of which Marx asks for "incontestable propositions," "deductions," "scientific answers," "precise economic concepts," "a common standard" for the scientific measure of labor, and a logical order and grammar of for a scientific socialist platform that would affirm the "real movement" of society.[59] Describing his own position as "the scientific view" regarding the contrasting price and value of labour-power as Marx presents it in *Capital*, he savages the vagaries of Lasalle, whose "fantasy [...] mistook appearance for reality"[60]

The Cartesian culmination of this materialist critique of discourse for Lacan is that it is abstract mathematical formalization without a subject that constitutes the desired conclusion of the analytic act in Lacan's science of the psychic apparatus.[61] The second section of lecture 6 in seminar XVI is here paradigmatic:

> Formalisation in mathematics is the attempt to submit discourse to a test [*une épreuve*] that we could define in the following terms [:] to function without the subject. [...] Consequently, nothing else than such formalization can constitute interpretation. In opposition to the fundamental equivocity of discourse, the function of isomorphism constitutes a certain number of domains as falling within [*tombant sous le coup*] the compass [*la prise*] of a single identical written formula.[62]

In utmost contrast, however, to Descartes' fetishistic cultivation of the subject of truth and cognition and its sutured subjection to a big Other (God), the radicality of Lacan's intervention in the domain of analysis—both psychoanalytic and more broadly taken—is clear and compelling: given

the inherent fetishism and servility of the transferential relation to the subject of truth that Lacan named the subject-supposed-to-know (*le sujet-supposé-savoir* or SSS), the goal of analysis must be fully to eliminate that transference and to reduce the knowing subject of truth to a mere "*déchet*" or refuse.[63] In place of the SSS, the psychoanalytic act requires instead a purely formal construction, one transmissible without a subject of enunciation: the matheme.[64]

Badiou's thesis in his 1984-85 Lacan seminar, focused on the Lacan of the early 1970s, takes this Lacanian intervention a step further, to propose that the *matheme* must be rigorously distinguished from the *mathematizable*. While the matheme is constructed as an asubjective knowledge (*savoir*) of *l'insu*, the "not-known," this construction occurs precisely at the point of the *impasse* of an existing, constituted knowledge that is, to the limits of the real, properly and unambiguously *mathematizable*. The Lacanian act that is the construction of the matheme is, Badiou observes, eminently scientific, it is "archi-scientifique." Badiou argues that the matheme names the construction of an integrally transmissible knowledge of the real, an impersonal *savoir* subtracted from the position and subjectivity of the analyst. For Lacan, Badiou comments, the mathematizable requires, "in order to be the most appropriate language for [a] scientific discourse, mathematics [as] science without consciousness." The matheme in, contrast, is what Badiou calls "the real of the real" [*le réel du réel*]. There is for Lacan, Badiou continues, that which is teachable of the real [*ce qui s'enseigne du réel*]; this is the mathematizable. In contrast, the matheme constructs what is *dicible* [utterable]—and thus potentially thinkable—at the very point of the impasse of the mathematizable.[65]

Here the enormous gap between Descartes' science and that of Lacan becomes manifest: For Descartes, mathematics remains a mere paradigm of something else, a metaphysics that would remain truthful to the paradigm of "long chains of utterly simple and easy reasonings."[66] In contrast, for Lacan, the matheme does not represent something else, nor is it a clear and evident knowledge of the real, but is instead a "*function*" of the real, taking its place in knowledge, such that truth and the knowing subject, discarded as a refuse (*déchet*), can be properly *situated* (as fetishistic, as idealist, etc.).[67] As Lacan says somewhat enigmatically, one does not know the real, nor does one *not* know it: instead, the real must be unambiguously demonstrated. Here is Lacan in *Radiophonie*:

> The real differs from reality. This is not to say it's unknowable, but that there's no question of knowing about it, only of *demonstrating* it.[68]

Demonstration, as matheme, will then present a formal construction of a logical impasse, an impasse that requires the leap or *salta* of the analytic act to pass over this void, beyond what is literally impossible within the

given, constituted logic of an existent world; the analytic act names the transformation of the impossible, of an impotence, into a construct of the real that can be integrally transmitted without a knowing subject of truth.[69]

Here we can return in conclusion to the construction of a post-Lacanian reading of *Capital*. What becomes evident in light of Badiou's Lacanian distinction between the matheme and the mathematizable is that *Capital* contains two precisely corresponding forms or regimes of formalization. In Chapter Five of *Capital*, Marx carefully demonstrates the impotence of classical political economy in the form of its incapacity to answer the most basic of questions: if two commodities are fairly exchanged at their real, necessarily equivalent value, from whence arises the profit accruing in this exchange?:

> However much we twist and turn, the final conclusion remains the same. If equivalents are exchanged, no surplus-value results, and if non-equivalents are exchanged, we still have no surplus-value. [...] Surplus-value cannot arise from circulation, and therefore, for it to be formed, something must take place in the background which is not visible in the circulation itself.[70]

The (logical) transformation of money into profit-bearing capital results—to this crucial point in Marx's demonstration—in a logical contradiction, a contradiction the classical economists were impotently unable to resolve: this transformation must follow the necessary laws of commodity exchange, yet, apparently, this process "must, and yet must not, take place in the sphere of circulation." It is at this crucial nexus that Marx then inserts his famous defiant exhortation to leap beyond this impasse: "Hic Rhodus, hic salta!"[71]

What is astonishing, however, is that Marx gives this impotence and impasse a purely and absolutely abstract form, as the famous formula that is quite literally a matheme: MCM'. To explain the nature of "buying in order to sell more dearly,"—which is to say, an exchange process in which a mysterious increment ("'") appears appended as a surplus value whose origin remains a mysterious contradiction—requires that *Capital* enact, in its Chapters Six and Seven, the event of an analytic act, a leap or *passe* beyond the logic of the world of classical economics, via the construction of an entirely novel and radical concept: labor-power.

If there is not properly speaking a knowledge of the real, Marx's matheme MCM' nonetheless demonstrates that the function of the real can be scientifically constructed as a knowledge (*savoir*) that allows for and produces the *situation* of the truth of the unconscious.[72] That said, MCM' does not construct a positive knowledge of the nature of the capitalist accumulation of surplus value via the exploitation of labour power—this is the work of the immediately following chapters Six and Seven. Instead, the matheme MCM' formally constructs a

positive demonstration of the known unknown, clearly and compelling demonstrating what the manifest discourse of classical economics did not adequately know it did not know.

In contrast to the matheme MCM', however, the formula for the law governing the rate and mass of surplus value (LRMSV) that Marx inserts in the 1875 French edition of the rarely commented-upon Chapter 11 comes to constitute, in light of Badiou's distinction between the matheme and the mathematizable, the culmination of Marx's demonstration in the first eleven chapters.[73] Seen in this light, it becomes clear that it is not merely the matheme, but above all the mathematization of an impossible capitalist real that constitutes the fullest expression of the desire of *Capital.* In other words, the desire of *Capital* is to construct the adequate formalization of the capitalist unconscious, of the social form whose effects are manifest to every one of its subjects, but whose structure of necessity, what Marx called its capacity to effect a "mute compulsion" upon its subjects endlessly to valorise value, remains wholly unknown.

Clearly and distinctly to compose and thus at once to know and not-know this unknown structure via the matheme MCM' is already an enormous accomplishment on Marx's part. More than this, however, *Capital* undertakes to put the capitalist social form in its place, and fully to articulate as a novel asubjective knowledge the logic of this social form: There where the capitalist unconscious was, *Capital* will be. The culmination of this asubjective articulation, then, will be the *elimination* in *Capital* of "Marx" the authorial subject, with all his extraordinarily rich and varied stylistic devices, a manifold voice ultimately (if momentarily) kilned in the dense mathematization that summarizes the first ten chapters of *Capital*'s apodictic demonstration:

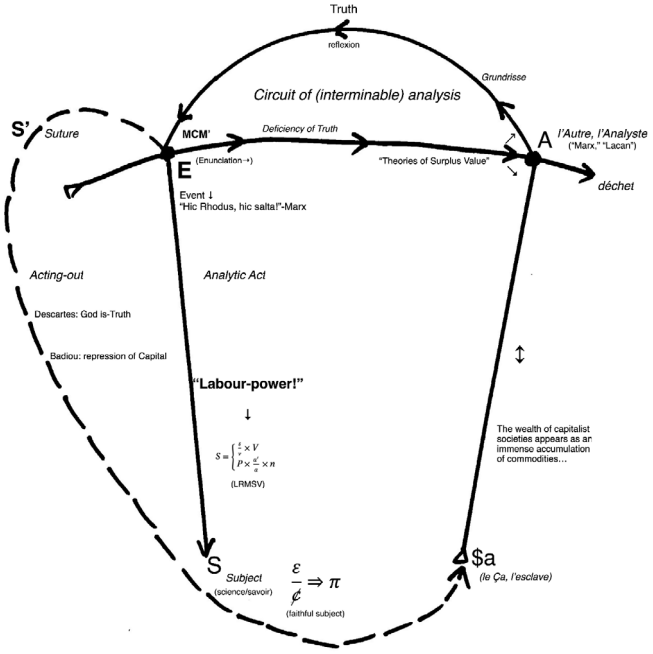
$$S = \begin{cases} \frac{s}{v} \times V \\ P \times \frac{a'}{a} \times n \end{cases}$$

If this is the case, *Capital* effectively reverses the order of attribution between mathematization and matheme as Badiou presents them. Badiou's tendency, a further expression of what I am calling his symptomatic repression of the reading of *Capital*, is to see mathematization as the mere logic of a constituted, existing world, and hence relatively uninteresting, compared to the matheme, which takes its place at the limits of a world, raising an impotence to impossibility, a point at the edge of the real where an event can flash up to illuminate a passage beyond that world. To take mathematization, as does *Capital*, as the consequent step beyond the koan that is the matheme is to refuse the event as suture, the dawn of the idea of communism in which all cows are red, a short-cut that would bypass a rigorous investigation of the unconscious logic of the capitalist social form. In contrast to

Badiou's endlessly repeated manifest disinterest in the analysis of the capitalist unconscious, ever faithful to its desire, *Capital* rigorously constructs the logic of that unconscious structure across its thousands of pages, throughout Marx's unfinished drafts, revision notebooks, and correspondence that constitutes this massive, sprawling, unfinished monument of knowledge.

If it is *Capital* and not "Marx" who is the faithful subject, what then is the event to which *Capital* remains faithful? Without a doubt, it is the discovery in 1857 of the concept of labour-power (or, as Marx first refers to it in Notebook III of *Grundrisse,* "Labour-power!")—the sole commodity capable of creating surplus value—in its strict categorial distinction to the transhistorical, anthropological notion of labour *tout court*.[74] *Capital* is the proper name of a fidelity to this event, which occurred long before the appearance of the first edition of *Capital I* in 1867, during Marx's years of systematic inquiry into political economy, at the moment of the initial, painstaking construction of the concept adequate to overcome the impasse of classical political economy: surplus value. *Capital* then comes to stand in the wake of this event—a discovery that decisively determines and allows for Marx's critique of political economy as a whole—as its trace, as the painstaking, endless and incomplete project of following through the manifold, even infinite consequences of this discovery, across the thousands of pages that will gradually become what we know not just as this three-volume work, but as the entire project still being published today as the MEGA² edition of Marx's *oeuvres complètes*.

In order to convey all this in a single formalization, an extrapolation of Lacan's famous graph of desire could be rewritten as the graph of the desire of *Capital*, the desire for the matheme and its consequent mathematization:[75]



Grapheme: The Desire of *Capital*

While much more could be said, a brief annotation would begin at the lower right ($a) and proceed counter-clockwise. Within the $a↔A field, the suffering, enslaved subject of capital remains subject to the mute compulsion of a social form, to the big Other, and to the material force of capitalist ideology. An encounter with an Analyst (A) can occur, however, at which point an analysis can be initiated, taking the subject of out of mere unconscious subjection to the compulsion of ideology, to begin to make that unconscious structure of compulsion manifest. A long, even interminable construction of the subject's truth begins, looping endlessly back upon the vector of reflexion to rejoin the maelstrom of enunciations, with every truth revealed in analysis inevitably compromised by its partiality and incompletion. As the infinite flow of statements carries away and spins the subject within this vortex, on each return, this riptide threatens to pull the subject back down in renewed subjection to the big Other, unless another session of analysis occurs—for Marx, this meant returning to the Reading Room at the British Museum—to restart the quest for Truth.

The culmination of an analysis, however, can result in the construction of a matheme (in the case of *Capital*, MCM'), which formalizes the known unknown of that subject's truth while simultaneously reducing the analyst to the status of *déchet*. At this point the analysis stubbornly bumps up against the limits of the real rather than looping back again to search for truth anew. The formalization of the matheme can then potentially hasten the suffering, impotent subject toward an Event (E), via a *passe* or *salta*, in an act that moves beyond the limits of that constituted world's logic and its contradictions (the enigmatic source of surplus value). In the case of Marx's critique of political economy, the discovery of the concept of labour-power ("Labour-power!") was such an event, and in its wake, *Capital* came to stand as the proper name for the subject faithful to this event, rigorously, systematically, painstakingly articulating its consequences as a new logic, from the novel concept of labour-power in 1857 to its ultimate formalization in the 1875 French edition of *Le Capital* as the Law of the Rate and Mass of Surplus Value (LRMSV).[76]

This joyful trajectory, from enslaved suffering to the beatitude of the Faithful Subject, is not devoid of its perils, however, and the subject of analysis, repressing the laborious work of formalization, can instead follow the Siren song of the Suture (S'), a precipitous chute (as in "Chutes and Ladders") that carries that subject back once again to a renewed subjection to the $a.

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Reading *Capital* in the light of Lacan's science of analysis and its characterization in Badiou's seminar clearly demonstrates that the desire of *Capital* is directed to the analytic act that would—partially yet adequately—mathematize the real, as the construction of an asubjective,

formal, integrally transmissible knowledge of the capitalist unconscious. Beyond the familiar Cartesian coordinates, it is consequently this process of formalization that constitutes the fullest measure of what Marx repeatedly affirmed as the book's "scientific" status.

Badiou's corresponding repression of that process, however, which takes the form of an ever-renewed disinterest in Marx's critique of political economy, should in turn be understood as a symptom in the Lacanian sense, one that would require its own construction. This not in the form of a specious critique of the author "Badiou," but as an uncompromising engagement with the asubjective content of Badiou's extraordinary body of work itself, a manifest discourse that, given its astonishing scope, originality, and compelling force, must remain subject to an interminable analysis. Finally it becomes obvious, then, that in light of Badiou's presentation of Descartes, Lacan, and the palimpsest of *Capital* that haunts these works, it is Marx himself who has already in fact partially yet adequately constructed in 1875 the asubjective formalization of Badiou's symptom, in that extraordinary interpellation to the last edition of *Capital* that he personally revised:

$$S = \begin{cases} \frac{s}{v} \times V \\ P \times \frac{a'}{a} \times n \end{cases}$$

1 Badiou, 2016; Badiou, 2013. All subsequent translations are my own unless otherwise noted. Portions of this article were first presented as the Cornell University Romance Studies Annual Distinguished Lecture entitled "Reading *Capital* after Lacan," 13.3.25.

2 In his presentations of each of the three editions of the first volume of *Capital* that he oversaw, Marx repeatedly and emphatically asserts to his readers the "scientific" nature of his study: in the first, 1867 edition, where he writes, speaking of the difficulty of Chapter One, "beginnings are always difficult in each science [*jeder Wissenschaft*]," goes on to invoke "free scientific criticism," then famously observing that "in the analysis of economic forms neither microscopes nor chemical reagents are of assistance. The power of abstraction must replace both" and states in conclusion that he "welcome[s] every opinion based on scientific criticism"; Marx speaks repeatedly in the Postface to the Second, 1872 edition of the "science" of political economy; and in the 1872 Preface to the French translation he oversaw, he warns his readers that "Il n'y a pas de route royale pour la science" [There is no royal road to science] (Marx 1989, p. 17). In these and other comments, only the lone invocation of "the power of abstraction" gives some indication of what in Marx's view constitutes the scientific nature of his work, leaving the reader to infer this from the substance of Marx's critique of political economy (Marx 1976, pp. 89, 91, 95, 104, translation modified).

3 My question is thus not that of Marx's relationship to "science," i.e., the natural and theoretical sciences with which he actively engaged in his research (biology, chemistry, mathematics, etc.), but rather what makes *Capital* a "scientific" work at the most general level that takes *science* as simply synonymous with adequate knowledge as such. On the former, see for example among a large literature, Sheehan 2018 and Kohei Saito, 2017. The anti-empiricist Cartesian-Lacanian tenor of my argument is also fundamentally at odds with that of Daniel Little, who argues against E. P. Thompson that *Capital* is "a rigorous work of empirical social science." Little, Daniel, "The Scientific Standing of Marx's *Capital*". *Review of Radical Political Economics* 17:4 (Winter 1985, 72-94) 72.

4 Althusser et al., 2015, p.67. I initiate this symptomatic reading of Badiou in chapter five of Nesbitt 2024; here I wish further to interrogate the general argument of the *Lacan* seminar, rather than merely the few sections in the seminar explicitly discussing Marx that I considered in that previous study.

5 On the Lacanian symptom, see Bruno 2023.

6 The principal meaning of *dialectic* in English, according to the *OED*, is simply 'logical argument', and in French (*Le Robert*), 'the art of reasoning in general.' I take the concept of "world" here in the sense in which Badiou develops it in *Logics of Worlds*.

7 Nesbitt 2024, pp.25-27. This article builds on the basic argument of that book, extending its analysis of the post-Althusserian, Spinozist materialist dialectic to here include Badiou's seminars on Descartes and Lacan and their implications for the reading of *Capital*.

8 Badiou,1988.

9 Badiou, 2023, p.41.

10 Here Badiou presumably bases his comments on Martial Gueroult's famous two-volume study *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons* (Paris: Aubier 1992 [1953], to which I will refer below.

11 Badiou, 2016, p.41. In Lacan's case, he repeatedly affirmed that he understood Descartes in light of the thought of Koyré: "It is well-known," Lacan writes in *Radiophonie*, "that everything I know about the 'Copernican Revolution' has been taught to me by Koyré." (Cited at Burgoyne, p.77). Lacan most famously acknowledged the importance Koyré played for his understanding of the Cartesian subject of science in the essay "Science and Truth": "Koyré is our guide here" (Lacan, 1966, p.856). On Lacan and Koyré see Roudinesco, 2024, p.511 et passim.

12 Koyré 1944.

13 Koyré 1944, pp. 37, 41.

14 Badiou 20166, p.47. Witness Marx's crucial finding in the final paragraph of *Grundrisse*, when, nearly 900 pages into his analysis, he at last determines the proper starting point for his exposition: 'Value', the analysis of which, he adds in a note to himself immediately following this section title, should necessarily constitute his materialist starting point: it is the 'section to be brought forward' to the beginning of what will become *Capital* (Marx 1973, p.881); see also Nesbitt 2024, p.231.

15 Badiou 2016, p.51, translation modified.

16 Badiou 2016, p. 51. Badiou continues: "Here we find the Lacanian distinction between statement and enunciation, which, in a way, structural linguistics borrowed from Descartes. I can call into doubt any statement provided that the statement (in the sense of the said) is actually enunciated (in the sense of the saying), provided that there is an enunciation (which, for its part, exists) of this statement. The point of the real is enunciation. I can say: in statements no truth circulates, but there is enunciation, I exist, I who doubt, who express doubt. In enunciation as such there is nothing, there is vanishing as the pure existence of the subject, unqualifiable, unsayable, and it is this that Descartes refers to as 'I am, I exist.' [...] Descartes says that 'this proposition' ['I am, I exist'], every time I utter it, guarantees the truth of the 'I am.' As long as I utter that I am, 'I am.' This proposition is true

every time I utter it, but Descartes absolutely does not say that it is true in and of itself. It is only true in the simultaneity with its utterance" (Badiou 2016, p.53, translation modified).
17 Badiou, here as elsewhere in these lectures, offers asides on his own contrasting philosophical position. On this question, his answer will be a steadfast anti-Cartesian refusal of all guarantees in favour of an axiomatic position coupled with a philosophy of the Subject as Event: "In what sense," he asks, "can such a statement ['I am, I exist'] be said to be true? I mean obviously true, in the absence of truth criteria, of external guarantees of its truth. The answer is necessarily this: The point of truth is of the order of the event. When there is the effective event of its utterance, the statement 'I am' produces an intersection of the real and an enunciation. It is a matter here of truth as event, hence strictly punctual, in the empty form of a point of truth" (Badiou, 2016, p.55, translation modified).
18 Badiou 2016, p. 57, 62.
19 Badiou 2016, p.63, translation modified.
20 Badiou, 2016, p.64.
21 "There's not the slightest proof of God's existence in Descartes. You suspected as much, I imagine: if there were a proof of God's existence in Descartes, we'd know about it!" (Badiou 2016, p.68).
22 On the extreme historical complexity of the debate over these two modes of demonstration in Descartes Studies, see Dubouclez, pp. 247-282.
23 "The [Cartesian] notion of the subject, [...] the primary referent of modern thought, [...] is unthinkable outside the context of the Scientific Revolution" (Badiou 2016, p.41).
24 Badiou 2016, pp.101, 103. Already in the *Regulae*, Descartes writes that understanding must not "juger que l'imagination rapporte fidèlement les objets des sens, ni que les sens revêtent les varies figures des choses, ni enfin que les choses extérieures soient toujours telles qu'elles apparaissent. Car en tous ces jugements nous sommes sujets à l'erreur" (Descartes, 2024, p.75). Cartesian philosophy, writes Martial Gueroult, "develops as a pure geometry that gains its certainty from the internal chain [*enchaînement*] of its reasons, without reference to exterior reality. [...] Descartes only admits of experience/experiment [*l'expérience*] according to the order determined by reason and indicated by it. [...] Thus his repeated affirmation that experiments are only useful if one [first] possesses true principles. [...] Descartes is opposed to experimental science since the mathematical principles that must explain it are not drawn from experience, but *a priori*. [...] The rejection of vulgar experience in favour of the rational," Gueroult concludes, "is the indispensable postulate of authentic experimental science, which discovers hypotheses and invents experiments that are often contradicted by empirical appearances" (Gueroult 1992, p.22, my translation).
25 See Nesbitt 2024, chapter 2.
26 I argue this proposition in more sustained fashion in the third chapter of Nesbitt 2024.
27 Badiou 2016, p. 80.
28 Descartes 2024, pp.565-566.
29 Gueroult 1992, pp.26-27.
30 In Session 3 of his seminar, Badiou closely reads passages from Descartes' geometric presentation in the *Réponses aux Secondes objections*, but never as a question of method and its theoretical implications.
31 "Descartes, in defining animals as mere machines, saw with the eyes of the period of manufacture. [...] Descartes, like Bacon, thought that the altered methods of thought would result in an alteration in the shape of production, and the practical subjugation of nature by man. This is shown by a passage in the *Discours de la méthode*" (Marx 1976, p.512).
32 *Méditations métaphysiques, Première meditation* (Descartes 2024, p.443, my translation).
33 Descartes 2024, p.34.
34 Descartes 2024, p.35. While one might cite many passages throughout Descartes' oeuvre, these criteria are clearly and systematically enumerated for the first time in the *Règles pour la direction de l'esprit,* from which I quote here.
35 In the "'Notes' on Adolph Wagner," Marx famously affirms the materialist nature of his starting point: "I do not start out from 'concepts', hence I do not start out from 'the concept of value', and do not have 'to divide' these in any way. What I start out from is the simplest social form in which the labour-product is presented in contemporary society, and this is the 'commodity'. I analyse it, and right from the beginning, in the form in which it appears." (Marx 1996, p. 241). I think Marx's affirmation here bends the stick back too far from any taint of Hegelian idealism; if commodities and their exchange are the actually existing form of social relations in capitalism, nonetheless, the highly abstract level at which Marx begins analyzes a thing not observable empirically but only as a conceptual abstraction.
36 Descartes 2024, pp.35. 36, 68.
37 Descartes 2024, pp.36, 45, 77.
38 Descartes 2024, p.44.
39 While I do so only in reference to Spinoza in Nesbitt 2024, in that book's third chapter I demonstrate in detail how in the initial chapters of *Capital I,* Marx proceeds following this Cartesian/Spinozist form of deduction. See also Heinrich 2021, *How to Read Capital*, for an even more minute explication of this positive deductive process of demonstration in the first six chapters of *Capital*. I invoke the coherence of Cartesian method with that of Marx here in order more

clearly to distinguish these various points—all of which Spinoza took on from Descartes' scientific method—from those that are specifically Spinozist in Marx: above all the synthetic method, the replacement of all guarantees for truth and proofs of God's existence with the proposition *verum index sui et falsi*, and the Substance-based displacement of the Subject of knowledge to the status of result rather than starting point.
40 Descartes 2024, p.80.
41 Marx 1973, p. 881.
42 Descartes 2024, pp.36, 73, 74.
43 Here too, this is a crucial proposition I demonstrate in the third chapter of Nesbitt 2024. See also Heinrich, *How to Read Capital*.
44 When one "examines a certain order or measure [of any thing], regardless whether such a measure is to be found in numbers, figures, the stars, sounds, or any other object one may choose, in consequence there must be a certain general science [*science générale*] that explains anything one may examine regarding [its] order and measure" (Descartes 2024, p.42).
45 Descartes 2024, pp.82, 88, 89.
46 Marx 1976, p.279. I analyze this particular instance of mathematical formalization in Spinozist terms, again without any reference to Descartes, Lacan, or Badiou, in the third chapter of Nesbitt 2024, pp.193-208.
47 "Je ferai appel à Marx, ... je rappellerai ce qui a été parfaitement mise en évidence, et pas très loin d'ici, par des travaux récents... Je n'ai pas produit [ce concept de *Mehrlust*] sans faire référence discrète... à celui dont, pourquoi pas, m'y ont induit, à savoir, Althusser" (Lacan 2006, pp. 16, 29).
48 See Lacan's extraordinarily inventive, hilarious, and, I would wager, characteristically untranslatable improvisation on the "*connerie de la vérité*" in the newly available 1967-68 Seminar XV. See Lacan 2024, p.43-48.
49 Lacan, 1966, p.777.
50 Marx 1976, pp.125, 90.
51 Marx 1976, p.139-154.
52 Lacan 2006, p.21.
53 Lacan 1991, 103, my emphasis.
54 Marx, 1976, p.139, my emphasis.
55 Bruno 2024, p.229. See also Pavon-Cuellar 2024 and Bourgoyne 2023. Pierre Macherey articulates a similar critique of traditional matter-based materia*lism* that he contrasts with a materialist critique in his essay "En matérialiste" (Macherey 1992). See Nesbitt 2024, 76-77.
56 Lacan 1991, p.74, emphasis added.
57 Pavon-Cuellar 2024, pp. 232, 239.
58 I take this insight directly from the illuminating Lacanian reading of *Gotha* that Kendal Karaduman gave in our seminar on "Marx and Lacan" (5.5.25).
59 Marx, 1996, pp.208-226.
60 Marx 1996, pp.219, 220.
61 In this regard, and though his name is never mentioned Roudinesco's biography, Lacan prolongs and develops the science of Jean Cavaillès on at least four counts that would need to be developed more fully: 1. A rejection of empiricism in the development of a rigorously axiomatic mathematics 2. A corresponding, Spinozist rejection of the Cartesian philosophy of the subject in favor of the asubjective rigor of apodictic demonstration 3. Above all, perhaps, as a materialist science of the sign drawn not from empirical intuition, but instead from "symbolic objectivity" and its formalization, where symbols do not represent, but are instead the constructed objects of this science 4. Science is thus for Cavaillès as for Lacan understood as the construction of an asubjective knowledge through the formalization process via apodictic demonstration: In demonstration, Cavaillès writes, "science recovers its essential traits: unity, necessary and indefinite progression, and enclosure within itself" (cited at Sinaceur 153). Sinaceur, 2019, pp.68, 145, 90, 153). Ses Jean Cavaillès, *Philosophie des sciences: Oeuvres completes.* Paris: Hermann 1994.
62 Lacan 2006, p.97.
63 See Tomšič 2015, p.54.
64 See the recently published Seminar XV, *L'acte psychanalytique* (Lacan 2024).
65 Badiou 2016, 36, 12, 27, 29, translation modified.
66 Descartes, cited at Badiou 2016, p.100.
67 Badiou 2016, p. 147.
68 Cited at Badiou 2016, p.150, emphasis added.
69 Badiou 2016, p. 181.
70 Marx 1976, pp.266, 267.
71 Marx 1976, p.268.
72 Marx 1976, p.176.
73 In my previous discussion of this formula in Nesbitt 2024, 198-208, I focused on the nature of this formalization of Marx's demonstration as a Spinozist *common idea.* Here, presupposing the results of this analysis, I further address its nature as the abstract mathematization of a knowledge that leaps beyond the impotence of the matheme MCM', to construct an adequate *savoir* of the nature of surplus value and its accumulation.
74 Marx 1973, p. 72. See Martin Nicolaus' discussion of Marx's discovery of the concept in his Foreword to *Grundrisse,* Marx 192, pp.44-47.
75 I construct this graph not directly from Lacan's various presentations of it cf. Lacan 1966, pp. 808, 815), which after many years still remain somewhat mysterious to me, but instead from Fredric Jameson's luminously clear and suggestive distillation (Jameson 2024). A fuller but needlessly complicated version of this grapheme would situate the various discourses across its arc, something to my knowledge Lacan never does: the Slave and Capitalist discourses between the $a↔A vector, that of the Analyst at point A, the Hysteric and University

discourses within the compass of the circuit of analysis, and an additional discourse I would call that of Fantasy (S1/$→ S2/a) within the span of the suture. I offered a quite different version of this grapheme, as a presentation of the field of postcolonial francophone studies, in Nesbitt 2025, p. 180. This diversity is testimony in my view to the rich suggestiveness of Jameson's presentation.

76 Badiou presents his concept of the faithful subject and its corresponding matheme in Book I of *Logics of Worlds* (Badiou 2009, pp. 50-53).

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Seven crossings of the shadow line inspired by the philosophy of Alain Badiou[1]

François Nicolas

Abstract: How can different intellectualities within the four procedures of truth—political, musical, mathematical, and amorous—benefit from Alain Badiou's philosophy without becoming bound to it, thereby accepting to regularly cross the protective shadow line that this philosophy provides them? I will present seven cases of such crossings by developing the indispensable militant crossing implied by the invention of a new type of communist politics in the 21st century. I will specify this in the need to inscribe the Cultural Revolution within a broader Chinese Communist Revolution that began in 1958 with the spontaneous creation of the People's Communes.

Keywords: Alain Badiou – philosophy – intellectuals – classicism and modernity – male-female love – musical romanticism – modern mathematics – communist politics – Cultural Revolution – People's Communes

> "*Yes, we move forward. And time, too, moves forward—until the day when we see before us a shadow line announcing that we will also have to leave behind the region of early youth.*"
> Joseph Conrad (*The Shadow Line*)

Position

When Frank Ruda asked me to contribute to this special issue of *Crisis and Critique* on Alain Badiou, I immediately accepted without entirely realizing the scope of the challenge: I thought I could specifically treat a particular militant point (the category of *revolution* in his book *Petrograd Shanghai*) without taking into account the specifically philosophical resonances of this political point.

Hence, in order to account for what appeared to me to be **a lacuna in his conception of the Cultural Revolution** (the surprising absence of the event of the *Popular Communes* in 1958), I it felt necessary to examine Alain Badiou's philosophy more broadly.

Reading Orientation

One might object that it would have been sufficient to approach the book in question as purely political, leaving aside the fact that its author is also a philosopher.

Indeed. Save for the fact that Badiou's *Foreword* already reminds us of the intertwining of the texts collected in this work are deeply intertwined with the writing process of *The Immanence of Truths*, suggesting that, in truth, these political events are subject to philosophical reassessment here (rather than being exclusively understood in terms of

their political interiority), thereby explaining how he divides his material according to his own philosophical imperatives[2] : Alain Badiou can take a philosophical interest in:

> 1. the *Shanghai Workers' Commune* event in early 1967 without politically correlating it with the *People's Commune* event in the spring of 1958,
> 2. the *Cultural Revolution* event of 1966 without politically correlating it to the *Communist Revolution* event that began in 1958.

This is because the philosophical issue at stake in this book is to establish that **politics** (especially communist politics) **is not without work (*oeuvre*)**, that is to say, that political works exist just as artistic or scientific works do. The **philosophical scope of this concept *of political work* (*oeuvre*)** attaches itself to Badiou's philosophical concepts of *world, body* and *absolute index*.

In making my argument, I will orient my reading in the following way: this book, **praising the political oeuvre** (that is, the capacity of communist politics to produce an oeuvre), is in line with the series of praises that Badiou has successively dedicated to Love (2011), Theater (2013), Mathematics (2015), Politics (2017), and ultimately Philosophy (2023). Yet, all these books deploy strictly **philosophical** forms of praise (just as in other books, Badiou has been able to **philosophically** define the various conditions of philosophy itself).

The point that seems crucial to me is the following: just as there can be no musical definition of music, no mathematical definition of mathematics, no lover's definition of loven and no political definition of politics, logically, there can only be definitions from outside (philosophical, sociological, anthropological, literary, psychoanalytical, etc.) —any praise of music, mathematics, love, and politics can only come from outside them (in this case, from philosophy) and cannot therefore be the result of internal intellectuality: **there is no more self-praise than there is self-definition**!

Difficulty of Reading

In doing so, a major difficulty arises: how, then, can we interrogate Badiou's philosophy (or rather, his philosophical praise of the active dimension in politics) in a way that is not philosophical but rather from a political (here, communist) point of view?

I propose to do so in terms of intellectuality (particularly political intellectuality). Hence the need for a detour to clarify what I personally mean by **intellectualities**.

Context

Musician (composer), mathematician ("barefoot"), activist (communist), lover (heterosexual) without being strictly speaking a philosopher, I coordinate this simultaneous exercise of four "truth-procedures"—a sort of "four-legged" walk—through a specific intellectuality that reflects the "reasonances (*raisonances*)"[3] between these four forms of thought.

Such a "heterophonic"[4] type of intellectuality is not strictly speaking philosophical in nature: coordinating a **contingent** set **of ideas** formed over the course of an individual life, such intellectuality does not aim to produce any concept of time common to the different truth-procedures humanity practices simultaneously at any given moment in its history.

In my case, I am interested in a particular art (music, not dance, and even less Art in general), in a particular science (mathematics, not chemistry, and even less Science in general), in a militant communist politics, and in love with a particular woman.

However, such intellectuality cannot be deployed over a long course of time without the support from some great philosophy—which is for me, that of Alain Badiou.[5] This is to guarantuee that the intellectual categories at work are backed by properly philosophical concepts.

Hence, for example, the *mamuphi* seminar[6], which since 2001 has been developing "*a musical intellectuality **in the light** of modern mathematics and **in the shadow** of contemporary philosophies*."

Thus, my own intellectuality (musical, militant, amorous, and mathematical) draws on Badiousian philosophy (its ontology of being and event, its ontic account or phenomenology of worlds and bodies, its subjects of truth) in order to consolidate the promotion of Badiou's own intellectual categories that are: stunning musical **beauty**, political **justice**, severe mathematical **truth**, and the demanding amorous **happiness**[7] by means of Badiou's philosophical consistency of the concept of harsh **Truths**, universal, eternal, and absolute.

This long practice now leads me to examine this philosophy in a new way, which, in a sense looking back over my shoulder, seeks to shed new light on its protective and nourishing "shadow." The aim of this "backlighting" is not, of course, to dispel it (according to a positivist model inwhich "scientific" light would lift the shadows of a philosophically "metaphysical" cave) but rather a certain **crossing by the intellectuality of philosophy** in the shadow of which it operates, establishing a fruitful gap between their respective immanent demands and their own mobilizations and motivations.

In other words, taking up the slogan of the "*intellectuality in the shadow of philosophy*," we raise the question of better defining what "in the shadow" means. Or, taking up the title of Conrad's book, we draw a "shadow line" between different intellectualities and the philosophy of Alain Badiou, a shadow line that can then better define the specific coordinates of the indispensable intellectualities that are immanent to the various "truth-procedures."

"Intellectuality"

To establish my lexicon, I propose here to distinguish between:

1. thought at work (oeuvre) in a truth procedure;
In the case of music, this musical thought (which is specific to musical works) is non-linguistic[8] *(which is also largely the case for mathematical thought).*

2. thought about this thought, also at work (oeuvre) internally within this same procedure: thought about the inflections of thought, its twists and turns, its decisions and consequences, etc.;
Still in the case of music, this musical thought of musical thought remains the specific domain of the musical work and, in doing so, extends its non-linguistic nature.

3. intellectuality specific to those who practice this procedure (scientists, artists, activists, or lovers) and come to reflect, this time in common language, on their thought about thought (which they practice) in order to insert themselves into a broader environment—into the heterophony of human thoughts—by endowing them with a theory, a critique, and an aesthetic (understood as *the logic of the sensory)*.
Thus, musical intellectuality becomes the musician's own business, reflecting, in their vernacular language, on the organization of music into its own world as well as on the articulation of this music-world with other worlds that the musical dividual frequents. [9]

Seven crossings

Considering this is an article, I will impose a certain thetic character on myself (rather than a deductive or demonstrative one). What follows seven points delimiting the capacity of Alain Badiou's philosophy to provide a conceptual shadow which would "shelter" the various intellectualities (militant, musical...) from contemporary nihilistic attacks and, correlatively, identifying the precise places where these intellectualities must cross the shadow line of this philosophy in order to continue to assume their own tasks.

The corrosive power of contemporary **nihilisms**, whose tireless refrain is "*What's the point? Everything is pointless!*",[10] is now being exercised at will in all areas. This is why humanity has lost confidence in itself, in its capacity to overcome its internal ineluctable division, and thereby put its long march of emancipation to work.:

- *What good is* music? Its stunning beauty is *pointless*!
- *What good is* mathematical science? *Its perspective on truth is pointless.*
- *What good is* communist politics? Its imperative of justice is in vain
- *What good is* love between a man and a woman? Its promise of demanding happiness *is in vain*!

These seven crossings are thus rooted in the contemporary situation of emancipatory intellectualities.[11] hey concern Badiou's philosophy, but in a certain sense do not directly address it. Let us repeat; it is not a question of asking him for an answer that would extent his protective shadow. Rather, it is a a question of accounting for an accurate intellectual measure of what cannot be covered by it and thereby **delimiting the respective contemporary tasks of the various intellectualities and philosophy.** Rather than illustrating the shortcoming of Badiousian philosophy, the seven crossings point to[12] the tasks of musical, communist, amorous, and even mathematical intellectualities, which must be remedied.

- Three will concern Badiou's philosophy more specifically.
- Four others will concern more specifically the retroactive treatment, by this philosophy, of its various "conditions": love, mathematics, music, and finally politics.

I will address each of them in turn, starting with the intellectual demands of our time, in order to highlight the inability to respond to them by simply relying on Alain Badiou's philosophical system and, correlatively, to emphasize the need for new types of intellectuality, particularly a new type of communist intellectuality for the 21st century.

Philosophy

1. Becoming and Dialectic

The first step (like the last) will be of the political and militant genre (as well as having resonances with musical composition). How can we discern, in a global situation that is sinking into nihilism as well as unjustifiable wars (ultimately concerning a great imperialist was between the USA and China), a separate future that gives us (in the here and now) some kind of minimal foothold for the project of reactivating a new kind of communist politics?[13]

Here, there is a great temptation—and Alain Badiou does not always escape it—to ultimately ("in the last instance") rely on the necessity of an event, by definition unpredictable, that would fracture the established impossibility and redistribute the cards of possibility.

Hence we are, in my view, confronted with a one-sided discourse on the **disorientation** of the contemporary world, which ignores the fact

that **communists themselves are not disoriented;** if it is true that they are communists because they consider that the communist orientation remains relevant[14] but that they lack a political strategy, that is, the ability to decide on a political direction for intervention in the contemporary world.[15]

Doesn't this difficulty to grasp an emancipatory future, undergroundingly at work in a world that has become massively obscure (and no longer simply reactionary like in the late 20th century[16]), have its philosophical basis in Badiou's idea that **the becoming of being is subordinate to the occurrence of events** (in the strong sense that Badiou gives to this concept)?

But if time only affects being in the form of events, if becoming is only the effect of an addition (or of an adjunction) of evental non-being, if being is not intrinsically affected by non-being, how can becoming be an intrinsic property of being?

In Alain Badiou's philosophy, being must certainly appear (in worlds), and this being-a-part (*à-part-être*),[17] can make an eventful return to being (so that "something then happens to being itself"), but this dynamic looping back of being does not, strictly speaking, constitute becoming.

Of course, at this point we find all the untangle of the three volumes of *Being and Event* with the dialectic, which, driven out of being in the first volume, returns with force with existence and appearing in the second volume...

My crossing can thus be summarized as follows: if there is no becoming intrinsic to being and if becoming only occurs eventually,[18] how is it possible today to escape the simple, quasi-messianic expectation of a saviour-event? And since it is precisely a matter of escaping such an expectation for those who are not disoriented, they must rely on some being that has not yet come to pass (Ernst Bloch), that has not yet emerged. Put otherwise, it is a question of admitting that in a certain sense (not strictly philosophical), there is a being capable of emerging, knowing that if we call such an emergence *an event*, this event will no longer be strictly Badousian since it will become an event of being.

This whole point involves a modern intellectual understanding of **emergence,** understood not as the simple appearance of what was already there but inapparent (as in the case of the tip of an iceberg), but as the constitution of a new superstructure (as in the case of the canopy of a dense forest). Here, emergence stratifies the structures of being into hierarchically interlinked level.[19]

2. Ek-sistence and Existence

The second crossing stems from the following problem, which is related to the previous one: how to exist as a communist in the contemporary world, that is, not only to exist objectively through one's physiological body, social functions (daily occupations), and relationships with other inhabitants of

this world, but how to ek-sist subjectively[20] through a project that is not transitive to the established world order and does not entirely conform to its internal norms of existence (its *logical transcendental*, to use the vocabulary of *Logics of Worlds)*? What actions must be taken in this world so that the communist orientation to begin to ek-sist and thus be able to aspire to exist later (according to the institutional measures of this world)?

We know that communist existence is not standardized by a historical materialism that dialectically combines productive forces and social relations of production; above all, it is subjective ek-sistence. In other words, **when it comes to communism, the subjective factor is decisive** (even if, of course, this factor cannot be seperated from its objective determinations: its autonomy is relative and does not amount to independence from objectivity)—where we then encounter the need for a new type of materialism that includes the subjective factor not as a reflection but as a full-fledged operator (a need that, since *Theory of the Subject,* Alain Badiou's philosophy has contributed greatly to clarifying).

But the point here is this: in a given world, *Logics of Worlds* makes little distinction between **the objective existence of things and the subjective ek-sistence of individuals** (in doing so, I distinguish here between the subjectivity of individual subjects and the collective "Subjects" of truth specific to Alain Badiou's philosophy). But to ek-sist subjectively is quite another thing (for example, when holding onto a particular point of personal affirmation against all winds and tides). It is, indeed, endowed with an entirely different intensity.

At this point, where subjective ek-sistence comes to slide between the existence of objects and the generic existence to come of Truths forced by certain collective Subjects, we must therefore proceed without any strictly philosophical guarantees. Is this not precisely the task of the various intellectualities who seek to take an immanent measure of their intervention by formulating it according to their own categorical network?

3. Dividual and Anthropology

The third crossing comes to complete the previous two: if communists are currently unable to establish the precise coordinates of the new type of communist organization they want to build,[21] it is because the collective "Subject" that needs to be built collectively is not immediately on their agenda and the subjective resources that are currently being mobilised are more a collection of individuals, of people, who refuse to resign themselves to a given art, a given science, a given love, that would be tasked with saving what can be saved at least until **the global saviour event** would finally arrive.[22] – And they are committed to grouping together to study, investigate, and intervene on their small collective scale.[23]

Here again, this disposition implies giving rights to a figure that remains very oblique (or even absent) in Alain Badiou's philosophy: the human

individual (whose subjective division prompts me to rename ***as a dividual***) with its imagination, affect, and unique ability to symbolize the possibilities its glimpse at in order to open up a concrete field of realization.

In other words, we must compensate here with non-philosophical means—thus, in intellectuality—for **the absent anthropology** of Alain Badiou's philosophy: by this I mean an anthropology, certainly non-systematic,[24] that gives rights to affects, unconscious decisions, and conflicts between the sexual animal and the human being living in body and mind. Undoubtedly, Alain Badiou's philosophy addresses this aspect, which I call "anthropological" for lack of a better term, in *Theory of the Subject*. But this was hardly hardly successful in the long-run, especially in the remainder of his work (that is, of course, except in the form of that strange return of the repressed that ultimately constitutes the philosopher's autobiography, where the individual, almost eclipsed by his earlier philosophy, reappears in full light in the singular form of the philosopher-individual, equipped with this very strange desire to produce nothing[25] in order to better recapture what non-philosophers have produced!).

Conditions

Let us now turn to four crossings specifically linked to the four types of "truth procedures" which, for Badiou, constitute the general conditions of philosophy.

4. Love Between a Man and a Woman

The next crossing focuses on what is today a very important question: if humanity has lost confidence in itself, it is not only due to the failures and defeats[26] of communist politics (but also partly of the modern arts, contemporary mathematics remaining somewhat untouched by these collapses). If humanity no longer knows how to account for its ineluctable antagonism – between partisan enthusiasts and the fierce enemies of their emancipatory vision – it is also because humanity's division into men and women has been suspected of being nothing but a source of domination and oppression; nothing more than a breeding ground for a (more or less) latent warfare between the two sexes.

Regarding this topic, it does not go without saying that the (proclaimed) defeat of heterosexual love stems from a genuine immanent failure. Concerning this question specifically, it is difficult to tell the difference between actual practices (which are very Individualised and are scattered across the globe) and representations that are proposed by the "democratic" and "parliamentary" doxa of the capitalist West (which is ultimately interested in the dissolution of this anthropological difference, just as it was previously concerned with dissolving any social bond that

isn't monetised on mutually agreed terms.

It remains that today, in France at least, the perspective of love between a man and a woman finds itself in a situation where that love is hugely devalorised. But on this point, as on many others, a communist cannot conform to the dominant doxa: if heterosexual love is suspected of being nothing more than a hypocritical pretense concealing an inevitable rivalry over who will dominate the other (e.g., matriarchy *versus* patriarchy), then how can we establish egalitarian collectives oriented towards common practices of emancipations?

If the reinvention of love between a man and a woman is a question for 21st century humanity, then communists must share their perspective on the matter to the best of their ability (even if it is clear that the arts will play a leading role here).

But it must be said that the philosophy of Alain Badiou, who until the end of the 20th century firmly supported the power of truth in love between the two sexes[27] has strangely come to praise a love of the other where the "two" lovers no longer refer to the "two" of the two sexes but to the flat and general duality of the same and the other![28]

Having reached this point, where Alain Badiou's philosophy, after freeing his philosophical concept of "Two," makes a gesture to level this condition, it is up to the militants of male-female love to deploy their own intellectuality on what heterosexual love means in terms of demanding happiness, at their own risk and peril, without being able to take shelter in any cove philosophically predisposed to mooring.

5. Musical Romanticism

The next crossing: this time in the arts and hence for me is the case of music. How to creatively prolong the category of modern music today, which I would call "contemporary" at least must as other instances of modernity: artistic (literary and poetic, pictorial and theatrical), mathematical (since 1830), and political (since 1848), not to mention the later modernity of Freudian psychoanalysis?

The more specifically compositional issue here concerns the musical assessment of a certain failure of **serialism** (which gradually became apparent at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s[29]). I will not dwell on this point here.[30] But this assessment naturally involves a conception of what *musical modernity* means and, in particular, at what point in history it began. While the importantace of **Schoenberg's** position is uncontestable[31], the question concerns whether **the musical romanticism** that preceded him and continued to influence Schoenberg's music constitutes a pre-modernity, or whether there is instead a radical break between romanticism and modernity.

I maintain the first perspective—that Romanticism, breaking with Classicism, initiated and ushered in modernity[32] —while Alain Badiou

separates them radically (somewhat, it seems to me, in the manner in which Althusser used an epistemological break to radically separate a humanist pre-Marx from a true scientific Marx). The issue at stake here is whether the actual destiny of musical creation is more neoclassical in nature (as Alain Badiou argues) or whether there is currently room for a modernity that is regenerating itself by taking into account the musical obstructions to musical modernity.[33] We will not dwell further on these points here, which are musically crucial but too peripheral for this review.[34]

Let us simply note that musical intellectuality cannot be confined here to the protective shadow of Alain Badiou's philosophy; not because the latter does not fulfill its own tasks[35] but because the intellectuality in question must assume its immanent autonomy of thought.

6. Mathematics and mathematical logic

Concerning mathematical thought, the question of the relationship between intellectuality and Badiou's philosophy takes a singular turn for two reasons:

1. Badiou argues that there is no such thing as a strictly mathematical intellectuality, and even that there cannot be one if it is true that the strictly ontological dimension of mathematical thought does not support reflexivity, so that the *working mathematician* cannot waste any time formulating mathematical thought in language.

2. *Furthermore*, what mathematically conditions Badiou's philosophy is essentially 20th-century mathematical logic—model theory (*The Concept of Model*), set theory (*Being and Event*), category theory (*Logic of Worlds*), the theory of large cardinals (*The Immance of Truths*) [36] – rather than mathematics itself (with a few notable exceptions: topology in *Theory of the Subject,* arithmetic in the little gem that is *Number and Numbers*, and topos theory in *Logics of* Worlds[37]).

I differ on these two points for non-philosophical reasons, as they are inherent to any intellectuality that takes into account the abundant intellectual resources available in modern and contemporary mathematics.

1. First, it must be noted that the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries saw the emergence of mathematical intellectualities (from Henri Poincaré and Hermann Weyl to Alexander Grothendieck and Lawvere), much like the emergence of musical intellectualities from

the 18th century (with Rameau) and especially the 19th century (with the Romantics, led by Schumann). It's no more appropriate to classify each of these mathematical intellectualities under the philosophy of science, or even under a simple epistemology, than it is to classify the musical intellectualities mentioned above under musicology or the philosophy of music.

2. For my part, I have undertaken a vast exploration of the intellectual resources that mathematics provides us in abundance: modern mathematics since 1830[38] and contemporary mathematics since 1945.[39]

However, the use of the intellectual resources offered by mathematics (modern and contemporary) is particularly decisive for a renewal of communism - communism in the 19th and 20th centuries (from Marx[40] to Mao) completely ignored them, to the great detriment of communist politics (and not, of course, to the detriment of mathematics, which requires no intellectual validation other than itself: an aristocratic privilege of its thinking!).

•

This leaves the seventh crossing, which concerns political activity itself and requires that I expand at greater length on this topic here.

7. People's communes and the Cultural Revolution

I will start with Alain Badiou's recent short book *Petrograd, Shanghai. The Two Revolutions of the 20th Century* (La fabrique, 2018) to examine the category of *revolution* that he mobilizes therein.

This category has been at the heart of a split between former UCF-ml activists[41] since Sylvain Lazarus chose to declare it obsolete, making it a category intrinsically attached to the specific "political mode" of the French Revolution.[42]

Let us summarize this division as follows: must the invention of a new kind of communist politics for the 21st Century (in its heritage of 130 years of classical communist politics between 1848 and 1976) continue to think of itself and to declare itself as **revolutionary**? Or, is this qualification "saturated", and thus ought to be purely and simply abandoned?[43]

Reduplication

Here, we can close in on the decisive intellectual point: if a new type of communist politics still calls itself revolutionary, it is because *revolution* must be understood in a new sense.

To this end, following Kierkegaard, let us call this type of dialectical necessity ***reduplication***, where the enunciation must conjoin with the enunciated, where enunciation and enunciated are deployed in dialectical unity.

The canonical example is that of Pascal advocating *speaking humbly about humility* (and not proudly).

We find this same principle implicitly in Adorno's argument that *a philosophy of **new** music* must also be *a **new** philosophy of music*; since an old philosophy of music is incapable of accounting for new music.

In our case, we propose that a political intellectuality of new revolutions (primarily the Cultural Revolution) must itself be **a new political intellectuality of revolutions** (and not a classical political intellectuality). [44]

However, this dialectical step of reduplication effectively crosses the philosophical shadow line introduced by Badiou's book if it is true that this work is immediately presented under the sign of a "classical" conception[45] of revolution; a revolution initiated by **a seizure of power** (generally central and state)[46] and subsequently producing **a civil war** (a declared antagonism on a mass scale in the situation at hand).[47]

This "classist" side-taking of the book will have important consequences in its analysis of its central issue: the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, the Cultural Revolution is "classically" understood mainly from the perspective of the antagonisms it declares, and it is only in a secondary manner that it is addressed in terms of the social relations it sought to revolutionize.[48] However, it is one thing to seize power, or even to revolutionize it (for example, through the Triple Alliance Committees[49]); it is quite another to revolutionize the issues at stake in that power, that is, to determine what to do with it; to establish a politics of putting this power to work (*œuvre*)!

Here we find our principle of reduplication: in order to be able to revolutionise social relations, we must also revolutionise what power means rather than simply taking power as it currently exists.[50] The whole imbroglio of the Cultural Revolution thus seems to boil down to a non-reduplication but an inverted one (instead of speaking proudly of humility, we humbly speak of pride). If it is true that the self-declared "revolutionaries" were killing each other over issues of power whose "content" remained eminently vague,[51] the abstractly ideological revolutionary enunciation had no connection to (it did not "quilt") the effective concrete revolutionary enunciated.

Occlusion

At this point, my hypothesis is that this imbroglio is due to two things.

1. IIn the space that is proper to communist intellectuality (the context for the present article), the confusion stems for a **classical** communist conception of what revolution means, even though the Cultural Revolution was obviously **modern** and not classical. But one cannot think of modernity in classical terms!

This *classical* communist conception is, of course, the *classist* conception of Marxism-Leninism and its tandem of *the Communist Party and Socialist State* articulated in *the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*.

2. In the space that is proper to the effective history, the confusion stems from the Cultural Revolution's unbelievable concealment of the **People's Communes**. First it concerned the case of the rural (late April 1958) and subsequently the urban (summer of 1958) which revolutionised socialist China during the Great Leap Forward!

But how was it possible that the peasants of the rural People's Communes and the women of the urban People's Communes were seemingly absent from the Cultural Revolution, for the benefit of the students (in the summer of 1966) and then of the workers (in the winter of 1966-1967)?

How was it possible that the contradiction that arose, from within the Great Leap Forward itself, which aimed to accelerate the socialist revolution (in an extraordinarily voluntaristic manner[52]), through the eventful invention of the People's Communes (away from any central directive from the CCP and Mao), an invention that added, in the effectiveness of social relations exemplified by the free canteens, the communist principle of "*to each according to their needs*" to the socialist principle of "*to each according to their work*" , an invention that initiated what must be called the first truly communist revolution in all humanity, how was the apparent erasure of this contradiction possible during the Cultural Revolution?

To answer this question, let us distinguish between the different Chinese revolutions, all led by the communists (Mao and the CCP):

- the **Democratic** Revolution (1928-1949),
- the **Socialist** Revolution (launched in 1953 with the first Five-Year Plan 1953-1957 for the construction of socialism),
- and the **Communist** Revolution proper (which arose in the spring of 1958 from a mass initiative that Mao openly supported from the summer of 1958 onwards).

How was it possible that this Communist Revolution was so repressed that the first workers' commune in China (that of Shanghai) did not even refer to these recent popular communes (rural and urban) but... to the Paris Commune a hundred years earlier?!!![53]

It is therefore that which has been repressed (and subsequently foreclosed) are the years 1958-1965; the years involving the political engagement of peasants and people. Ultimately, this resulted in a schism in the CCP for the first time since the 1930s. All of this culminated in the Lushan Conference in the summer of 1959 with removed Peng Dehuai from office, followed by the so-called 7,000 Conference in early 1962, marking the Thermidor of the People's Communes. Finally, this resulted in the Socialist Education Movement (1963-1965) which was launched by Mao in a (futile) attempt to regenerate a truly communist militancy (but under the overly cautious label of "socialist"!).

This is the situation we have inherited.

A Tripple Gesture

Dealing with this legacy, as modern communists of the 21st century, seems to me to involve crossing the shadow cast by this book in threefold manner.

1. Historically; by restituting the cultural revolution (1966-1976) as the second major period of the Communist Revolution that began in 1958 , this second period being that which aimed at reactivating the worker's resources of the previous period; that which was most surprisingly absent from the first major period (1958-1965).[54]
In truth, the history of the urban People's Communes[55] larifies the reasons for this absence, which in fact corresponds to a withdrawal fo the workers: the worker aristocracies of the State factories ("Danwei) viewed the extension of their privileges... to housewives (who had seen up small-craft subcontracting workshops) with a degree of suspicion.

2. Negatively; by **observing** the inadequacy, during the period of this Communist Revolution, of the Marxist-Leninist principles put forward by Mao from the summer of 1967; the principles that sought to prevent the Cultural Revolution form sliding into Civil War that was (correctly) considered to be politically devastating: "*the vast majority of Party cadres are good*"[56] and *"nothing essential divides the working class."*[57]

Clearly, we witnessed here the transition to a truly communist revolution (within a socialist revolution still in progress) divided the working class and provoked fierce opposition from the majority of CCP cadres (see the reactionary conference of 7,000 in early 1962).

Mao, in a sense trapped in a socialist revolution that had to be pursued.[58] no doubt hoped in this way to appease his comrades in the CCP, not knowing how to politically address the new antagonisms raised by this impromptu and politically unplanned Communist Revolution (unlike the Great Leap Forward, for better or for worse).

3. **Affirmatively**; considering that the Chinese Communist Revolution (and its second strategic period, the Cultural Revolution) failed due to internal **obstruction**.

It may seem paradoxical to consider that such a motif – that of obstruction—is affirmative in nature. But many modernities (and primarily mathematical modernities) were affirmatively constituted under this motif: by positively considering what it is that obstructed the classical development of their field. That is, by understanding the impasse of this classical approach not only as an **obstacle** (in the sense where an obstacle is **extrinsic**, that would have to be circumvented or destroyed, as Yukong did with the mountains hindering his peasant work) but as an **intrinsic obstruction** revealing some real hidden, latent, and secret which organises (quasi unconsciously) an effective impossibility.

Obstruction

Faced with this, what is the modern task of thought?
It can be broken down into three stages.

1. It is impossible to unobstruct an obstructed situation, because destroying the obstruction in question would be tantamount to destroying the situation itself.

2. One can always consider the situation to be internally saturated and then decide to abandon it—this is the path taken at the beginning of the 19th century by great mathematicians (Lagrange, Cauchy, etc.) when they were faced with the obstruction of classical algebra.

3. The modern approach, on the contrary, is to invent a way of revealing the secret of the obstruction (and Lacan reminds us that "*a confessed secret remains a secret*") by objectifying the point of impossibility in order to extend the situation by adjoining this new point of the real—the paradigm of this modern approach is the revolution in modern algebra through the adjunction of Galois groups...

Saturation?

So, the modern point of view recaptures what appears to be saturation,[59] understanding it as follows:

> 1. as effective saturation, not of the situation as such, but of the old (or *classical*) relationship *to* this situation,
>
> 2. as a symptom of an intrinsic obstruction of the situation,
>
> 3. as an opportunity to revolutionize the intervention in this situation by establishing for it a new, properly modern objective of adjoining the object that obstructs the classical intervention project in order **to extend** the situation well beyond its initial region, definitively saturated by the negative effects of the obstruction....
>
> Thus, modern algebra will be reconstituted in a considerably expanded way around group theory and no longer around the algebraic solution of its equations. More precisely, solving an algebraic equation algebraically will no longer mean, as classical algebra conceived it, to formulate algebraically each of its roots, but to algebraically formulate the Galois group that binds together all of its roots. Thus, the algebraic challenge of resolution will shift from the individual root to the collective roots.

This therefore presupposes a **revolution of the very notion of revolution** (reduplication obliges!): classical revolutions are by means of destruction/reconstruction,[60] whereas ancient revolutions (exemplified in politics by the anti-slavery revolutions of Spartacus in Rome or the Quilombos in Brazil) were by means of **abandonment/displacement**. Modern revolutions (exemplified by those in mathematics from 1830 onwards) are by means of adjunction **/extension:** thus, the Chinese Communist Revolution was an attempt **to adjoin** the communism of the People's Communes to the construction of socialism in order **to extend** communist politics (by revolutionizing social relations and initiating an effective decline of the socialist state).

If we communists inherit the strategic failure of the Chinese Communist Revolution, and in particular its Cultural Revolution, it is therefore up to us to identify its inherent point of obstruction.

Hypothesis

The scope of this task is certainly vast, and for the moment I can only formulate the following hypothesis: the obstruction of the Chinese Communist Revolution is linked to the *classic* communist project of a proletariat that, through its postulated singularity, guarantees the compatibility between affirmative labour and labour of the negative,

between the resolution of contradictions within the people and the dictatorial treatment of antagonistic contradictions.

Let us note that the People's Communes clearly showed that a mass emancipatory advance inevitably gives rise to new political and social antagonisms which, even more than the well-documented old ones, are more difficult to confront because they are only discovered as the movement progresses.

"*Proletariat*"?

"*Proletariat*" claims, in effect, to seal the dialectical unity of these opposites under the form of a political **singularity**.

Let us recall that this is indeed the essential characteristic of algebraic **singularities** (see Hironaka's theory): an algebraic singularity renders the antagonistic contradiction ("orthogonality") between two indiscernible regularities, such as the tip of a vertical cone whose singular spike manifests the indiscernibility at this single point between two general and orthogonal constituents of the cone, both of which are smooth: its horizontal circles and its oblique lateral lines (themselves deformations of the vertical lines of a cylinder).

In this sense of singularity, the proletariat[61] renders two opposing determinations of the communist orientation indiscernible from one another:

- a **negative** determination: anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism; Isn't the proletariat classically defined by an accumulation of negative properties, as in this characterization that intertwines three negative determinations? "*The proletariat brings together those who have **nothing** to **lose** but their **chains***."
  We can therefore understand that such a "proletariat," once engaged in the construction of socialism, which finally affords it the proper possession of a labour, a roof over its head, a family, health, and culture, may feel such strictly negative determinations wavering![62]

- An **affirmative** determination: its ability to strategically direct communist politics (it is still necessary to characterize the communist revolution of social relations affirmatively and not to be satisfied once again with doubly negative characterizations such as "*the reduction of great differences*" and "*the withering away of the state*").

Pointing out where the obstruction lies (or would lie) is of course not enough to identify the real issue, the impossible "secret" that must be objectified in order to effectively revolutionize modern communist orientation.

Nor did Abel's 1828 demonstration of the algebraic insolubility of the general quintic polynomial equation reveal his group of solidarity that accounted for this impossibility (this would be Galois's task in 1830).

Let us not be misled here by the small gap between these two dates: in truth, the obstruction identified by Abel had been quietly occupying mathematicians since the end of the 16th century. Thus, revolutions in human thought are measured on a scale of centuries, not on that of a human lifetime.

Reasons, then, to trust in humanity and to lean on the small victories it has already won (starting with this one: "A truly communist revolution did take place in China between 1958 and 1976!" and nothing can cancel out its objective existence and subjective ek-sistence) to base a communist hope in future victories of greater magnitude!

Thus, communist intellectuality—which was my "subject" here—has a truly modern perspective if it is true that in these postmodern and cynical times, "*we communists assume that we are still modern*!"

All in all...

On the one hand,

1. The various forms of modernity (artistic, scientific, political, and romantic)[63] differ from the classicisms that preceded them in the emergence of specific intellectualities developed by human agents (artists, scientists, activists, and lovers) and intertwined with the collective actors (scientific theories, artistic configurations, etc.) of these modernities.

2. to establish their own theories[64], these intellectualities draw on specifically philosophical resources;

3. In doing so, they took stock of the limits of these resources, of their *shadow lines,* which they crossed so as not to become sutured to them.

4. Hence, for these mature intellectualities, there is the temptation to turn to the anarchic alternative of anti-philosophies.

On the other hand, we can claim that Badiou's philosophy has little use for intellectualities who can go beyond his own shadow lines.

Let us draw the following conclusion:

- if communist politics is fortunately no longer tied to the "philosophy" of *dialectical* materialism and the "science" of *historical* materialism,

• if communist intellectuality must now mobilize new types of intellectual resources[65], so as not to sterilize its relative autonomy of thought in an autarkic retreat obsessed with independence,

• then 21st-century communists must learn to intertwine in new ways specifically political thought and other forms of thought, specifically communist intellectuality and other intellectualities, while making limited use of philosophies that unfold under conditions of emancipatory creations of political, artistic, scientific, and romantic orders.
On this point, the intellectual resources of Badiou's philosophy are decisive: our seven crossings do not constitute a liberation (if it is true—as I have already repeated—that it is a matter for the intellectualities internal to the four conditions to shed light on areas of thought where philosophy is voiceless).

Essentially, the intellectual resources of Alain Badiou's philosophy inscribe the following four Affirmations in a modern rationality:

• There is not only what is, because there is also what happens eventally;

• There are not only bodies and languages, for there are also singular, universal, eternal, and absolute truths.

• There are not only animals and human individuals, for there are also collective subjects, activists of these truths.

• There are not only the social, cultural, technical, and sexual activities of human beings, for there is also humanity's collective capacity to create politics, arts, sciences, and loves.
However activists, musicians, mathematicians, and lovers who subscribe to this philosophy must be careful not to remain stuck in it (just as this philosophy is careful not to become bound by its own particular conditions) and not to allow themselves to be carried away by the anarchistic temptation of anti-philosophies.

Inescapable long marches, advancing on two fronts!

●●●

Translated by Daniel Barry and Frank Ruda

1 I would like to refer you to my personal website (https://fnicolas1947.fr) for the various intellectual backgrounds to this text. The communist website *Longues marches* (https://longues-marches.fr) also contains numerous articles (particularly in the journal *Longues marches)* on the question of a new type of communist politics in the 21st century.
2 Of course, a given philosophy freely selects, chooses, and decides which events will "condition" it, without being under any absurd obligation to be exhaustive and to include "all" artistic, scientific, and political events: a philosophy is not an encyclopedia! The validity of its choices can then be seen in their philosophical (rather than artistic, political, or scientific) fertility.
3 Resonances between different types of reasoning... [Translator's remark: This is a neologism created by F.N. that resonates in the English neologism "reasonance"].
4 **Heterophony** allows several heterogeneous voices to coexist peacefully through the intertwining of polyphonic cooperation, antiphonal emulation, and juxtaposed companionship.
5 I have been reading Alain Badiou's philosophy since 1966 (via *Cahiers pour l'analyse)* and have followed it very closely since my militant encounter with Alain Badiou in 1971.
6 Mathematics-music-philosophy
7 "*O severe mathematics, thank you for the countless services you have rendered me.*" Lautréamont (1869)
8 Strictly speaking, there is no *musical language* (the expression is only valid metaphorically).
9 I devoted the third volume of my tetralogy *Le monde-Musique* to a specific examination of *musical intellectuality:*https://www.musicae.fr/livre-Le-monde-Musique-III-de-Francois-Nicolas-154-96.html
10 **What is the point of** wanting, desiring, hoping? **It is futile** for nihilists, since the choice would only be between *wanting nothing* (*active* nihilism*)*, *not wanting something* (*passive* nihilism*)*, or assuming that *wanting is nothing* (*neutral* nihilism*)*.
11 By this I mean the intellectualities involved in the emancipatory processes of humanity...
12 The *Grothendieck* revolution characterizes the **point** by its dynamic ability to **point**: the point thus becomes a **pointing** operator**,** a "point of view."
13 As far as I am concerned, see the activities of the communist pole *Longues marches*: https://longues-marches.fr
14 From this point of view, the expression "*communist hypothesis*" seems inappropriate to me since, by definition, a **hypothesis** involves a verification procedure capable of invalidating it, whereas an **orientation** involves a long march that will be renewed and regenerated by assessments of experience. As I will return to later, if there is a *communist hypothesis,* it concerns the proletariat, not communism as such.
15 Let us make the following distinction: **orientation** is a matter for the compass; **positioning** is a matter for the sextant; **steering** (in the sense of **deciding on a direction)** is a matter of choice once the two previous points have been established.
16 In the lexicon of *Logics of Worlds*, it can be argued that our era is one of **obscure** (and therefore nihilistic) subjects, rather than **reactionary** subjects **(**i.e., subjects who, at the end of the 20th century, were openly counter-revolutionary and anti-communist).
17 There is indeed a being of appearing (just as being or being-there is indeed a being), but appearing inscribes a "apart."
18 In this case, dialectics strictly speaking does not concern being (this is, moreover, the central orientation of *Being and Event)* but only being or appearing (then understood as *being-apart)*. But then we come up against this more technically philosophical point: if it is indeed the nature of being to appear, and if appearing does indeed return to being in such a way that being is affected by appearing (theses of *Logics of Worlds*), how could the dialectic of being/being-there not also necessarily be an internal dialectic of being (otherwise, what would be the proper ontological basis for the necessity of being to appear, a necessity that is ignored in the ontology of *Being and Event)*?
19 See my article in issue 3 (October 2024) of the communist journal *Longues marches* (https://longues-marches.fr/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/3-F-maths.pdf)
20 To simplify, let us say that we exist **in** a world (according to the intensity of its immanent transcendental logic) but that we ek-sist at this world (according to a subjective intensity that belongs to another logic, relatively autonomous from the previous one).
21 The communist orientation allows us to sketch out a general system of **parameters**, but we are not currently able to precisely situate a new type of political organization within it, to pinpoint it with precise **coordinates** in this general parameterization (except negatively: we know that it will no longer be, strictly speaking, a party, let alone a party of the proletariat...).
22 But music as consolation in times of distress is only cheap music, stripped of its own affirmative power! Even so, a consoling love would then be worth only "for lack of anything better"...
23 On this point, the communist group *Longues marches* talks about circles (it only takes three activists from different generations to form a communist circle, just as it only takes three non-aligned points to draw a geometric circle).
24 I am in no way referring here to Sylvain Lazarus' *Anthropology,* which was (as I will

discuss at greater length in note 42) merely the beginning of an uninterrupted, step-by-step liquidation of any prospect of communist politics.
25 "*The desire proper to philosophy is nothing other than to produce nothing.*" (February 13, 1991; Seminar *Theory of Evil, Theory of Love; p*. 109)
26 The communist orientation maintains that, strategically, it is internal **failure** that causes external **defeat**, not the other way around (see the Maoist primacy given to internal causes...).
27 See, for example, "*Only Love Is Heterosexual*" (April 10, 1991).
28 See *In Praise of Love* (2009).
29 Note the synchrony with the global political shift resulting from the failure of the Communist Revolution that began in China in 1958 and led to its defeat after Mao's death in 1976...
30 I note here a long-standing disagreement with Alain Badiou, specifically on the following point: should we (as I believe) consider *dodecaphonism* and *serialism* as two separate entities, or can we (as he argues) consider them as two successive modalities of the same compositional orientation? In either case, *serialism* will not, of course, refer to exactly the same musical orientation of thought...
31 I devoted my book *La singularité Schoenberg* to this point..
32 The entire 2022-2023 season of the *mamuphi* seminar was devoted to examining this hypothesis, essentially validating it—a collective book will soon publish the proceedings.
33 My compositional hypothesis here is this: the serial problem is obstructed by an endogenous defect in harmonic syntax, a defect that must now be taken into account (all my future compositional work aims to address this point) in order to reconfigure contemporary music.
34 Here, we should link the debate on romanticism/modernity to the old philosophical debate of the 1920s between Georg Lukács, a proponent of neoclassicism, and Ernst Bloch, a proponent of expressionism...
35 It can be seen that music is not strictly speaking a condition for Alain Badiou's philosophy, but that it serves him (due to the philosopher's longstanding intimacy with this art) as a perfectly legitimate field of illustrations and examples. Need I point out that this fact is actually a blessing for musicians, who are thus spared the burden of philosophical discourse credited with coming from outside to tell the truth about their art: woe to those artists who, in search of recognition, pledge allegiance to philosophers (who, incidentally, are often powerless to help them!). For more details, see my articles on *Schoenberg* and *Wagner* in *The Badiou Dictionary* (ed. by Steven Corcoran; Edinburgh University Press; 2015).
36 See my texts examining these different volumes on my website: https://fnicolas1947.fr/intellectualites
37 It should be noted, however, that in *Logics of Worlds,* topos refer to Lawvere's **elementary** topos (relating to mathematical logic) rather than Grothendieck's **sheaf** topos (relating to algebraic geometry) – a day of the *mamuphi* seminar will be devoted to examining this point on April 11, 2026.
38 Starting with algebra with Galois, geometry with Gauss and then Riemann, analysis with Cauchy, arithmetic with Dedekind, etc.
39 Schwartz distributions, Kurzweil-Henstock integrals, Hironaka's algebraic singularities, Grothendieck's sheaf theory, Lawvere's synthetic differential geometry...
40 *Marx's mathematical manuscripts* contain only incidental reflections: in his own words, Marx practiced differential calculus as others do crossword puzzles, to relax. And he practiced it according to the ill-founded infinitesimal calculus of Leibniz and Newton, which had nevertheless been replaced several decades earlier by Cauchy's modern analysis. To take these manuscripts as a Marxist approach to mathematics is a deplorable misunderstanding that unfortunately persisted until the heart of the Cultural Revolution...
41 Of which I was a member from 1971 until its self-dissolution in 1985.
42 Let us restore the "diagnosis": "*As a category of politics, the term revolution is assigned to a unique situation. That is why I would say that, since the end of the revolutionary mode of politics [1794], the category of revolution has* been saturated *and can no longer be used to think about other political singularities. The revolution took place only once: between 1792 and 1794. It must be said to be exhausted.* [*...] There was only one revolution, and that was the French Revolution.*" (*The Category of Revolution in the French Revolution*; Conférence du Perroquet; March 1988)
It is retroactively clear that this was the second theoretical step in an undertaking of political liquidation (which I detail a little here because of its entanglement with the category of *saturation*, central to Alain Badiou's 2018 assessment of the Cultural Revolution):
• Lazarus's first step having established (in the early 1980s) that politics was broken down into singularities (monadically closed in on themselves) that he called "modes,"
• once everyone had accepted that communist politics could no longer be *Marxist-Leninist* (hence the closure of the UCF-ml in 1985 to join the ill-named *Political Organization*), communist politics could no longer—according to him!—aspire to *be revolutionary*;
• then, still according to him, since emancipation policy no longer really had to call itself *communist*,
• all that remained for Lazarus to do was to invalidate the idea of political emancipation in

order to liquidate any real prospect of organized militancy.
We also know the central role played in this liquidation by the anti-philosophical promotion of his anthropological nominalism...
43 And in this case, to whose benefit? If not to the benefit of social democratic reformism, then to whose benefit?
44 In a sense, what else is Alessandro Russo doing in his remarkable book *Cultural Revolution and Revolutionary Culture* (Duke University Press; 2020) if not precisely examining the revolutionary culture capable of accounting for the Cultural Revolution?
45 Badiou speaks (p. 8) of mobilizing "*all the classic attributes of revolutions*" to describe the sequence of the GRCP.
46 Badiou classically focuses the category of *revolution* on the question of power (rather than on the social relations that need to be revolutionized): "*By 'revolution' we can only mean the articulation of antagonistic political forces on the question of power. The question of revolution is ultimately that of power*" (p. 52).
47 Hence, the book hardly agrees to call a seizure of power that follows a civil war (rather than, *classically,* preceding it) *a revolution*: "*The seizure of power by the CCP just after the end of World War II [...] is not adequately described by the word* 'revolution*.' Admittedly, Russia also experienced a long (at least four years) and fierce civil war. But this civil war followed, rather than preceded, the Bolsheviks' seizure of central power, so that this seizure of power can, at least approximately, be described as a 'revolution'*" (p. 7).
48 Alain Badiou makes it clear (p. 95) that "*Mao in no way makes the determination of the enemy the essence of politics (as Carl Schmitt does). Its essence is to resolve contradictions within the people.* " (p. 95) But it must be noted that the concrete contradictions at stake here are absent, for a specific reason that I will explain: in 1966, the contradictions within the people that needed to be resolved were inherited from the *People's Communes* event that had occurred nearly ten years earlier and had since been politically mistreated.
49 p. 71
50 What was true of the bourgeois state (it is better to take it than to build another) still holds true, at least in part, of the socialist state (as the Chinese example amply demonstrates, taking the lead is by no means sufficient to implement communist policy on a mass scale!
51 The Red Guards were "*armed with the single slogan of 'the struggle of the new against the old'*" (p. 63).
52 The right wing of the CCP skillfully took advantage of the limitations and dead ends of this voluntarist leftism...
53 We dare not entertain the disastrous hypothesis that the workers of Shanghai thus displayed a class contempt for the peasants, similar to that which isolated the Paris Commune from the French countryside...
54 The political oddity, unresolved and therefore a sign of unnoticed obstruction, is that Chinese workers seem to have remained on the sidelines of the People's Communes, and that peasants did the same during the Cultural Revolution.
55 For which Fabio Lanza's work is absolutely decisive...
56 p. 71
57 p. 77
58 Let us recall this point, as improbable as it is ignored: **socialist planning,** the cornerstone of any construction of socialism, was simply interrupted from 1963 to 1965, so that the Third Five-Year Plan, succeeding the second (1958-1962), was not implemented until 1966. The Chinese socialist economy thus wandered without centralized planning for three years in a row!
59 In the book *Petrograd, Shanghai,* this motif is central to understanding the failure of the Cultural Revolution (see pp. 49-50, 85-86): "*The word 'revolution' itself is at the heart of saturation*" (p. 49).
It must be noted that this motif of saturation, with its inevitable liquidationist destiny (a saturated situation cannot be desaturated: it must be abandoned), is explicitly borrowed from Lazarus, who made it a centerpiece of his *Anthropology of the Name* in the late 1980s*...*
60 The circular of May 16, 1966, launched the Cultural Revolution under the banner of a *classical* revolution: *"This circular clearly states that it must be maintained that 'without destruction, there can be no construction'"* (p. 63). Hence, throughout the Cultural Revolution, there was a constant political discrepancy between *modern* discourse and *classical* discourse*.*
61 In doing so, I shift the focus of Badiou's book in two ways:
1) the decisive singularity is less the obvious one of *Mao's* name (p. 83) than the more essential but ignored one of *the proletariat*;
2) *singularity* refers less to a doubling (that of a "*representation of representation*" – p. 82) than to an indiscernibility of two global opposites at a specific point, which is then marked by a completely unique phenomenological property (the tip of the cone is its only non-smooth place).
62 It should be noted that the Cultural Revolution was able to dialecticize three different types of negativity. Thus, the *16-point Decision* of August 1966 declared: "*At present, our goal is to crush those who are engaged in the capitalist road, to criticize the reactionaries, and to reform all branches of the* superstructure." " (p. 90). In other words, **classical** negation with regard to capitalists, **intuitionist** negation with regard

to reactionaries, and **paraconsistent** negation with regard to reform and contradictions within the people. This implicitly opens a breach in an overly *classical* conception of revolution...

63 I prefer to maintain the plurality of modernities, leaving it to philosophy (if necessary) to subsume them under a single concept of *Modernity*, just as I cautiously maintain the plurality of the arts, sciences, politics, and loves, leaving it to philosophy (if necessary) to produce its own concepts of *Art, Science, Politics*, and *Love* (concepts that the various specific intellectualities have little need for in reality).

64 Thus, a ***musical*** theory of music differs radically from any philosophical (Adorno), mathematical (Euler), historical, sociological, psychoanalytical, or musicological theory of music.

65 Just as there were three **sources** of Marxism (French utopian socialism, English political economy, and German dialectical philosophy), the communist pole *Longues Marches* argues that 21st-century communism has three intellectual **resources**: the Chinese Communist Revolution (1958-1976), modern and contemporary mathematics, and French philosophies of truth subjects (from Bachelard and Lautman to Badiou, via Sartre and Lacan). For more details, see its website https://longues-marches.fr

An Encounter with Alain Badiou at Beijing University

Claudia Pozzana

I met Alain Badiou in China at Peking University in October 1975. In reality, Badiou had never been to China before, and that meeting was the ideal prelude to a long and deep friendship. It was a stroke of luck, but also a necessary logic. I had just begun my studies at the Department of Philosophy at Beida, Peking University. We were a small group of foreign students, including a Canadian classmate who had *Théorie de la contradiction* in her hands. She had been to Paris and found it at FNAC, then the leading bookshop in the French capital. She passed the book to me and Alessandro Russo, also a classmate, saying with a disconsolate air, 'I don't understand it at all'. I still have the copy she used as scrap paper to write addresses on. For us, however, the book was immediately exciting, challenging, but crystal clear. It was the right book at the right time.

We had both chosen the Department of Philosophy, then one of only three options available to foreign students, along with History and Literature. I had graduated in Chinese Language and Literature from the University of Venice Ca' Foscari with a thesis on the main magazine of the May Fourth Movement of 1919, *Xin Qingnian* (New Youth). It would have been more logical to choose Literature or History. Moreover, I had no specialist training in philosophy, except for private lessons from my brother, who had written his thesis on Sartre, and some exchanges with his wife, who had written her thesis on Merleau-Ponty. In short, I had a smattering of 'family' knowledge of contemporary French philosophy, as well as having read a little Althusser, because he recognised Mao as a great philosopher, albeit with some critical reservations, the importance of which I underestimated at the time. I knew very little about Badiou. What little I knew was that he had been part of the Althusserian school, from which he had later distanced himself, but I did not understand exactly why, and he had written some texts on mathematical logic that were far removed from my intellectual horizon.

Théorie de la contradiction, just published by Maspero in the 'Collection Yenan', a very Maoist name, was in tune with what I was about to begin studying at the Department of Philosophy at Beida. I had chosen philosophy because I felt that at that moment it was the most direct way to get in touch with the Chinese intellectual scene, and also because a French friend who had studied there the year before had spoken enthusiastically about a very lively atmosphere. The History and the Literature Departments, on the other hand, seemed more rigid and bureaucratic. There had been little interesting new literature in China for many years (only later did I discover that there was some valuable underground poetry that would emerge a few years later). History was halfway between interesting developments, such as a re-evaluation of legalist political thought, and a kind of block on the entire political history of the 20th century after May 4th, because some CCP leaders had been the subject of drastic, but as yet undefined, criticism.

So, the Philosophy Department at Beida was the best choice for me, and I fully agreed with Alessandro, who had no doubts about it. The encounter with *Théorie de la contradiction* was electrifying for both of us. We were to take courses on Marxist philosophy, with particular reference to classical German philosophy and, of course, Mao's philosophy, both the theory of knowledge and dialectics. Holding in our hands the book of a contemporary philosopher, already known as a prominent figure in France's intellectual and political landscape, which focused on a central theme in Mao's thought, immediately seemed to us an exciting broadening of our horizons. We encountered a French philosophical thought that originated in 1968, at the very moment we were studying philosophy in China during the Cultural Revolution.

In *Théorie de la contradiction*, one could sense the tone of a political activist (the 'Collection Yenan' was published by the political organisation founded by Badiou himself, the UCF-ML), but also the style of an original philosopher, who brought into play the most original innovations in French thought of those years, such as the 'return to Freud' by Lacan: primary process and secondary process, were widely quoted, for example. But there were also trenchant aphorisms: 'if things do not change, it is men who die'.

We studied it and also discussed it in university courses with our Chinese professors, in a context of great intellectual vivacity. How false and slanderous is the denigration of the Chinese intellectual and political climate of the mid-1970s after the capitalist restoration in China! Indeed, who knows what developments might have ensued from the innovations we encountered at the Beida Department of Philosophy, which were made even more stimulating by our encounter with Badiou's philosophy.

What made the atmosphere at Beida's Department of Philosophy particularly innovative was the presence of the Institute for Research on European Philosophy (*Ouzhou zhexue yanjiusuo*), to which some of our teachers belonged and with which we were in fairly regular contact. We even accepted an invitation to give two lectures in Chinese to the researchers at the Institute on European Philosophy. What youthful recklessness, but also what enthusiasm, and what encouragement from our teachers, who certainly knew much more than we did, but let us speak as if we were their colleagues. This is another example of the intellectual and pedagogical climate of the time.

In any case, Alessandro and I presented a two-part lecture at the Institute for Philosophical Research on the reception of Mao's philosophy in Europe, one on *Théorie de la contradiction* and the other on *Contradiction et surdétermination* by Althusser. Another French student, François Gipouloux, gave a report on Sartre in 1968. The Canadian students (who came from American universities) chose Wittgenstein and Popper instead. There was both a political and a philosophical division between analytical and continental philosophers.

But the innovations of the Institute for Research in European Philosophy were not limited to the cordiality with which young foreign students were welcomed. There were at least two aspects that made it such an important philosophical centre at that time. First of all, the Institute's opening was strongly supported by Mao, who also decisively influenced the appointment of the director and deputy director. Well, one detail that no one could ever believe in the climate of 'total denial' that has covered Maoist politics for half a century is the criterion by which Mao chose the Institute's main leaders. He expressly wanted them to be two great non-Marxist scholars. Not just any two scholars, because one was the Chinese translator of *Sein und Zeit*, the other a student of Schlick, a leading exponent of the Vienna School. It should be noted that the choice fell on the two main trends in European philosophy, 'continental' and 'analytical', of which Mao was clearly aware.

But why not Marxists? Because Chinese Marxist philosophers had been trained in the Soviet Union and therefore had strong prejudices against European philosophy, particularly classical German philosophy, which in Stalinist doctrine was classified as idealism and therefore foreign to the framework of 'historical materialism and dialectical materialism'. The Institute for Research on European Philosophy, on the other hand, paid particular attention to classical German philosophy, thanks to another great philosopher, Zhang Shiying, whose memorable lectures on Hegel we were fortunate enough to attend, and who was another element in our encounter with Badiou. In fact, in that very year, Badiou was engaged in a long-distance dialogue with Zhang Shiying, which was published the following year in the last volume of the Yenan Collection's philosophical series, *Le noyau rationnel de la dialectique hégélienne*. The translation was by Joel Bellassen, who had been a student at Beida's Department of Philosophy the year before us and had warmly recommended the intellectual qualities of its teachers.

This dialogue between Badiou and Zhang covered philosophical themes of great significance, both because it concerned a monumental work such as *Science of Logic* and because the 'rational kernel' had been, since Marx, the *vexata quaestio* of the whole of Marxist philosophy. The two philosophers converged on the problem of a new reading of Hegel. For Badiou, it was a question of overcoming the horizon of a phenomenological reading that had prevailed in France in previous decades. This text contained *in nuce* the orientation of Badiou's reading of Hegel, which he would develop in the elaboration of his philosophical system. For Zhang Shiying, the problem was how to move away from the Stalinist reading, positively re-evaluating Hegel's idealism, which he considered a response to the 'vulgar materialism' of the philosophers of the French Revolution. In his lectures at Beida, he reminded us that Lenin not only had great esteem for Hegel, but also emphasised the active value of the Absolute Spirit. Although Zhang did not quote him directly, the

thorny problem posed by Mao's philosophy to the Stalinist conception was clearly visible in the background when he said, 'Spirit transforms into matter, matter transforms into spirit'.

However, even though we were in the Philosophy Department of China's most important university during the last two years of the Cultural Revolution, studying the philosophical texts of Engels and Lenin, as well as Mao, our professors were very careful not to overlap philosophical and political concepts; if anything, they discouraged our 'youthful' tendency to do so. On the other hand, as regards the relationship between philosophy and politics, the orientation they emphasised was what Badiou later called the 'political condition' of philosophy. Obviously, they did not use that concept, and it was only retrospectively, thanks to Badiou, that we understood the attitude towards politics that we saw in our professors in the Department of Philosophy at the time.

For example, when Zhang Shiying re-evaluated Hegel's idealism, he considered it 'conditional' on the outcome of the defeat of the French Revolution. Similarly, in another course we were taking on Lenin's *Materialism and Empiriocriticism* (we had to read it in Chinese too!), Feng Qi, also a great specialist in European philosophy, emphasised that at the origin of that text was Lenin's concern to counter the tendency towards the dissolution of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in the aftermath of the defeat of the 1905 revolution. In both cases, an essential driver of the philosophical concept was the 'political condition'.

There is certainly much more to say about that 'first encounter' with Badiou at Beida, but even more about what I learned thanks to the privilege of being able to follow closely, on the basis of a personal friendship, the construction and development of a great contemporary philosophical system. To limit myself to one crucial aspect, the category of 'conditions of philosophy' involves the singularity of each of the 'truth procedures' as Badiou calls them, that is, the different modes of rationality in the fields not only of politics but also of science, art and love.

That conception, a crucial turning point in contemporary philosophy, was for me a factor of intellectual liberation, which gave a great impetus to my study and translation of contemporary Chinese poetry. It prompted me to read that poetry in its singularity of thought, or as the Chinese poets themselves said, as an 'independent intellectual space', without having to inscribe it in a 'worldview'. Moreover, in the 1990s, while formulating his theory of the 'conditions' of philosophy, Badiou remained critical of a tendency to suture poetry and philosophy together, present above all in Heidegger's conception of poetry as the original source of thought.

In translating and presenting in Italy the new Chinese poets known as *menglong*, 'obscure' (in reality very clear, as when Lucretius wrote "obscura de re tam lucida pango carmina"), I was therefore supported by both these aspects of Badiou's philosophical position towards poetry. In other words, I cultivated a great admiration for the singular depth of

these authors' poetic thought and the care taken not to seek a fusion with philosophical thought. A fusion that at the time seemed to me to serve as a substitute for a supposed 'end of philosophy', which was quite fashionable at the time. With regard to the formula of 'poetic thinking,' which various friends suggested to me as the main way to read poetry, I proposed that the wave of new Chinese poetry that had emerged underground in the 1970s was rather 'thinking poetry'.

Furthermore, the category of 'condition', by focusing on the singularity of the tasks of philosophical speculation, can be said to have itself performed the function of 'condition' for the creation and development of the great philosophical system set out in the monumental trilogy *L'être et l'événement* (which also includes *Logiques des mondes* and *L'immanence des vérités*). These are challenging but compelling readings, fortunately supported by some slim volumes that summarise the crucial points of his philosophical system with great didactic dynamism. I am referring here to the first and second *Manifeste pour la philosophie,* as well as *L'éthique*, a text that I was so passionate about that I immediately undertook its Italian translation. Ethics was placed there as a link between ontology and logic, and in fact marked the transition between *L'être et l'événement* and *Logiques des mondes*. Breaking with the moralistic vision of a 'general ethics' (which at the time was the now-outdated 'human rights' and 'respect for differences'), Badiou reformulated the question in terms of an 'ethics of', that is, an ethics of truths. This helped me to understand why Paul Celan said "the truth of poetry is its pure and simple being available".

The third part of the trilogy, although centred on a dizzying dialogue on 20th-century mathematics, proved to be unvaluable resource for my reading and translation of the new generation of migrant worker poets in China. I presented a reading of it at the collective seminar on *L'immanence des vérités*, proposing that the Chinese worker-poets seek an infinity of poetic truth, rejecting all finitude (economic, state, ideological and even religious) by which they are '*recouvert'* and made invisible in contemporary China. As I said at the time, I do not know whether this is a mathematical concept, but when these nomadic proletarians declare that their poetic existence is an 'immense singular number', they act in the light of the immanence of truths.

Too Close, Still Missing

Valerio Romitelli

Almost half a century. That's a very long time. When does one ever have the opportunity to revisit, rethink, and re-discuss things said and done almost fifty years ago? It's a privilege. Releasing this distant interview is an emotional experience. For two reasons, I say, precisely to imitate Badiou's style, who often punctuates his words with numerals. The first is that, despite all the time that has passed, this interview still doesn't seem distant to me at all. On the contrary, it's almost too close. The second is that it still seems lacking, affected by that same sense of loss that made this interview so long, driven by the desire to never stop asking, as if the true object of our discussion remained elusive. Let me explain. Why too close? Because, in my opinion, the fundamental questions still remain more or less the same. That is to say, in the most general terms possible: how can we be there, how can we count; how can we assert ourselves alongside all those who usually aren't there, don't count, are worthless? How then can we be there, count, assert ourselves, not by blending in with our peers without recognized qualities and following them in revolts or transgressive behaviour, but by trying to reduce the differences in power over others? It is precisely around such questions that all the endless controversies on Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism revolved in the interview. Nor was anything else at stake in all the discussions surrounding the then, and to some extent still to this day, highly renowned French intellectuals, of whom the interview always reports. Not being by vocation a philosopher or an intellectual, particularly well-versed in any field of knowledge, my aspiration at the time was in fact none other than to be a militant communist, so to speak, up-to-date. That is, inspired above all by the little or much I knew about the Cultural Revolution in China, in particular, the attempts pursued there to revive what had been one of the clearest, greatest, and most difficult objectives to emerge from Marx's work: attempting, above all, to reduce the differences between intellectual and manual labour. My experience in this regard in Italy had been both exhilarating and disappointing. I had conducted it within one of the many fragments of the PCI (m-l), a small party founded in 1966 and nevertheless recognized by China, where our leader had even met Mao himself. An exhilarating experience, because I had experienced the passions and stimuli of militant activity in a collective that was certainly political but disinterested. A disappointing experience, because the intellectual poverty of its leaders forced it into sterile dogmatic exercises aimed solely at pleasing what was supposedly pleasing to the Chinese parent company. As this experience was winding down, Maoist France had begun to seem like an El Dorado to me. A country then at the centre of global high culture, a country then heir to that position of excellence in knowledge and thought that Germany had held before the Nazi devastation, a country whose most famous universities had given rise to such a fascinating phenomenon as structuralism, a country whose intellectual peaks were largely seduced by Maoism: what more could

one ask for? Thus, my encounter with Badiou in the mid-1970s was a kind of love at first sight, crowning my enthusiasm for what I believed was truly revolutionary in France at the time. Meanwhile, I met Alessandro Russo during a meeting commemorating Mao's death, organized by the extra-parliamentary Italian Workers' Movement for Socialism. We were offered to edit a series for a publishing house that went bankrupt shortly afterward. Before that, our primary intention was to translate and publish a text by Badiou, *Théorie de la contradiction*, which was to be preceded by the interview proposed here. From a political perspective, there were no disagreements among the three participants. By then, we knew what we no longer lacked: the party. What we lacked, above all, was a precise indication of what could replace it and how. The search, therefore focused primarily on which political organization to adopt. "Political organization" was the name given to itself by a group of comrades that Badiou later led and that I personally followed for years. Like every other collective body not subservient to capital, however, it ended up dissolving. And for some time now.

The interest of the interview published here lies in its occurrence at the end of the 1970s, when the irreversible dissolution of all the revolutionary experiments attempted during the decade surrounding 1968 began to emerge. This dissolution also led to the decline of France itself as a country of global cultural excellence. With the rise of neoliberal ideology, the intellectual devitalization emanating from the United States left no escape route. Technique and technology seemed to have become the only topics worth discussing in depth. This was also in keeping with the impending world war, the most likely outcome of which is anticipated by the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

Long before this abysmal scenario began to unfold, Badiou dedicated himself to building an immense philosophical system aimed at understanding and revitalizing political research within a set of experiences he called "procedures of truth", including art, science, and love. And it gives me great satisfaction to have remained faithful to this path, even while reinterpreting it in my own way. The question still remains: what was missing from this journey, and what is still missing from it? The answer for me would be the same: political activism. The conditional tense is obviously necessary, however, given that there is no way, either in Italy or elsewhere, to satisfy this desire. Even less, it can be satisfied through philosophy, as one might ultimately deduce from Badiou's intellectual journey.

Why not consider instead that a necessary condition for political engagement, never truly reworked since the explosion of '68, is ideology? Why not reconsider, for the umpteenth time, what Lenin said as early as 1902: that to combat the ideology of capitalism, a new ideology is needed? Why not acquire the entire vast anti-ideological literature, to which Badiou himself contributed in his youth, and try to think positively

about a new ideology instead? Why couldn't its goal be to promote the need for experiences that finally reduce the differences between manual and intellectual labor? Examples of this kind abound. The extraordinary, incredibly tenacious struggle of the GKN factory workers in Campi Bizenzio, on the outskirts of Florence, demonstrates this. However, it lacks a supporting ideology. It is to theorize something of this kind that I am working. Always striving to continue the path whose beginnings this interview chronicled back in 1978.

Badiou's Passage – The End of Antiphilosophy

Frank Ruda

Abstract: This article examines the function of the last antiphilosopher, Lacan, in Badiou's oeuvre and argues that philosophy is systematically determined by at least two historicizing operators: one it encounters through identifying events taking place in what Badiou calls conditions (they impact philosophy's concept of truth) and one originating in antiphilosophy (and have an impact on philosophy's concept of the subject). It is the latter that can help resuscitate philosophy in times of a crisis of philosophy – which is why its two paradigms are Marx(ism) and psychoanalysis. The present article examines Badiou's concept of philosophy vis-à-vis the latter.

Keywords: Badiou, antiphilosophy, conditions, Lacan, historicization, subject, sophistry.

> "Lacan's genius lay in seeing that... if a truth cannot originate from its being given, it must be because it has its origin in a disappearance." (A. Badiou)[1]

> "Is it one living being that doth
> One life through dear division run?
> Or are these two, self-chosen, and both
> Fain to be known as one.
>
> The meaning true I will divine
> Whereby to make such riddles plain;
> Feelest thou not in these songs of mine
> That I am one and twain." (J.W. Goethe)[2]

> "Antiphilosophy is always what, at its very extremes, states the new duty of philosophy, or its new possibility in the figure of a new duty." (A. Badiou)[3]

0. Modern Inadaptation

In 1954 Jacques Lacan declared, "modern man has become singularly unused to broaching the grand themes. He prefers to resolve things in terms of conduct, of adaptation, of group morale and other twaddle."[4] The grand themes were those addressed in the "fundamental dialogues on justice and courage in the great dialectical tradition",[5] grand themes that, now, have become matters of idle talk, rigmarole and babble. They have been replaced and overwritten by explanation of social dynamics, group orientation and habitualization that unexplain modern man's second nature. Thus these grand themes became obscure. Modern man has replaced a second nature apt for tackling grand themes in their singular

existence with a nature that de-issues these issues, de-dialecticizes dialectics and turns courage and justice into, at best, mere social customs and collective habits. But what these grand themes of the dialectical tradition also concerned is, ultimately, nothing less than the knot of "being, truth and the subject."[6] The problematic undoing of this knot and its substitution therefore cannot but produce a whole series of problems and questions. Is such covering-over that appears to have incapacitated modern man complete and unchangeable? Or are there still resources left to be tapped into? Is there and can there ever, even, be any proper history or historicity of man without these grand themes? Did the tradition run out of steam? Was it hijacked and overpowered? Or is modern mankind ill-equipped to keep up with the grand themes because it has proved unable to reinvent and to modernize them? Where does the specifically modern inadaptation – to the grand themes – come from?

My hypothesis in the following will be that Lacan, in raising this very issue, gestures toward a radical renewal of the grand themes and therewith provides the condition for a renewal of philosophy. Lacanian psychoanalysis allows for the reactivation, as it were, of a certain desire that had been fenced off and foreclosed, and it is precisely such desire that, in a historically specific conjuncture, is crucial for the rebirth not only of the grand themes but also of the dialectical tradition – i.e. philosophy – in modernity and for modern man. All this, as articulated by Alain Badiou. But this is, apparently, only possible under a series of conditions, one of them being that "Lacan offers an occasion to think the real nature of the desire of philosophy."[7] So, even though Lacan is often harshly critical of philosophy, this critique must, for Badiou, be read against the background of the fact that under modern conditions, psychoanalysis and philosophy are also, in a certain sense, allies. For "philosophy and psychoanalysis" – both – "make no sense without a desire for something to take place other than the place."[8] It is Lacanian psychoanalysis that allows philosophy to once more gather the courage[9] to take another step, to go one step further. Since philosophy can learn from (Lacanian) psychoanalysis that "we can always go one step further."[10] This means in the delineated context that "antiphilosophy educates philosophy to be in modernity."[11]

Yet it is instructive to provide an analysis of what incapacitated modern man and modern philosophy in the first place – for if properly understood, such an incapacity can be raised to a point of impossibility and then reformatted. Crucial for any consideration of Lacan's placement in Badiou's corpus is therefore the precise frame of the diagnosis of the self-incarceration, self-enclosure, and exhaustion that befalls not only modern man, but also philosophy. Such an exhaustion is not – at least not necessarily – the result of an intervention of a non- or a-philosophical outsider. Rather it is systematically self-imposed. An exhaustion of philosophy brought about by philosophy itself – philosophy thereby becoming the insult that adds another injury to the already existing injury.[12]

Its self-exhaustion affects philosophy's ability to tackle the grand themes and ultimately suspends all of philosophy's actual potential for and of thought. Sure, philosophy's ill-health has been diagnosed, repeatedly, under the name nihilism.[13] But this is not identical to the psychoanalytic diagnosis. Rather it is philosophy's own self-diagnosis (as if it started googling its symptoms and pretended to professionally interpret what it found online). This auto-diagnostic auto-incapacitation is one of the reasons that psychoanalysis positions itself as anti-dote to philosophy. It is one of the reasons why it positions itself as an antiphilosophy. Antiphilosophy then becomes not an evaluative term, but rather a purely functional descriptor. However this does not necessarily mean, as Alain Grosrichard once stated, that for antiphilosophy "it was not a question... of considering philosophy as a whole as an enemy to be vanquished" but rather "to be an 'antiphilosopher' is still to be a philosopher but in a different way."[14]

Yet if antiphilosophy were just philosophy done differently the "anti" in antiphilosopher appears to be a misnomer. Different from seeing in it primarily a change of the philosophical modus operandi (or of its discursive organization), it appears, rather, to be comparable to the way in which Deleuze once approached Nietzsche – another antiphilosopher –'s thought. For Deleuze stated that "if we do not discover is target the whole of Nietzsche's" – and Lacan's – (anti-)"philosophy remains abstract and barely comprehensible."[15] It is Slavoj Žižek who has elaborated instructively how we can comprehend what this means for Lacanian psychoanalysis. Žižek diagnosed that the philosophical conjuncture in which Lacan declared to rise up against philosophy – so the philosophy against which Lacan takes up his arms – is a very specific one: "it is already the post-Hegelian philosophy itself which, in its three main branches (analytical philosophy, phenomenology, Marxism), conceives of itself as "antiphilosophy", "not-anymore-philosophy".... One is therefore tempted to risk the hypothesis that what Lacan's "antiphilosophy" opposes is this very philosophy qua antiphilosophy: what if Lacan's own theoretical practice involves a kind of *return to philosophy*?"[16]

In the following, I will fundamentally agree with Žižek's claim that Lacanian antiphilosophy allows for a return and a novel beginning of – dialectical – philosophy.[17] However, it does so, as I will argue with Badiou, in a conjuncture that is not only saturated by the three not-any-more-philosophies Žižek enumerates, but also in a historically specific situation that is marked by the powerful effect of one of the last philosophers (post-Hegel), namely Heidegger (who I therefore would not entirely subsume under the signifier "phenomenology"). Badiou's far-reaching effect on the philosophical conjuncture implies that with and after Heidegger philosophy is torn between "hermeneutic orientation..., analytic orientation" and "the postmodern orientation", with the first orientation setting the scene for the two others. This is a scenario in which meaning becomes more relevant than truth, and language becomes

"the great historical transcendental of our times", which leads to the effect that philosophy is "rendered... incapable of sustaining the desire which is proper to it."[18] Philosophy's incapacitation is thus linked to the effective success of Heidegger's project. For he succeeded in turning philosophy Pre-Platonic (and to some extent pre-philosophical) again. Heidegger's was such a powerful turn and turning back of the historical clock of philosophy that Badiou links to the name 'Heidegger' a multi-form suturing of philosophy to one of its conditions (of which Heidegger was the most influential *philosophical* proponent) – to poetry – which in its aftermath manifests in the predominant role of language and the effective suspension of the category of truth.

This is why the philosophical conjuncture in which, for Badiou, Lacan's antiphilosophy is not only saturated by antiphilosophical no-longer-philosophies but it is also structurally undone by "the last universally recognized philosopher"[19] whose thought effectuated an aftermath of a multi-form suture. Suture and saturation lead to a suspension of the dialectical tradition and it is thereby that such a state of philosophy made the incapacitation of modern man worse. It is then this situation into which Lacan's antiphilosophy – in my reading of Badiou – intervenes, and in which it creates the condition of a novel beginning of philosophy.[20] It is in this sense that antiphilosophy "is situated *within* philosophy, because the affirmative philosopher draws very interesting lessons from antiphilosophy itself."[21] Antiphilosophy is a post-anti-philosophical philosophical concept. Antiphilosophy read in this way is a second mode in which the discourse of philosophy – philosophy as practice – is and can be historicized.[22] Not only do novelties in philosophy's condition affect the very concept of truth, but a certain renewal and innovation – namely of its concept of the subject – effectively derives from antiphilosophy. And maybe this is especially true in times of the crisis of philosophy. There is a peculiar negation of negation at play – an exhaustion of philosophy and a negation of exhausted philosophy by antiphilosophy – that allows for what Badiou calls an affirmation. In times of crisis, it can be the best option to up the anti. The guide in the subsequent examination, the master of the following trajectory, *le peut-être-maitre*, will be, unsurprisingly, Badiou.

Yet it is not an easy task to examine the relationship not only between Badiou and Lacan, but more generally between philosophy and this specific form of antiphilosophy. For "it is always perilous to approach Lacan from a philosophical point of view...For... no one is entitled to take this description [i.e. antiphilosophy] lightly."[23] The philosopher in Badiou's rendering is not entitled to take "this description" lightly because it refers to an experience that is "radically exterior and foreign to philosophy"[24] (inter alia because psychoanalytic antiphilosophy is located where philosophy is not: in the clinic). For the antiphilosopher rejects two claims are fundamental for any philosophical position: they reject that there is the

universal power of the concept (i.e. that there is something that can be transmitted without relying on experience). They reject this even if what is transmitted – by and in the medium of the concept – is what is universal in an experience (but thereby exceeds the very form of experience). They also reject that the concept of truth has any practical or orientational validity.[25] Antiphilosophical, then, is any position that emphasizes a (non-) concept that exceeds all concepts (paradigmatically one can think not only of the role of anxiety in Kierkegaard, but also of Lacan's endorsement of Kierkegaard against Hegel[26]). It marks an experiential grounding or, more precisely, an ungroundedness which is so singular and unique that it undermines all possibilities for any universalism of the concept. If it allows for a universalist dimension at all, as for example in Saint Paul who opposed the reasoning of the Greek philosophers on the basis of his Damascus-experience, this is a universalism that is linked to singularity, to which philosophy seems forever unsuitable as it can only bring together singularity with universality under the aegis of the latter and thus at the cost of the former. Such – in this specific sense – an anti-conceptual dimension of experience does not simply challenge conceptual approaches but indeed brings them to ruin. Following this, I will explore how to understand less the existence of but rather more the *philosophical function* of antiphilosophy, and specifically, of Lacanian antiphilosophy in its relation to (Badiouian) philosophy. How, to put it differently, does the singular mode of historicization of philosophy through antiphilosophy operate?

One can start answering this question by emphasizing that despite the foreignness and exteriority to philosophy, the "'antiphilosopher'" is nevertheless "that particular kind of philosopher" – note that an antiphilosopher is a philosopher! – "who opposes the drama of his existence to conceptual constructions, for whom the truth exists, absolutely, but must be encountered, experienced, rather than thought and constructed."[27] Antiphilosophy is thus not an attack per se on the category of truth – even though there are also some antiphilosophers who attack truth –, but an attempt to singularize truth and link it to a concept of experience.[28] The antiphilosopher's discursive articulations take the form of "neither system nor treatise nor even really a book. He propounds a speech of rupture, and writing ensues when necessary."[29] Antiphilosophy speaks in breaks, and thus holds itself always close to the real. The present article will not aim at reconstructing and unraveling the intricacies, nuances and developments of Badiou's concept of antiphilosophy. It rather (only) aims at situating the one position that Badiou describes as the last – contemporary – antiphilosophical position, Lacan's, within Badiou's philosophical system, and examines the contours that allows Lacan to be identified as "a condition of the renaissance of philosophy."[30] For this purpose, the precise placement and function of antiphilosophy within a post-Heideggerian philosophical conjuncture is crucial.[31]

1.Antiphilosophy – Philosophically

Antiphilosophy is a term that was used in rather occasional manners by Lacan to describe his own enterprise.[32] It was invented by Coleridge in 1818 and marks, broadly speaking, a position that rebels against the arrogance of philosophy, against philosophy's arrogance of assuming mastery and being "a self-sufficient discourse."[33] Historically, this auto-delineation "refers to the mostly religious and conservative, if not outright reactionary, thinkers who resist the arrival of rationalism, deism, or materialism on the part of French enlightenment thinkers, the so-called philosophes, such as Diderot, Voltaire, or d'Holbach."[34] But Badiou does not take antiphilosophy as such to be a reactionary phenomenon. Rather it is a inner-counter-philosophical position that organizes, in different variations, a complex network of determinations that *can* include the assumption that truth is ultimately only an effect of language and "an appeal to what lies beyond language, or rather at the upper limit of the sayable"[35], which is irreducible to whatever concept of truth and can only be activated through "the dimension of the *act*".[36] This is a category that brings together, for example, late Nietzsche's declaration to break history into two and transvalue all values and Kierkegaard's insistence on a leap of faith. There is thus an inversion of hierarchy: the act is more significant than any (conception of) truth. Lacan's very own appropriation of the term of antiphilosophy introduces quite some nuance into the term, deriving from the fact that for him truth – paradigmatically – is "making a hole in knowledge"[37] and the subject – a term Lacan, for Badiou, so drastically rethought that he effectively periodized it and opened the "*second epoch*"[38] of its doctrine. The subject thereby becomes the "border-effect... of such a hole piercing."[39]

According to Badiou, Lacan's self-description as antiphilosopher thus does not suggest a conservative gesture – and certainly not at all an endorsement of irrationalism.[40] Rather, it appears to highlight a specific characteristic of Badiou's conceptualization of antiphilosophy (post-Lacan), namely that all philosophical discourse – at least in its present form – misses something. As Badiou states "the idea of the 'remainder' can be found in every antiphilosophy, which builds very subtle networks of relations only so as to track down the incompleteness in them and to expose the remainder to its seizing in the act."[41] The *anti-* of antiphilosophy then finds its place in the emphasis of that which remains foreign within philosophy – be it life, grace, existence, or enjoyment – that philosophy cannot get rid of. Philosophy thereby is ultimately considered to be a form of *Weltanschauung* that is formulated on the back of the assumption that everything – whose philosophical name is 'being' – is consistent and whole and can be grasped – is knowable – as such.[42] There is what one could describe as a Parmenidean arrogance in philosophy, which results from the assumption that being and thought are one and the same and that therefore philosophy is discourse of the master, of

the *maitre*, the master of being, a *m'etre*.[43] Philosophers would aim and claim to be the masters of being by means of thought. The means of domination are applied to being through the very idea that it could ever be mastered – and the form in which this is done is, inter alia, by means of knowledge (which is why philosophy in this sense can be identified with the university discourse[44]). But if such attempted mastery appears as a form of Parmenidean arrogance and therefore ultimately not only idealist but potentially outdated and part of a bankrupt project, it might be that in modernity we have to gather the courage to face that which – in the right ways – cannot be mastered and give up – also in the right way – our attempts to master it.[45] Thus "one must declare [philosophy's] *effective* expiration, along with that of every figure of mastery."[46]

Badiou has once, pointedly, resumed his reading of Lacan's position from the 1970's such that Lacan would have endorsed the assumption that there is no knowledge about the Real of the subject and that there is thus something constitutively unknowable. However, for Badiou, Lacan also argued that there is a knowledge of the fact that there is something unknowable. This is the knowledge that there is the unconscious. The unconscious is a knowledge which cannot be experienced as knowledge but only through the form of the act, and hence through analysis. If this knowledge could *only* be experienced, it would be conceptually mystical. This is why and where the dimension of the matheme comes in for Badiou, since, in his reading, Lacan claims that there *is* knowledge of the unknowable – or in other words: of that which is utterly singular – through formalization.[47] This allows for a concept of truth to be drastically separated from the concept of meaning: "truths have no meaning."[48] Without any question, Badiou takes Lacan's position so seriously that he repeatedly states – and there is a slightly different emphasis in some of the different versions of this claim, which I will leave aside here – that "a philosophy is possible today, only if it is compossible with Lacan."[49] A statement like this demands some elaboration.[50] For what is "a philosophy compossible with Lacan"?

One way of answering this is to claim that Badiou had to develop the concept of antiphilosophy into a proper philosophical concept[51] and has thereby sought to follow the following dialectical guideline: "to accompany Lacan, our master, to the point that he in some sense led us to, a point that, if we are to be faithful to him, we need to go beyond."[52] It is the very fidelity to Lacan that allows to detect the precise point that allows, then, another step to be taken. The localization of this very point thus has a direct bearing on how one understands the philosophical concept of antiphilosophy, or, in different terms: on how one understands how Badiou reads Lacan. In Badiou's 1987-1988 seminar – on "Truth and Subject" – one finds a very direct answer:

> "it may be that, on a whole series of points, what I say about this or that in general, and about Lacan in particular, may even seem, to a Lacanian, inaccurate or distorted, and this is for two essential reasons.... I treat Lacan... from the standpoint of philosophy. The Lacanians might dispute this. They might contest even the possibility of this treatment, considering the fact that only from the viewpoint of analysis can the text of Lacan be treated. This is a position which I understand perfectly and to which I have nothing to object, under the explicit condition that those who tell me this are themselves entirely faithful to this principle, that is to say of treating the Lacanian text solely from the viewpoint of analysis and, consequently, do not legislate... over something that would abandon this principle."[53]

Badiou's reading of Lacan thus raises the question of how to read an antiphilosophical text – "the put into play herein is in truth that of antiphilosophy"[54] – in the first place, especially in this particular case, since Badiou does not read Lacan analytically.[55] Does this imply an unavoidable misreading? An intended hermeneutic or even formalizing mishap? Badiou's answer is decidedly negative and one can argue that this is for two concomitant reasons: 1. Badiou does not read Lacan('s antiphilosophy) as an analyst or for clinical purposes and 2. this raises thus the question how to read a text when the very status of the text needs to be determined in the act of its reading. Such a *forced reading* – a reading that forces a specific status of the text through the effects of its being read – seeks to determine what a philosophical concept of antiphilosophy is or will have been.[56] It seems therefore possible to detect a comparability between some – Lacanian – reactions to Badiou's reading of Lacan, to some – of the Kantian – reactions to Hegel's reading of Kant. Since Hegel (for example in his depiction of Kantian morality in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*) unquestionably leaves aside myriad nuances and technical complexities and hence can appear to fundamentally misrepresent Kant's position. The Hegelian reproach to such a critique is that Hegel presents not an inattentive reading, but rather that he epitomizes (and condenses) the Kantian position such that its truth – the point where one needs to go beyond it – comes to the fore.[57] This is thus a forced reading-protocol, which is not about an adequate representation of the inner complexities but about a productive way of simplification and reduction. Which is why, in a different context, Hegel will highlight the philosophical necessity to "foreshorten its picture by abstractions", that one must mobilize "the fact that Thought is, after all, the most trenchant epitomist."[58]

A forced reading epitomizes effectively and trenchantly. It diagonalizes, in Badiou's terms, since it seeks to locate an impasse and to force a passage. Thus, Badiou does not present a Lacanian reading of Lacan, but one that seeks to detect a point, a point which allows for

another step to be taken. But, as I have suggested, such a localization of a point also forces the locating of Lacan within the specific conjuncture in which he allows a point to be detected, and only then potentially to make such a potential step.

2. From the 90s to Eternity

In his 1990-91 seminar on the theory of evil and the theory of love, Badiou – therein reminiscent of his 1989 *Manifesto for Philosophy* – diagnoses the contemporary state of philosophy to be defined by four problematic characteristics: 1. Philosophy is paralyzed by its own history. It is bogged down by what it has been. Metaphysics is the slightly disorientating shorthand for that very past. To overcome this paralysis, what is needed is *un pas de plus*, an additional step: another *not* – an additional minus – that "unbinds the bond that imprisons philosophy in its history."[59] 2. A task arises from this: philosophy must break with its own being historicist. This necessitates a change of its practical form, of its form of practice. Philosophy needs to become thetic. Otherwise it cannot but endlessly reevaluate its own history and ruminate its own closure and end. What is thus needed is a form of (Nietzschean, i.e. antiphilosophical) active forgetting; a forgetting even of all the diagnoses of forgetting that populate the history of philosophy and move it forward to the domain of declarations. 3. Philosophy must endorse the idea that one can define what it is and one can do so rigorously and axiomatically. Such definition is a historical invariant. This establishes a difference with those who are neither philosophers nor antiphilosophers but who pretend to be philosophers, notably the sophists. Since they also break with historicity and the grand narratives, but ultimately endorse an undoing of the very form of philosophy itself that gives way to all desires for anything true.[60]

Badiou's philosophical project in the 1990s is thus – and thereby is in line with Lacan's comment I referred to at the beginning of this essay – an attempt to provide an answer to how to maintain and remain faithful to philosophy; how to continue under modern conditions. There is therefore a fourth conjunctural point, namely, that to undo the problematic historicist undoing and to affirm the possibility of philosophy today, one must *pass through the category of truth*. Any passage is a passing of truth for contemporary philosophy, which Badiou has announced as a "*new departure*... following the dissolution of its relation of organic connection to knowledge." Furthermore, "this theme of truth crosses the paths of Heidegger (who was the first to subtract it from knowledge), the mathematicians (who broke with the object at the end of the last century, just as they broke with adequation), and the modern theories of the subject (which displace truth from its subjective pronunciation)."[61] There is a new passage if truth is affirmed as different from knowledge, thought of without reference to the category of the object and linked to the second epoch of the doctrine of the subject, i.e. contemporary Lacanian antiphilosophy. The

task seems clear: one must reinvent the category of truth by mobilizing Heidegger, Lacanian antiphilosophy, and contemporary mathematics.

Under these auspices it is the category of truth that then also allows for an overcoming of philosophy's own paralysis resulting from its own endless self-deconstruction and its own no less endless self-historicization. Thereby, philosophy can be freed from being stuck with a problematic kind of temporality – the "absoluteness of time"[62]. And in addition, this means to "give [back] to the concept" – of truth – "its eternal dimension," which consequently necessitates a "modern thesis, an a-theological thesis of eternity."[63] This means to identify eternity in history, affirming that it makes holes in the latter. The reinvention of philosophy proposed here can be read through two interlinked lenses: it must be situated, first, within the precise conjuncture in the history of philosophy on the one hand side and on the other hand side, it can only be properly understood if at the same time it is also related not to antiphilosophy in general, but to the specific antiphilosophy of this very period. It is Lacanian antiphilosophy which allows for an undoing of the very *form* of – undoing in – philosophy in the particular conjuncture in which the Heideggerian, inner-philosophical undoing of philosophy's history has effectively and successfully taken place. This form of undoing operates in contradistinction to the extra-philosophical sophistic undoing of philosophy which one also must read in context of Heidegger's far-reaching intervention.[64]

If located appropriately in the historical conjuncture of philosophy, it is exactly antiphilosophy which allows for a reconstitution of philosophy – by ending philosophy's end in the right way[65]: by enabling ending – encore – what seems to have already ended and by thereby creating something new. It is this secondary negation and revision that will enable philosophy to return and reaffirm its very own conditions. This is the secondary degree of historicization. This implies that antiphilosophy's effects are registered within philosophy through a historically specific transformation of – the very form of – philosophy itself. Antiphilosophy allows for an afformative historicity, for an afformation of philosophy.

It is only on the basis of such an antiphilosophical transformation that an already struggling discipline had a chance to reinvent itself as what it always was (supposed to be): "a universal doctrine of the dialectic of being and event as doctrine of the subject."[66] Antiphilosophy thereby allows us to traverse philosophy's fantasy of its own end, its fantasy of its exhaustion. A strange kind of analysis, which is at the same time what allows philosophy to go on when it seems to have reached an end and thus it seems impossible to continue. Antiphilosophy is the non-conditional way of transforming philosophy – but not by being a willing helper or physician. There thus can be a reconciliation between a position that Badiou voluntarily identified as a position of peace (philosophy) and a position emphasizing conflict (psychoanalysis),[67] since, rather than this,

there appears a productive conflict between a position that ultimately aims at reconciliation – this great Hegelian word – and another that emphasizes the irreconcilable. Reconciling reconciliation and conflict must then lead to a mode of reconciling reconciliation with the irreconcilable. To examine the peace-meal that is shared between the position of peace and that of war in piecing together war and peace, the following is not an attempt at unnecessary pacification. Rather it explores what if peace (or reconciliation) can be understood as a mode of working with war, of philosophy working with psychoanalysis – not to remain within a situation of war, but to exit it. But to modify one of the famous Lacanian adages, namely that analysis has to deliver anxiety in the right dosages, we might ask: what is the right dose of antiphilosophy (for philosophy to be reactivated, reformatted)? To answer this question, it is again crucial to give an answer to the question: what had incapacitated philosophy?

This answer will allow for a Heideggerian condition to be identified that reinscribes a poetic framing of pre-philosophical thought into philosophy, which then in effect exhausts the contemporary potentials of philosophy. It is this condition and its effects that provides the precondition for Lacan's intervention, which interrupts the Heideggerian productive neo-regressive suture with an at least twofold gesture: it emphasizes that pre-philosophical poetic thought can be read in another, non-poetic and this means: in a formal manner, as if it were a matheme (against Heidegger) and it thereby reinforces a split history of philosophy itself which de-sutures Heidegger's suture of philosophy by reinscribing the letter differently.

3. Nihil Bound: Heidegger

The signifier that allows us to enter Badiou's discussion of the last universally recognizable philosopher with whom "an entire epoch of thought and its concerns"[68] closes, is "nihilism." "Nihilism" describes a result of what Heidegger addresses in terms of technique, which only uses resources and knows being only as a resource. Technique puts being to work in a service du biens, a service *du being*, to pun badly, on the ground of a supposed *subiectum*, that is the *sujet supposé encadrer* all that is. Philosophy diagnoses that nihilism manifests in the measuring and measured technical production and administration of being as if it were an object; of a being or, more precisely, of beings in their totality, of *Seiendes im Ganzen*, and thus in their technological enframing, in a *Gestell*.[69] Thus science becomes the suppression of existence under the technical will to power,[70] which implements a deracination from being that leads to nihilistic consequences because the reign of technique only has one aim – its own reproduction. For Badiou as with Heidegger this deracination originated in Greek mathematics, wherein there is a "irreversible... unleashing of the power of the letter"[71] which ruptures previous forms of

thought. But, for Badiou, this deracination is misidentified by Heidegger, since he fuses the Greek and the Galilean moment and thinks that science, mathematics, i.e. the letter is technology.[72] For Badiou, "the matheme is not" and has nothing to do with "technical nihilism."[73] Nihilism cannot be matheme-atical as the matheme is not technological.[74]

But, for Heidegger, the *aletheia* came under the yoke of the *idea*, as his famous and harsh critique of Plato epitomized, which marks a forgetting of difference under the inscription of an obscuring signifier. And this is the background against which Heidegger, for Badiou, reads the history of capitalism and the history of literalization – the matheme qua part of technique[75] – as well as the history of rational argumentation as one and the same and fuses them with the history of philosophy. Nihilism for Badiou's Heidegger has the following characteristics: it implies an obscuration of the world (vs. the bright rational light of the Greek world[76]), leads to a flight of the Gods, to the destruction of the earth,[77] to the unification of the masses of human beings, and to a desacralization of being which is allowed for by an decoupling or unbinding of the letter from being itself.[78] All these claimed-to-be-nihilistic consequences manifest in a history of philosophy that can therefore be taken to be a unilateral embodiment of the oblivion of being. Whatever Badiou's far-reaching critique of Heidegger will be,[79] he makes the following clear: Heidegger is a philosopher, because he affirmatively reasserts, even forcefully endorses, the claim that being qua being can be thought. Thereby Heidegger made ontology – which had become if not impossible at least dubious in the aftermath of Kant's critical project – possible again.[80]

But for Heidegger it is not philosophy that can do this job, since philosophy lost its soul when it lost being. This is the additional component of nihilism. For philosophy in Heidegger also diagnoses a strange exhaustion of its own capacity to diagnose nihilism. Philosophy emphasizes that there is nihilism but this diagnosis leaves everyone indifferent, and *this* precisely *is* nihilism.[81] Thus can philosophy now be identified with its own history, which history is presumed to be homogenous. Different from its framing in Descartes – where philosophical articulation breaks with, and in this sense is independent from, history – through Heidegger – and for Badiou the intermediary position within the history of philosophy that enabled such a take is that of Hegel – philosophy now becomes intelligible against the background of its own history. Philosophy is no longer an illness, as in Nietzsche[82], but becomes what Freud would have called a case.

Nihilism here becomes a case study of how there is an unavoidable incapacitation of philosophy due to its very mode of operativity, which is only properly legible from the perspective of its history. Nihilism is philosophy not only as a lost cause but also as a lost case. For it is its own history that culminated in the absolute exhaustion of all potentials of its discursive continuation.[83] So we are no longer looking for a cure for

philosophy. Rather, we have to diagnose its demise and execute it quickly and adequately. To have the patience of the concept then means that the doctor – diagnosing nihilism – needs to assert that the patient – the concept – is dead already and cannot be reanimated. Thinking can know all this, which is why it was ill-behaving for some time within the form of (onto-theological) philosophy. For Heidegger, there thus must be a change of the very form of practice, from philosophy to thought, from *Philosophie zu Denken*.[84]

Badiou affirms that Heidegger's readings of poets are singular[85] – even though he assumes that they ultimately neglect the very form of the poem – and he contends that his "anti-bourgeois radicalism"[86] – which turns him into a feudal socialist[87] who flirts with populist forms of romanticism that end up being a reactionary – must mainly be appreciated as linked to his project of reinvigorating the thought of being qua being. And even though Badiou identifies in Heidegger a "hyper-nazi" – that is a nazi for whom Hitler's Nazism did not go far enough[88] –there is no Nazism in the assumption that thought can think being qua being. But it was Heidegger's resuscitation of ontology that made him, after the war, seek the remedy to nihilism – this is after late Heidegger's engagement – solely in an engagement with poetry. When philosophy's discourse is exhausted and incapacitated, at least in this influential case, (Heidegger's) hope lies with the poets, i.e. with another, a different form of discourse; with another form of saying "it". Poets speak indirectly.

This also means that with Heidegger philosophy assumed that philosophy had ended. And this is at the ground of all kinds of possible suture: "[t]he modern blockage of philosophy is suture"[89], Badiou once proclaimed. A suture marks the philosophical assumption that it is not philosophy but only one of philosophy's conditions that can think (its) time.[90] But thinking time through poetry prevents thinking time – at least sometimes. And this is the result of Heidegger's proposal that the poets are the only true Safe Haven of being, which led him to believe that the form of thought that historically preceded philosophy – in his interpretation – and that he saw a way out in the subversion of any form of technologized science. The way out is the way back, since pre-philosophical (and this means pre-Socratic) thought provides the exit from philosophy's internal – technical and worsening dynamic of the – will to power and enframing. This is to say that for Badiou's Heidegger philosophy was unable to do what it was supposed to do, and so Heidegger assigned its previous task to the poets – the task to think being. In this way poetry is deemed to be able to do what philosophy cannot. This is a defining feature of the "age of poets".[91] The poets of the age of poets think un-objectively, through a "'method' of disobjectivation."[92] *Dichtend Denken*, thinking poetically, is now what replaces philosophy, and this is the consequence of the Heideggerian undoing of philosophy when it reaches its culmination.[93] For Heidegger, in this rendering, philosophy

was exhausted: it came to an end and therefore one had to turn back the clock. He thus unended the end of philosophy and began anew, but not with philosophy, but rather with a form of poetic thought or suturing of thought to poetic form.

Poetic thought undoes objectivity and it undoes the objective condition of thought. This does not turn it into a form of subjective expression, but rather into something in-objective.[94] It enables it to be thought that thinking can be conditioned by something that is not an object; that thinking is also not the objective ground layer, the *subiectum* of modern thought – that such ground-ing could been undone. This culminates in an attempt to again become pre-Socratic: it is an attempt to locate the disjunction of thought from any object and thereby from the technological framing of science in a poetic form of thinking and saying. It is possible to think being qua being in a form of discourse that does not objectify; Heidegger is for Badiou "the only one who has tried to pursue, to establish in philosophy the process of destituting the object and thus the idea that the category of the object is an obstacle to all thought of being."[95] Heidegger is why the poetic form of discourse becomes crucial. Its form is that of the discursive event, and an event is not a thing. It is not even a no-thing, but some-thing that takes place, that happens. Poetic thought can register that which being is, an event, a donation – for Heidegger.[96] As Badiou claims: "The poem founds being in speech and is not an expression of it"[97] and hence we get here, in Heidegger's understanding, a finally objectless discourse of being qua being.[98] With Heidegger's turn, with his immense turning back of the clock – for "Heidegger fled to Greece"[99] – the poets become our pre-Socratics. And Heidegger becomes as effect of this alter-modern and alter-Platonic counter-historical undoing. Heidegger becomes our, and that is "a new", Parmenides.[100] This means there is a novel beginning of thought – for and with Heidegger – and potentially also of philosophy – for Badiou. This is how to make sense of Heidegger again raising the question of how philosophy begins at all. This question is linked to the name of Parmenides. For Parmenides is "not, or not yet, philosophy"[101], and with the novel Parmenides, Heidegger, – and this is his success – philosophy is not, or will now no longer be, philosophy.

But here everything depends on "the position of Parmenides in the Greek tradition" for an account of this leads to "more than the position of Parmenides in the Greek tradition." Parmenides is the one who falls out of the Greek tradition. This is because, within the tradition, Parmenides thinks, for the first time, against it; he exceeds it, thinks and embodies a peculiar threat it is facing. This is to say, to mobilize a claim by Klaus Heinrich, that "the threat of non-being" is what is at stake in such an account of Parmenides.[102] Thinking through such threat is instructive for philosophy – especially when it just seems to have confront its very own non-being.

For Badiou, Parmenides has always been the name linked to the beginning of philosophy, because "he proposed an entirely novel knot between three concepts, that of being, of thought and that of non-being."[103] Parmenides thus founds philosophy without being the first proper philosopher – this is Plato. Parmenides, rather, is the first thinker who proposes the new form of conceptual knotting - philosophy - and he does this in a way that is constitutive for any philosophy, namely in the form a rational argument – the apagogical demonstration – that breaks with the form of mythical narrative or mystical experience that dominated before.[104] For "philosophy begins when one breaks with experience."[105] Thus with Parmenides, the father[106], "the master"[107] – and therein similar to the new Parmenides that is Heideggger – there is a "new regime of the functioning of discourse"[108] whose expression is poetic – it is a poem – but whose operation is not.[109] For, certainly, one feature of this discourse is that of "poetic saying. The other is the firmness of the consequences"[110] that follows an "imperative of formalization"[111] that allows what is bound together to be separated, namely: being, thinking, and non-being.[112] Parmenides speaks thus in the form of a knotting proof, of a real demonstration. His name stands for "an event of thought."[113]

Heidegger sought to undo the history of philosophy, from Plato to the 20th century, and return to this "event of thought" that he identified with an event of being. But for Badiou, Heidegger's making-thought-presocratic-again allows as its consequence for more than just a return. It allows – potentially – for a novel Plato, if there is another (repetition of philosophy's foundational) parricide. Can one kill – the new – Daddy – again? If, as Werner Jaeger noted in his interpretation, the Parmenidean Goddess as linked to the symbol Y, which formalizes a bifurcation that compels a decision, then Parmenides allows for a possible passage, a possible choice: kill him or do not kill him. A return to Parmenides is thus a return to a choice, to a potential novel or different commencement.[114] But how to pass onto choosing?

4. The Permission to Pass

The first condition of passing is that one must "desuture Heidegger"[115] and this cannot be done by means of another twist in Heidegger's deconstruction. This can also not be done by means of poetry alone. Rather what Badiou in 1987-88 proclaimed as "the end of the age of poets"[116] must entail a break with the poetic suturing, a break that must repeat philosophy's first foundation. This first foundation was a rupture of the suturing of thought to poetic form by means of the matheme. The big letter was turned small.[117] But how was this turn possible? How to end the end of philosophy in its novel-Parmenidean guise? How to begin again, properly? It is crucial to recall that what "ends something is never an end, but an event."[118] This is precisely why Lacan plays the crucial role that he

plays for Badiou. Since if "philosophy has been born under the condition of the matheme", then it is precisely the emphasis on the matheme under Heideggerian conditions that allows philosophy's birth to repeat. And this is how Lacan's antiphilosophical act is registered. Re-mathematization.[119] After our poetic-and-no-longer-apagogic Parmenides, Lacan allows for a repetition of the killing of the father - for a repetition of Plato. This is *un pas de plus*, another step which is a step that has already been taken. But which has never been taken in this way. This is novelty through and in the mode of repetition. Lacan – who translated Heidegger's "Logos" text into French –enabled a renewal of contemporary philosophy by performing a torsion on the post-Heideggerian poetically sutured condition of philosophy.

Thus a modern philosophy is only possible if it is "able to withstand the challenge of Lacan",[120] because it owes to Lacan the philosophically challenging defense and renewal of the Cartesian subject under post-Heideggerian conditions. This is what Badiou describes as a "counter current that is heroic."[121] But Lacan's gesture also splits philosophy's previous commencement into two. He asserted, first, that the whole history of philosophy has been Parmenidean: "the supposition that being itself thinks is what founds the philosophical tradition from Parmenides onwards."[122] If the philosophical tradition can be unified through the thesis that being thinks, then Parmenides is what unifies philosophy,[123] unifies the assumption that it is the same to think and to be.[124] As we move from Parmenides to the new Parmenides, Heidegger, being is still assumed to think. We move, with Badiou, from Parmenides through Descartes, Hegel and Nietzsche to Heidegger, and the latter is so successful in his endeavor that we seem to have not moved at all – even though we can now totalize anew. What Lacan enables Badiou to detect is that philosophy has thus far moved from Parmenides to a new Parmenides without ever properly reaching Plato. With Lacan we can thus make *un pas de plus*, another not: after Heidegger there is no philosophy but thought, but then there is antiphilosophy, and this is how we can actually start to get moving again: by moving – and thinking – what is not there, non-being. With this move we have already started leaving Parmenides behind. Psychoanalysis allows for an end of the end of philosophy - and it allows us to see in the end of philosophy a precondition for philosophy's continuation.

Thus we can shed light on the complicated "peace treaty" between philosophy and psychoanalysis: Lacanian psychoanalysis, by being-anti, potentially allows for that which is dead to be brought back to life by negating that which is not – down with death! Lacanian psychoanalysis thereby makes it possible to conceive of an entirely new concatenation of the "fundamental knot of being, non-being and thought"[125] because Lacan can be read as changing the status of the Pre-Socratics post-Heidegger. This allows him not to oppose, "as Heidegger did, the Pre-Socratic poem to Plato's matheme, [rather] Lacan has the powerful idea that poetry was the closest thing to the mathematization available to the Pre-Socratics."[126]

Lacan detects a trace of the matheme – and *this* is the change in the very ontology of the letter. It is with this act that Lacan makes possible a "modern Platonism"[127], a repetition of Plato. It allows for a repetition of the parricide (which Plato commits in the *Sophist*) of Parmenides, with the new Parmenides, by emphasizing the matheme. By affirming that love originates in an encounter Lacan enables it to be thought that there can be a novel thought of being that emerges eventally – without being being an event.

Badiou suggests – in *Being and Event* – that the hitherto history of philosophy has its template in Plato's difficult, multi-hypothetical *Parmenides* dialogue; that before Heidegger the history of philosophy remained within the first half this dialogue (which is to say it debates with great refinement the intricacies of the assumption that the One is), and that it is through Lacanian antiphilosophy that one can now pass on to the dialogue's second half. After Lacan we move from the assumption that the One *is*, to an account of 'there is one' - of *il y a de l'un* - which is, effectively, the taking of another step - the *un pas de plus* - toward what will be called a "Platonism of the multiple."[128] Lacan, therefore, is exactly the thinker who "completes contemporary antiphilosophy."[129] He allows to totalize antiphilosophy such that we understand, for the first time fully, what it is. This is not because Lacan formulated the most antiphilosophical of all antiphilosophies, rather because he repeatedly demonstrated that psychoanalysis is essentially incomplete and incompleting; that analysis is also it incompletes philosophy because it forces a rearticulation of the philosophical concept of the subject.[130] If philosophy can never get rid of the sophists, but it can "reduce them to silence"[131], what does its reaction to antiphilosophy needs to be (especially when it completed its incompleting)? With Lacanian psychoanalysis it becomes clear that philosophy, rather than to listen to the sophists, has to listen to antiphilosophers.[132] Philosophy has to learn to listen to those who are the professionals (not of speaking but) of listening themselves.

With Lacan[133] we "are... the contemporaries of a second epoch of the doctrine of the subject. It is no longer the founding subject.... The contemporary subject is void, cleaved, a-substantial, and ir-reflexive."[134] Lacanian antiphilosophy brings a historicization of the conception of the subject to philosophy – to a concept which in Badiou finds its place cleaved between the undecideability of the event and the indiscernability of truth. It could only find his place, as I argued, because antiphilosophy forced philosophy to think subjectivity anew and thereby allowed for a renewal of philosophy in general. This force of transformation is different from the mode in which, in Badiou, the conditions force philosophy to think truth anew, because the conditions demand philosophy to formalize a contemporary space of compossibility (for the truths established in them), whereas the impact of antiphilosophy on philosophy forces to conceive of the being of non-being differently. It concerns the taking place of the "pure existence which determines the being of the subject."[135]

Thereby it is antiphilosophy that enables us to think anew of "the knot of being, subject and truth."[136] Lacanian antiphilosophy performs a torsion that leads to a renewal of philosophy. Why? Because it allows to think anew that which is not, i.e. in this historically specific space: philosophy.

5. Two-Step

After and with Heidegger philosophy admitted its own incapacity. Lacan's torsion elevated this incapacity to a point of impossibility, where it becomes clear how to end the end of philosophy by traversing this end and thereby establishing the coordinates for philosophy's renewed continuation; it becomes possible to detect the point one needs to change it. For Heidegger metaphysics forgot being in terms of physis, for Lacan "metaphysics is the possibility to think non-physics"[137], of that which is neither one nor being. This is has far-reaching consequences, one of which is that it allows to conceive of being qua being – now that we are in the second half of Plato's Parmenidean dialogue – in the form of multiples of nothing, which is why to conceive of "pure multiplicity" is "Lacanian."[138] The Heideggerian diagnosis and reinstatement of the incapacitation of philosophy was elevated to a point of impossibility, notably to think through what seemed to be impossible, that the inconsistent multiple (derivable from the meaningless name of being) is what there is. It made it possible to conceive of the fact that there is no being unless it is named, and that the meaningless name of being cannot but be the result of an event that took place in the discourse on being, which therefore can be thought to be situated outside of philosophy in the practice of formalization that operates with the matheme. It is only at this point that we are in a position where we can think that there is no there is, and that the only reason that there is any there is must be because something that happened has been named. Such creative rethinking of what is not revitalized the "plasticity of philosophy."[139]

That for Badiou, Lacan's only imperative is "dissolve"[140], to dissipate, to disband, to unbind, here becomes plausible. He unbinds the post-Heideggerian condition by interrupting it, an interruption which works by 1. breaking the Heideggerian suture between poetic thought and philosophy and thereby also breaks 2. the identification of poetry and ontology, which in turn enables 3. to identify ontology with mathematics. But the identification of mathematics and ontology is a meta-ontological thesis that stands itself under the condition 1. of the detachment of the letter from any objective dimension (i.e. under the condition of poetry), and 2. under the condition that ontology – the science of being qua being since Aristotle – is not a science of some given thing, but rather the science of something that can only be approached from the perspective of an encounter (which for Badiou is Lacan's definition of love). The account of being that ontology as mathematics gives is a result of an event (in the discourse on being). Philosophy, as meta-ontology, then articulates what

this means by also mobilizing the matheme, as that which formalizes the impasse of formalization in ontology. Meta-ontologically the matheme therefore becomes the matheme of the event.

This is a philosophical working through of an antiphilosophical proto-evental or para-evental transformation of philosophy. This is why Badiou can state that philosophy and psychoanalysis share what he calls two common borders: those of the matheme and of love. The matheme is the mode in which the letter is unbound from reference and sense: it allows transmission and for a knowledge of a truth that cannot be known, precisely because it does not transmit any content and there is nothing to be known in it.[141] For Badiou, then antiphilosophers are therefore "very useful for philosophy" and this not only because they articulate contemporary objections (this why they share something with the sophists), but because "we must learn from them about the form of universality."[142] Even though psychoanalysis is not primarily about education, philosophy is forced to learn from it, from what it passes on.[143] But how does philosophy learn? There are a number of answers that Badiou gives, all of which are important for the peace-treaty picture I am drawing here. When Badiou states that that the Parmenidean form of presocratic poetry (especially because it is co-originating with mathematics as demonstrative discipline) can be read in two ways - namely as poetry or as a poetic form of formalization, i.e. as proto-matheme - this reading splits the Parmenidean discourse into a hardly decipherable two. It indicates that its amphibological undecidability is an indication of the fact that philosophy needs to think undecidability – identify in it a choice – as this is how it can relate to the event of thought that was Parmenides. It is an event of thought that is neither conditional nor philosophical but establishes both in a form yet to become clearly worked out.

With Badiou's Lacan we have a poetic-Heideggerian Parmenides and one that is proto-mathematical. But Lacan also split the pre-philosophical condition into again, into another two, because against Parmenides' ontology of the one, he endorses what Badiou calls the "primacy of discord"[144] with which he identifies the position of Heraclitus. And it is the latter who allows us to think the "non-relation's chronological priority over relation."[145]

Lacan completes antiphilosophy by traversing philosophy's fantasy of its own end, by ending its end, by radically splitting – and displacing – its beginning: the passage from Parmenides to Heraclitus. Thus can Badiou affirmatively cite Lacan's claim from Seminar XX that "Parmenides was wrong and Heraclitus was right."[146] Badiou's Lacan completes antiphilosophy because he is enables us to dialectize not only the history of philosophy but its extimate link to (the history of) antiphilosophy. Its original formula is: Parmenides vs Heraclitus. It is what allows us "to formalize the internal dialectics of antiphilosophy."[147] Another step in the dialectic of end and beginning – a two-step.

6. To End: Badiou's Passage

Badiou repeatedly ends many of his texts on psychoanalytic antiphilosophy with a call for courage, inter alia the courage "to accomplish one more step."[148] This is because Heidegger actually provided the condition of nihilism with its most radical expression in philosophy by ending philosophy – Heidegger made philosophy courageously anxious – and thereby shook up the foundations of philosophy and thought only to discover a more profound, namely poetic, foundation. Lacan radicalized this foundation by unbinding and voiding it again, by aiding at desturing Heidegger. The subjective – and affective - name of such shaking, voiding, and unbinding is anxiety.[149] But Lacan pointed to more than just anxiety, notably when he stated in 1973 that "love can only actualize what, in a sort of poetic flight, in order to make myself understood I called courage."[150] In my reading, Badiou's philosophy follows this Lacanian dictate and directive and radicalizes it. It attempts to take another subtractive step, at adding another minus, *un pas de plus*[151], by finding the courage to continue after what ended the end (of philosophy) itself ended. Furthermore, in this argumentative framework, what notably also comes to the fore is the (mytheme-atic) history of antiphilosophy itself. Badiou once stated that the late Lacan resembled Oedipus at Colonus, that is an old man who dies and disappears, but who does this so slowly that he becomes increasingly erratic while fading away.[152] Could this not also be more than just an individual destiny? Can there, in other words, not also be an exhaustion of antiphilosophy? How one answers these questions that concern the proper historicity of antiphilosophy, has consequences for the very status of antiphilosophy.

However this may be, philosophy, as Badiou has demonstrated, needs courage to face anxiety (and discord) – it needs courage to face antiphilosophy – and this allows another step to be taken, allows for one *not* more. Antiphilosophy, thus, is the cause of an anxiety specific to philosophy, and it is exactly by producing such anxiety that it serves as guide to a novel courageous reconciliation.[153] The next step to be taken will have been the step to a novel parricide. From (a new) Parmenides – through (a new) Heraclitus – to (a new) Plato. This passage will have been universally recognized. It will have been Badiou's passage – the passage of our Plato.

1 Badiou 2005, p. 122.
2 Goethe 1913, p. 103f.
3 Badiou 2011, p. 11.
4 Lacan 1988, pp. 198f.
5 Ibid.
6 Badiou 2017a, p. 210.
7 Badiou 1997, p. 46. Badiou therefore claims that psychoanalysis "almost... prepares for a modern Platonism." Ibid., p. 52. Translations here and in the following are all my own, F.R..
8 Badiou 2017a, p. 202. The difference between the two, as Badiou will not tire repeating, concerns the localization of the void. Psychoanalysis localizes it in the subject, philosophy in being. Cf. for example: ibid., p. 202f. This marks also a practical difference that concerns the status of the "act", for it either opens up – through its universality – to being qua being or to the subject's interlinkage of being and non-being. Cf. again: ibid., p. 205. Badiou will claim that "in its being the subject is nothing other than a truth grasped in its pure point" and a truth "provides an access to being that is ... not known." Ibid., p. 209.
9 It is not by accident, that many of Badiou's texts on psychoanalysis end with a claim to courage. I will return to this below.
10 Badiou 2015a, p. 164,
11 Badiou 1993-1994.
12 "Philosophy is in crisis, this much is evident." Badiou 2022, p. 32.
13 Badiou has recently argued that philosophy must always traverse such a nihilism and make the move from 0 not only to 1, but, ultimately, to the infinite. He compared this very move to a move from nihilism to an affirmation that he then identified with a non-theological form of "absolute knowing." Cf. Badiou 2023a, pp. 124-131.
14 Grosrichard 2012, p. 224.
15 Deleuze 2002, p. 8.
16 Žižek 1993, p. 3f. This analysis is particular interesting as Badiou himself suggested that it is no one else but Kant who gave "a philosophical form to antiphilosophy itself. To show philosophically that the philosophical pretension can only stir up air." Badiou 1994, p. 24. Brought together, we can assume that it is precisely a neo-Kantian turn post-Hegel which creates the conditions in which Lacanian antiphilosophy intervenes – for Kant "proposes to ruin the dogmatic edifices of metaphysics [and] proposes a philosophy at the limits of antiphilosophy." Badiou 2023b, p. 68. Soler, different from Žižek, suggests that Lacan in his gesture against philosophy is in line with the ideological developments of his time (and does not oppose them), cf. Soler 2006. Regnault claims that the "anti" does not mark a position that would contradict philosophy. Cf. Regnault 1997, p. 73. Badiou himself subsumes Lacan at one point under the general tendency to oppose "the Plato symptom" that has been defining for the late 19th and entire 20th century. Cf. Badiou 2017c, p. 229. But he also recognizes that Lacan proclaimed at one point that already Plato was Lacanian. Cf. ibid., p. 236.
17 This reading is obviously complicated by Lacan's explicit – 1973 – question whether, different from "a philosophy that culminates in Hegel's discourse" and which Lacan then identifies with "the idea of historical progression", "the formalization of mathematical logic, which is based on writing serves us in the analytic process....?" Cf. Lacan 1988, p. 93.
18 Badiou 2003a, p. 31ff. For Badiou this leads to a "milieu", which emphasizes "anthropology, language-empiricism and skepticism against any possible ontology." Badiou 2015a, p. 42. It is against this background that Bruno Bosteels is justified to suggest that "today the dominant philosophical attitude is in fact thoroughly antiphilosophical in nature, even if the label itself is not always used or accepted." Bosteels 2008, p. 161.
19 Badiou 2007, p. 1.
20 This marks a particularly tricky rendering of the (non-)relationship of psychoanalysis and philosophy – a kind of impasse and thus an indication of a possible passage –, since thus far, at least for Badiou, "neither has psychoanalysis interrupted philosophy nor has philosophy been able to deconstruct psychoanalysis." Badiou 2017a, p. 206. The efficacy of either vis-à-vis the other was thus starkly limited. Below I suggest a peace treaty of how an interruption allows for a deconstruction.
21 Badiou 2022, p. 28.
22 It is, as Badiou once stated, "an apparatus of duplicity" – a designation which describes "an operation" – that allows for an act in the form of thought such that psychoanalysis can "make holes in philosophy." Badiou 2017c, p. 246.
23 Badiou 2006, p. 7.
24 Badiou 1991, p. 133.
25 In a pointed formulation this can be reformulated by stating that "the differend between philosophy and antiphilosophy can be resumed in a simplified manner such that antiphilosophy discards truth because it is senseless, while philosophy defends truth because it is senseless." Weise 2025, p. 67.
26 Lacan claimed that Kierkegaard was guided by a "paranormal anxiety" and thereby sought – against Hegel – that anxiety allows for an experience of the limit of the concept, as it is itself a limit-concept. Cf. Lacan 2014, p. 18 and see also: p. 533. For Badiou, this is an indication that Lacan is an antiphilosopher because in "antiphilosophy it is never on the side of reason that one has to search for the true." Badiou 2023b, p. 68.
27 Badiou 2019a, p. 67.
28 This is the reason as to why Badiou in other contexts has suggested that such

a singularization linked to the concept of experience – think again of Paul's antiphilosophical foundation of universalism with regard to which Badiou suggested that "the subjective position figure[s] as decisive factor in discourse" (Badiou 2003c, p. 17) – comes close to affirming that truth is ultimately subjective (and hence not universally accessible). For this especially cf. ibid., pp. 27f. The antiphilosophical project in this case is thus "to redefine 'truth' itself" (Bosteels 2008, p. 171). But Lacan has a specific place in this category as he does not "purely oppose sense to truth", "as is the case for many other antiphilosophers." Badiou 2023b, p. 64. Adrian Johnston has, not only for this reason, suggested that Lacan is rather a "paraphilosopher whose interweavings of psychoanalytic and the philosophical" is genuinely creative and path-opening. Johnston 2014, p. 250.

29 Badiou 2003c, p. 31. This formal classification makes it certainly not always easy to place thinkers like Marx or Freud within the category of antiphilosophy, even though both – for slightly different reasons – are classified as antiphilosophers. One rendering of the immanent systematic incompleteness of Lacan's oeuvre can be found in: Milner 2021, pp. 102ff.

30 Badiou 1992, p. 84.

31 I am saying "function" here in the same way in which Badiou has used the term in the following self-description: "For today's French Marxists, the function of Lacan is the function that Hegel served for the German revolutionaries of the 1840s." Badiou 2009a, p. 4. This also means that I will not explore Badiou's disagreement with Lacan and its specific points, but only how the antiphilosophical renewal of philosophy can be conceived of.

32 A highly important – even though critical – rendering of Badiou's rendering of Lacan – in Badiouian spirit – can be found in: Chiesa 2024. The long-standing discussion with my friend Lorenzo Chiesa and our collective and systematic close-re-reading Badiou's *Being and Event* project has had many direct repercussions on my attempt to bring together conceptually Badiou and Hegel (after Badiou's critique of Hegel).

33 Chiesa 2024, p. 2.

34 Bosteels 2008, p. 188. Also instructive for this context with a focus on Lacan: Soler 2006.

35 Bosteels 2008, p. 161.

36 Chiesa 2024, p. 3. This dimension is "in its element in Christianity." Badiou 1994, p. 49.

37 Badiou 1991b, p. 25.

38 Badiou 2007, p. 3.

39 Badiou 1991b, p. 25. Chiesa adds to this that Lacan's position for Badiou is also not defined by an animosity vis-à-vis science and the critique of philosophy does not aim at an outright rejection, but rather an emphasizing "that philosophy is and has always been inherently *split*." Chiesa 2024, p. 5.

40 Badiou clearly emphasizes that the antiphilosophical proximity to or wrestling with Christianity, say in Paul, Pascal, Rousseau, Kierkegaard or Wittgenstein, is unique in Lacan's case. Since Lacan is "the only true rationalist of the group." Cf. Badiou 1994, p. 19.

41 Badiou 1994, p. 23. The obvious example regarding Lacan's relation to philosophy – in Badiou's rendering – is its neglect of enjoyment and its negligence toward the Thing to which it is attached (for this also cf. Balmés 1999). The antiphilosophical names are Heraclitus and Paul, Pascal, Rousseau and Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein and Lacan. Sometimes Badiou adds Freud, Marx and Foucault to this list.

42 Such a line of argumentation can, for example, be found in Lacan 2013.

43 As Badiou puts it: "Lacan's basic claim is that as philosophy is an instance of the master's discourse, what opposes it is the ethics of the discourse of the analyst." Badiou 2017c, p. 228.

44 Cf. Lacan 2001, p. 314. As I am not focusing on Lacan's own, vacillating use of the term "antiphilosophy" here – as I am mainly interested in what this concept does within Badiou's philosophy – I, again, refer the reader to Chiesa 2024.

45 That this is linked, in psychoanalysis, to the discovery of the unconscious is apparent.

46 Badiou 2003c, p. 58.

47 More precisely it is not only formalization but also an affect – anxiety – that in Badiou's reading of Lacan is the bearer of truth (cf. Badiou 2023b, p. 68). For the general line of this argument, cf. for example: Badiou 2010. This is why Badiou claims that "Lacan's thesis is that the Real is external to the antinomy of knowing and not-knowing ." Badiou 2017e, p. 58. For reasons indicated, I here leave aside the complexities of Badiou's account of the Real as ab-sens.

48 Badiou 2009a, p. 67. This is directly linked to Badiou's claim that from psychoanalysis philosophy can learn that "every truth emerges from having found a pass in the impasse...." Badiou 2017a, p. 206.

49 Badiou 1992, p. 84.

50 This is, in one of Badiou's articulations, a particularly vexing task as Lacan's position itself divides into "two paths that are undoubtedly incompatible", namely into an endorsement of logical intuitionism, which negates actual infinity, and into an endorsement of Cantorian set theory, which seeks to think through it. Badiou 2017b, p. 214. The charge then is repeated, in more drastic terms (as "ultimately, Lacan remained pre-Cantorian" (ibid., p. 219)) and rendered such that Lacan's is ultimately a finitizing structuralism that places actual infinity as the inaccessible distance that separates 1 and 2. But, as Badiou claimed once earlier on, it is as if Lacan sides

with one position, "but points" at another and this other is", which is where we want to get." Badiou 2009b, p. 161. However, from 1992 till today Badiou defends the claim that "the Lacanian doctrine of the subject is essentially finite...." Badiou 2017b, p. 225.
51 That is a concept that is, for example, different from the philosophical concept of religion (which is constituted by the equivalating of meaning and truth) and from the concept of sophistry (to which I will return).
52 Badiou 2017b, p. 227. He states at one point that he made "antiphilosophy one of my concepts." Badiou 2025, p. 262.
53 Badiou 2017f, p. 139f.
54 Ibid., p. 140.
55 Badiou stated in 1991: "Neither am I nor have I been Lacanian or Anti-Lacanian." Badiou 2011b, p. 123.
56 One of the crucial questions is if it is an anti-philosophical philosophy (as suggested above) or a truth procedure (cf. ibid., p. 142) or as Lacan worried at some point, ultimately, a renewed form of religion. Another way of approaching this question would be to examine in what precise way psychoanalysis necessitates a concept of the idea (or of the absolute). Inter alia in 1992, Badiou suggests that Lacan's thought represents an event for the condition of love. Cf. Badiou 2011c, p. 135.
57 To be clear, with this comparison I am not suggesting that Lacan is per se Kantian for Badiou. As the latter stated clearly: "Lacan dodges the trap of criticism and is in no way a Kantian. The feat he accomplishes is to propose neither that the real is unknowable nor that it is knowable." Badiou 2017e, p. 58.
58 Hegel 1991, p. 19.
59 Badiou 2018, p. 15.
60 However, Badiou also claims that Lacan at some point appears proximate to a sophist – a position that afterwards Barbara Cassin championed – because a sophist is "strictly indistinguishable from the philosopher" if not by his or her harsh negations of philosophy and assumption of a predominance of *lalangue*. In this formulation it sounds as if the antiphilosopher in its most elevated manner learns from the sophist and makes himself indistinguishable from the philosopher, without being a sophist. Cf. Badiou 1991a, p. 136. A game of hide-and-seek in minimal differences.
61 Badiou 2007, p. 3.
62 Badiou 2018, p. 20.
63 Ibid.
64 The reason for this is because "the imaginary of the sophist is that there is an omnipotence of language: this is the idea that language is unbound from the real and that one does not need to care for the real." The sophist is here thus different from the antiphilosopher as the latter, "pastes the real into the symbolic: he believes there to be a radical deficiency of the symbolic which is, in his view, more or less imaginary." Badiou 2025, p. 292.
65 To end the end, is Badiou's early version of what he later will articulate in the slogan "down with death!".
66 Badiou 2016, p. 27.
67 Badiou 1989.
68 Ibid.
69 Heidegger 1977, p. 20.
70 Badiou 2017d, p. 121.
71 Ibid., p. 136.
72 Ibid., p. 137.
73 Ibid., p. 136.
74 That psychoanalysis plays a specific role in "contemporary nihilism" that stands "under the emblem of enjoyment", Badiou elaborates in p. 54ff.
75 Badiou 2017d, p. 37.
76 Badiou 2015b, p. 52f.
77 For Badiou this indicates the German character of ecology, cf. ibid.
78 This desacralization could also – and ought to be rather – read as subtraction, as Badiou notes, cf. ibid., 54. Desacralization then becomes a proper condition for a modern understanding of the infinite. Cf. Badiou 1992, p. 56f.
79 This critique is multilayered and has to do with the suturing of philosophy to poetry, with the interpretation of Parmenides, with the status of the subject, with the assumption that being is fundamentally a question without answer and with the status – and the understanding – of poetry.
80 Cf. Badiou 2019b, p. 142.
81 For a longer account, cf. Ruda 2023.
82 Cf. Heidegger 1991.
83 For this, cf. Badiou, 2016, p. 46f.
84 Cf. Badiou 2019b, p. 151.
85 Cf. Badiou 2017d, p. 54.
86 Ibid., p. 130.
87 Badiou 1992, p. 52.
88 Badiou 2017d, p. 243f.
89 Badiou 1992, p 61.
90 Badiou 2015, p. 132.
91 Badiou 1992, pp. 69ff. It is crucial that this term is "a *philosophical* category" and not a poetic one. Cf. Badiou 2014b, p. 4. It is what "organizes a *disorientation* in thought." Ibid., p. 18.
92 Badiou 1992, p. 76. This is crucial, since the forgetting of being took for Heidegger very frequently the form of philosophy conceiving of being in terms of the highest being (i.e. as an object).
93 Pippin 2022.
94 Badiou 2017d, p. 197.
95 Ibid., p. 209.
96 Or in Badiou's rendering: "the poem, being a free donation, is free donation of this gift that is being itself." Ibid., p. 120.
97 Ibid., p. 118.
98 There is a dialectical twist here latent in

Badiou's account. For if the poetic form enables us to think that being qua being needs to be linked to a conception of evental donation (of the event), this can be read in two ways: either being's givenness is itself evental or our discursive account of being qua being – whatever it might be – is the result of an event, which is not an event of being. The latter is Badiou's position.
99 Badiou 2014b, p. 241.
100 Badiou 2015b, p. 221. Badiou also describes this as "the reactivation of the Pre-Socratics as the forgotten source from which our destiny took flight." Badiou 2006, p. 8.
101 Badiou 2014b, p. 36.
102 Both citations are from: Heinrich 1982, p. 84.
103 Badiou 2014a, p. 9.
104 Cf. ibid., p. 201ff.
105 Ibid., p. 169.
106 Only he, and therein Badiou follows Plato's rendering, appears "in the figure of foundational father." Ibid., p. 138.
107 Ibid., p. 119.
108 Ibid., p. 42f.
109 Badiou therefore argues that Heidegger (as much as Nietzsche) are inadequate readers of Parmenides – even though Heidegger's return to Parmenides created part of the condition for a renewal of philosophy. But Heidegger, problematically for Badiou, reads Parmenides in terms of pure narrative, pure fable. Whereas Badiou sees in Parmenides a beginning of philosophy but not yet in the form of philosophy, as there is for example no "pure ontology" (ibid., p. 56) in him, but one dressed up in mythological and cosmological clothes. However, there is the clear attempt made to break with previous mythical and narrative structures.
110 Ibid., p. 90.
111 Ibid., p. 175. Badiou calls this a "pure three". Cf. ibid., p. 178.
112 Badiou assigns Parmenides therefore the "audacity to conclude." Cf. ibid., p. 234.
113 Ibid., p. 224. That this even has something to do with the co-invention and co-conditioning of mathematics and philosophy Badiou derives from Szabó 1978.
114 Cf. for this Jaeger 1947, p. 104.
115 Badiou 2017d, p. 53. It is here certainly not trivial that Badiou mobilizes a claim from Lacan's Seminar XX where the latter speaks of the "philosophical tradition starting from Parmenides" and thereby identifies Parmenides – and not Plato – as the founder of a tradition (of philosophy), which is a tradition to which Heraclitus then opposes himself (cf. Lacan 1988, p. 114). This turns Heraclitus into the first antiphilosopher, as part of the genealogy of psychoanalysis. This is a gesture that Lacan will repeat, in a different form, vis-à-vis Socrates (the analyst) and Plato (the master). Badiou 2006, p. 15f. Elsewhere, Badiou openly embraces this claim and suggests that "Heraclitus… is as much the antiphilosopher to Parmenides as Pascal is to Descartes." Badiou 1994, p. 14.
116 Badiou 2017d, p. 34.
117 Badiou claims that mathematics thinks in small letter, the poem in capitals. Cf. ibid., 23. And maybe we could say we need new small letters for a new un-naming.
118 Badiou 2017d, p. 39.
119 The matheme then sits in Badiou where he thinks for Plato the idea sits. It formalizes the impasse of formalization. This even holds for the meta-ontological matheme of the event that formalizes the impasses of formalization of mathematics as ontology.
120 Badiou 1997, p. 46.
121 Badiou 2017d, p. 183
122 Badiou 2003b, p. 66
123 As a sidenote, it is no one else than Hegel who stands as clear exception to this thesis. For he famously stated that "there is not one proposition of Heraclitus which I have not adopted in my Logic", emphasizing a clearly Heraclitean streak in modern philosophy. Hegel 1995, p. 278.
124 I here leave aside Badiou's quite articulate reproach to this reproach – which maybe unsurprisingly – shows that Lacan will end up endorsing, against his own declaration, a position that in this sense is also Parmenidean – or philosophical. This reconstruction is for another place and time.
125 Badiou 2019b, p. 106.
126 Badiou 2006, p. 9. . Even though, for Badiou, he shares with Heidegger that "something has been forgotten or lost between the Pre-Socratics and Plato." Ibid., p. 12. For it is in this passage that changes how difference is thought: Badiou's line is that the Pre-Socratics differentiate identity, while Plato will identify difference (through the concept of the idea). Cf. ibid. The leads Badiou – and this is only possible under Heideggerian conditions – to presume that "the Pre-Socratics… from part of the polemical genealogy of psychoanalysis." Cf. ibid., p. 13.
127 Badiou 1997, p. 52.
128 Badiou 1992, p. 103.
129 Badiou 2013, p. 12 and p. 82.
130 The discussion about the consequences of this reading for the place of Marxism in Badiou will deserve an independent examination. What concerns Marx (if we count him) as antiphilosopher, it is important to note that together with Kierkegaard, he is one of two antiphilosophers that oppose Hegel – and most of the philosophers in the history of philosophy seem to predominantly have one antiphilosopher in Badiou's account.
131 This is the title of a section of Badiou's hypertranslation of Plato's *Republic*. Cf.
132 Here it is also crucial that philosophy can side with the antiphilosophers when it is

about “defending the real against the sophists, who think that there is an omnipotence of the symbolic… but when the philosopher also defends the symbolic against the antiphilosopher, the sophist can become” an ally. Cf. Badiou 2025, p. 293f.
133 And to some extent with Lenin, Marx and Freud, too.
134 Badiou 2007, p. 3.
135 Ibid., 105.
136 Badiou 2017d, p. 28.
137 Ibid., 72.
138 Ibid., 70.
139 Badiou 1991a, p. 148.
140 Badiou 2013, p. 155.
141 The whole paradox of the unconscious for Badiou lies in this formulation. It is, in other words, a subtractive knowledge of truth.
142 Badiou 2019b, p. 159.
143 As Badiou once stated: “*Dianoia* is the thought that passes through, the thought that is the traversing of the thinkable.” Badiou 2014b, p. 33.
144 Badiou 2006, p. 10.
145 Ibid. Badiou goes as far as to claim that in Heraclitus for Lacan we find an anticipation of the death drive or what Lacan refers to as “negative libido”.
146 Badiou 2006, p. 15.
147 Ibid., 16.
148 Badiou 2017a, p. 210. This is the case in Badiou 2017c, Badiou 1997, Badiou 2003b.
149 This holds for Heidegger, Lacan and Badiou – even though their accounts differ. Obviously, this concept demands a long elaboration on its own. In my “Courage and Event” – a book I aim to complete within this year – crucial elements of such elaboration will be presented.
150 Lacan 1999, p. 144.
151 Badiou 1991a, p. 136.
152 Badiou 2014c, p. 53f. Badiou there states: “However, the death of Lacan was cloaked in a singular aura because it echoed his own work. His death is modelled after his late thought, which was placed under the sign of, precisely, Oedipus at Colonus, this figure of an old man who dies and leaves to all the world the insoluble enigma of his death. Lacan, if I may say so, succeeded in pulling this off: the muteness of his last years and his death form an integral part of his enigmatic legacy.”
153 Badiou for example claims that “antiphilosophy puts philosophy on guard. It shows the ruses of sense and the dogmatic danger of truth. It teaches us that the rupture with religion is never definitive. That one must take up the task again. The truth must, once again, be secularized.” (London: Verso 2001), p. 65.

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Two Fidelities. Badiou's Philosophical Inquiries Into Politics

Alessandro Russo

The aspect of Alain Badiou's intellectual journey that has always most appealed to me is his handling, at various times, of what he called the "enigmatic relationship between philosophy and politics." The issue was already present in preliminary form in the 1978 *Interview*, which began our friendship. Over the next fifty years, Badiou explored it through his ongoing philosophical inquiry into modern and contemporary revolutionary politics, extending his analysis even to key historical moments such as Müntzer and Spartacus.

To reorganise, primarily for myself, what I have learned from this extensive investigation—from this frequent direct engagement between the philosopher and politics—I will attempt to outline the principal threads of fidelity, with all the significance this term holds for Badiou, in his intellectual development. The intertwining of these two threads, I believe, even if it does not fully resolve, illuminates the nature of the aforementioned enigma.

In Badiou's intellectual work, two critical fidelities intersect. The first is to the flourishing of French philosophy after World War II. The second is to the political inventions of the 1960s, especially the Chinese Cultural Revolution. These fidelities reach beyond just those moments: one embraces philosophy's entire speculative potential, the other involves the long process of experimentation started by Marx in inventing modern communist politics.

"Le temps des philosophes"

The philosophical configuration to which Badiou has remained faithful since his youth is the great horizon of thought in France in the 1950s and 1960s. "Le temps des philosophes," as it was called, is the philosophical season in which Badiou, a young Sartrean in his high school studies, then *a normalien* at the ENS, a reader of Lévi-Strauss and Lacan since the 1950s, active in the Althusserian school, interlocutor of Foucault, and student of Hyppolite and Canguilhem, completed his studies.

One document that captures the essence of this philosophical training is a series of interviews Badiou conducted in 1964-65 with leading French philosophers. Filmed for schools under the title *Le temps des philosophes*,[1] these interviews show Badiou, then a high school teacher in Reims, skilfully facilitating discussion. Each philosopher presented their own perspective, while Badiou's questions helped them to clarify their views.

Even today, this provides a broad and lively overview of the French philosophical scene in the mid-1960s, at the height of that intellectual configuration. It is not a complete catalogue – leading figures such as Sartre, Althusser, and Lacan are notably absent – but it does feature great philosophical personalities such as Hyppolite and Canguilhem. There is also an openness to new ideas destined to have a considerable influence, such as the interview with Foucault on "Philosophy and

Psychology", at the time he was writing *Les mots et les choses*. These are very different voices, but at the same time, they are situated within the same philosophical horizon. At that time, France had a concentration of philosophers comparable in intensity to classical German philosophy or to certain periods in ancient Greece or ancient China.

Although the series' title, *Le temps des philosophes*, rightly celebrates this philosophical flourishing, the content of the interviews is anything but celebratory. What emerges above all from this series of films is a peculiar tension among all the interviewees on the major themes of philosophy. It could almost be described as a rationally guided anxiety that fuels the reflections of these philosophers. For each of them, in different ways, the destiny of philosophy and its foundations are at stake in that special intellectual conjuncture. The breadth of what is at stake and Badiou's personal involvement in that intellectual climate are fully evident in the interview with Hyppolite on the theme "La philosophie et son histoire," perhaps the most systematic and representative of the series, given the theme. At one point, the interview turns to the problem of the "non-philosophical conditions of philosophy." It is Badiou who raises the issue, but it is Hyppolite who formulates it in terms of "conditions."

However, a key difference between teacher and student soon emerges. Hyppolite sees the conditions of philosophy as specific social or cultural circumstances influencing a philosophical system, which retains its core value beyond them. Badiou, instead, questions whether extra-philosophical conditions should make us rethink the uniqueness of philosophy's history. He suggests viewing conditions not in a conjunctural sense (as specific to a time or place), but as an ongoing background central to philosophy's very existence and its history.

Hyppolite is not convinced and does not seem willing to share this perspective. The positions remain respectfully distant, but what Badiou formulates there in embryonic form is a question that will become crucial for him, that of the existence of conditions of thought independent of philosophy and the relationship of philosophy to them. The systematic formulation will take place more than twenty years later.

At this point, Badiou had published only two experimental novels, not any philosophical texts.[2] This was the start of his career, marked by a literary distance from philosophy, as if he were approaching philosophical projects indirectly. Nonetheless, Badiou soon became involved in two key philosophical groups. He joined the "Groupe Spinoza" of the Althusserian school, which sought to reorganise dialectical materialism. He also helped found *Cahiers pour l'analyse* with a group of young philosophers affiliated with both the Althusserian and Lacanian schools, sharing a special interest in Maoism and the Cultural Revolution. Badiou called them, with some irony in the 1978 *Interview*, "une sorte d'épistémologues maoïstes."

The mid-1960s represented the peak of the "Temps des philosophes." Events in 1968 then dramatically changed the French philosophical scene.

Just before this, notable young philosophers emerged, bringing together political and philosophical radicalism. Although they later took different paths, Badiou remembered, "we were young philosophers eager to break the history of our discipline in two." This Nietzschean allusion ("breaking in two") is somewhat self-deprecating. Actually, their orientation was toward "a new kind of positivism." They wanted "to advance by discovering structures whose interactions could explain phenomena, including human development."[3]

The structuralism of those young philosophers was a stance taken in a philosophical battle. "To do away," Badiou recalls, "with all forms of philosophical idealism and establish ourselves in the vast domain of the sciences, structured, as Althusser said, into 'continents'," Althusser spoke of five scientific continents: the mathematical continent of the Greeks, the physical continent of Galileo, the biological continent of Darwin, the historical continent of Marx and Lenin, and the continent of the unconscious of Freud and Lacan.[4]

Their main targets were 'phenomenology' from Husserl and 'empiricism' from the Vienna School. Despite existing differences, Althusser's theory provided a shared intellectual framework for these young philosophers' dual political and philosophical fidelities.

The "road to Damascus."

May 1968 brought division to this philosophical landscape. After this point, political and philosophical fidelity could no longer coexist within Althusserianism. The resulting dispute split the Althusserian school: some, like Althusser and his followers, continued to see the PCF as the essential political organisation and maintained a critical "entryist" approach, while others, including Badiou, sought new organisational forms.

The breakup of the "Althusserian school" also involves divergences on strictly philosophical issues, which are destined to deepen, but in the immediate term, it is essentially a political divergence: it concerns the attitude towards the Cultural Revolution, May 1968, and above all, the PCF. In reality, the two planes immediately intersect: the disagreement leads to the breakdown of the relationship between philosophy and politics that Althusser had outlined in his "scientific" project. The events of 1968 were a political critique of the formalism of that conception, which ultimately allowed Althusser to remain within the PCF and ignore the fact that mass movements were criticising the unbearable opportunism and bureaucratism of all the communist parties linked to Moscow. The whole "scientific" framework of Marxism (the "scientific continent" of history) did not allow anything serious to be said about the new political situation in France, about political events in China, or about the PCF's crisis and its mass discredit.

The events of May had a casual but significant organisational consequence—even, one might say, eventful—on Badiou's activities

within the Althusserian school. A fairly well-known detail is that of his two lectures scheduled for *the Cours de philosophie pour scientifiques,* created by Althusser in the spring of 1968, and later published in the volume *Le concept de modèle*, only the first was delivered, on April 29, while the second, scheduled for May 13, was suspended.

This was an emblematic interruption of a journey, which Badiou has repeatedly referred to as his "fall on the road to Damascus." In fact, after May 1968, not only did Badiou change direction, but he also reoriented his fundamental intellectual activity in a specific sense for many years. He committed himself full-time to political organisation, co-founding the Maoist group Union des Communistes Français (UCF-ML) in 1969. He would only return systematically to philosophy in the mid-1970s, with the multi-year seminar that culminated in *Théorie du sujet*.

Continuity and discontinuity between these two moments are intertwined on various levels. For example, it is true that in the mid-1980s, mathematics once again became a central reference point for Badiou. However, from the first volume of *L'être et l'événement* onwards, it is conceived in a fully ontological perspective, according to the somewhat abbreviated formula that Badiou used at the time, "mathematics is ontology". This perspective was subsequently refined with the articulation of a logic—or rather a variety of *Logics of Worlds*, as the work published in 2016 is titled—distinct from the "ontology of the multiple." In the 1968 lectures for the *Cours de philosophie pour scientifiques*, however, the reference to mathematics lacks this distinction. In that early work, Badiou points to what he later called his "logical materialism." In the trilogy *L'être et l'événement,* the elaboration of a systematic ontology is a precondition for both logic and a renewed conception of materialism.[5]

The trilogy concludes with a reorganisation of the very category of truth (truths, in the plural), through a dizzying and rigorous journey into the problem of infinite (infinities) in 20th-century mathematics (*L'immanence des vérités*, 2017). A tenacious reader ventures into an astonishing philosophical belvedere on 20th-century mathematical thought. The book is, above all, a dialogue in which the philosopher engages with the most contemporary "scientific condition", right up to the open dilemmas that run through mathematics.

Conditions

Between these two moments—the inaugural period stretching from his student years to 1968, and the creation of an impressive philosophical system starting in the mid-1980s—there is a journey that includes crucial twists, turns, and advances. As for the relationship between politics and philosophy, there is a first decade that is entirely political, but which includes a peculiar "trespassing" into philosophy (the "Yenan Collection" between 1975 and 1979)[6]. In the following decade, the return to strictly

philosophical work takes place in two distinct stages: *Théorie du sujet* (published in 1982, but the seminar in which he presented it began in January 1975) and *L'être et l'événement* (1986), the first of the trilogy that includes the aforementioned *Logiques des mondes* (2006) and *L'immanence des vérités* (2017). The transition from *Théorie du sujet* to *L'être et l'événement* is, in turn, decisive. In elaborating the latter, Badiou formulates a completely new perspective on the relationship between political fidelity and philosophical fidelity, both with respect to Althusserian positions and to his own positions up to *Théorie du sujet*.

A key point of this shift is that of "conditions of philosophy" or "philosophy under conditions." It is no longer a question of "continents of science," where philosophy, as Althusser said, acts as a "representative" of one towards the other (for example, of politics towards science and vice versa), nor of a political trespassing into philosophy as in the "Yenan Collection." The thesis of "philosophy under conditions" instead involves a peculiar work of inquiry that philosophy must carry out on the extra-philosophical conditions of its existence. Science is one of these conditions, but it does not in any way constitute their unified horizon, just as philosophy is not epistemology. Politics is, in turn, distinct from science, as are art and love. Each of these "four conditions" of philosophy constitutes a specific mode of rationality, in each of which subjects can trace singular "procedures of truth."

Badiou often cites the Platonic foundation of this intellectual map of the relationships among philosophy, science, art, politics, and love. They were also decisive intellectual interlocutors for Plato. They have always been so for Badiou as well. His passion for mathematics, literary writing, the study of Lacanian psychoanalysis, and organised political engagement are constants in his intellectual journey.

With one fundamental discontinuity, however. In *Théorie du sujet*, these four modes of thought are fully present alongside philosophy, sharing in the same project of theoretical renewal of the problem of the subject. In the system inaugurated by *L'être et l'événement*, on the other hand, those four intellectual "worlds"—science, politics, art, and love—are indeed fully present, but philosophy establishes a peculiar dialogue with them at a distance.

The consequences of this distancing are vast. First of all, it allows Badiou to focus on a philosophical project and develop the systematic construction of an ontology, a logic, and a metaphysics (in the three volumes of *L'être et l'événement*). The project also involves a confrontation with the entire history of philosophy, including "anti-philosophy," as can be seen both in this trilogy and in the admirable thirty-year-long *Séminaire*. Furthermore, Badiou resumes his investigations in an even more rigorous manner on all fronts of his extra-philosophical intellectual interlocutors. What emerges is a very singular configuration of "philosophical distance" and "conditioning" at a distance from philosophy.

Art, politics, science, and love are no longer directly involved in the philosophical program, but are independent rationalities, which moreover constitute the essential "conditions" for the existence of philosophy.

This drastic reorganisation of philosophy's relationship with other singular forms of thought has its epicentre in the relationship with politics. The redefinition of Badiou's philosophical program, which leads to the constitution of his system and the elaboration of the category of "conditions," occurs at a fundamental political turning point.

In the mid-1980s, two decisive and complementary issues were at stake. One was how to renew the political experimentation in which Badiou had been involved for fifteen years. This was the moment of transition from the UCF(ML) to the Organisation Politique. The other was how to remain faithful to the political season of the long 1960s. The end of that worldwide political configuration, which became fully apparent in the early 1980s, was immediately followed not only by the complete denigration of that political season, but also by the establishment of discredit towards the entire political enterprise of modern communism.

I discussed how and when the 1960s ended in a seminar organised by Badiou himself in Seoul[7]. The turning point in Badiou's journey, in which he formulates the perspective of the "conditions" of philosophy, coincides fully with that end, or rather stems from the need to thoroughly consider the political essence of that "dark disaster," as he calls it in a scathing pamphlet[8]. In the early 1980s, with *Peut-on penser la politique?* Badiou posits that the task of political thought is not only the unavoidable observation of the end of state communism, but also the problem of unravelling the relationships that politics had with history, economics, and philosophy itself in the revolutionary culture.

This readjustment of the relationship between philosophy and "conditions" is itself under condition of a political moment in which Badiou is actively involved. The transition from the UCF(ML) to the Organisation Politique in 1985 involved a fundamental change of perspective. In previous years, ML (Marxist-Leninist) had been the acronym designating membership of the Maoist camp. The political objective of the UCF(ML) had been, in the wake of the Cultural Revolution, to experiment with a "new type of party". The new name, on the other hand, declared that the organisation was indeed a fundamental condition of politics, but that the value of the names that had designated it in the past had been exhausted. No longer a "party" to be "renewed," but a "political organisation" to be invented from scratch.

The Organisation Politique, which dissolved between 2007 and 2009, still lacks a political assessment formulated by its founders and activists. As the venture came to an end, differences arose over the conception of politics, both as thought and as organisation, and over its relationship with philosophy. At the time, I had followed that political experiment with great attention and hope, and was very saddened not only by its closure, but even more so by the fact that its protagonists had remained silent about it

publicly. Although there is still insufficient evidence to fully reflect on the end of the most promising political experiment of the second half of the 1980s in France, I will venture to outline a personal assessment of what I have learned from it, the thesis of "political distance", and what I believe to have been at the roots of a serious impasse, the formula of "politics without party".

"Political distance"

The main theoretical innovation of the Organisation politique was that of the "political distance", which also gave its name to its newspaper. The formulation was very clear: a new politics of emancipation and equality, on a par with the communist politics inaugurated by *the Manifesto*, had to be "at a distance" from state power. This thesis marked a fundamental break with the entire tradition of 20th-century communism, in which the "seizure of state power" had been the main strategic objective.

The thesis of "political distance" also laid the foundations for an assessment of the failure of state communism and the lethal fusion of politics and the state. At the same time, that thesis opened the way to examine the enigma of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. That perspective was a great impetus for me in studying those events. The main internal political limitation that led to the self-destruction of independent organisations (usually called Red Guards), I argued, was precisely their inability to maintain a real "political distance" from the state, and more precisely from the conception, dominant in 20th-century communism, that the "seizure of state power" was the essential stake in revolutionary politics.[9]

In its militant activities, the Organisation Politique led tenacious campaigns in defence of the "sans papiers," against whom governments exercised, and continue to exercise, violent persecution. On this key issue—now more pressing than ever, in France as elsewhere—the Organisation Politique was able to take original and counter-current positions with respect to the identity drift that was thriving in government circles, supported not only by the most squalid figures of the fascist-leaning far right, but also by the entire "democratic" opinion that prided itself on being progressive and liberal. Consider the abominable "veil law" in the name of "secularism." In those battles of the first order for an egalitarian politics towards workers of foreign origin, the Organisation Politique was able to practice effective "political distance."

"Politics without party"

The other thesis of the *Organisation politique*, the "politique sans parti," was, I believe, its weak point, or rather the symptom of an internal weakness that led to an impasse. This assessment can be made in light

of the political developments of the following decade, particularly the consequences of the end of the USSR. In the mid-1980s, this thesis may have seemed convincing because it declared the end of the party organisation and contained the implicit promise that a completely new one could be built.

In fact, however, not only did that promise remain implicit, but it was overshadowed by a negation (a *without*) that did not affirm anything truly new, or at most postponed *sine die* the affirmation of a new vision of political organisation. Furthermore, that seemingly radical formula overlooked the actual transformation of state power in those years, namely that state politics was also rapidly becoming party-less.

The phenomenon was already underway, because the crisis of state parties was rooted in the long 1960s, but it had remained latent, submerged in the 1980s by the complacency of the triumphant restoration. Their disintegration only fully emerged in the 1990s, when the dissolution of the USSR brought to light the decomposition of the 20th-century party system. Emblematic of this was the establishment of the Euro as the supreme form of government in Europe, adopted unanimously in response to the loss of authority of the parliamentary parties.[10]

In that situation, declaring a *no-party* politics as the essence of organisational invention not only failed to *affirm* a new form of organisation, but also did not allow for the necessary distance from governmental circumstances, which were also post-party. If the fundamental condition for the creation and development of egalitarian organisational inventions is radical independence from governmental circumstances, in order to practice real political distance, it is essential to precisely identify the specific forms of state power in a given situation.

I therefore venture to argue (but I am ready to listen carefully to a different assessment made by the protagonists of that experience) that that "no-party" was an obstacle to the independence of the invention, because it blurred the distinction with the ongoing transformations of the real circumstances of state power. So that the latter could well have said: "No-party? Come on, gentlemen, we totally agree, we were no-party long before you."

Other factors contributed to the demise of the Organisation Politique, notably the differences that emerged between Badiou and another founder of that enterprise, Sylvain Lazarus, over the relationship between politics and philosophy. This divergence, which had been present since the 1980s, had been promising at the outset, but the final break was never really apparent.

One starting point for the differences was Lazarus's response to Badiou's lecture "Peut-on penser la politique?" with another lecture, shortly afterwards, entitled "Peut-on penser la politique in interiorité?"[11] The difference, albeit seemingly minimal, signalled a disagreement that was destined to deepen. Both shared the view of politics as a unique mode of

thought. However, while Badiou assigned philosophy the task of thinking about the co-possibility of its extra-philosophical "conditions," including politics, for Lazarus, "politics in interiority" not only had no need to enter into dialogue with philosophy, but also had no reason to coexist with it.

Lazarus asserted the absolute singularity of political thought and its total rational self-sufficiency. Badiou sought a principle for de-suturing philosophy from its "political condition" and, while valuing Lazarus's thought, observed that it was "subjectively anti-philosophical." This, however, did not imply an antagonism of principle. It should be remembered that in those years Badiou was engaged in intense dialogue with the whole of anti-philosophy, as shown by four years of *the Séminaire* dedicated, from 1993 to 1996, to Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Lacan, and St. Paul. However, I believe that the main cause of the exhaustion of the Organisation politique was not the disagreement between Badiou and Lazarus, but the consequences of an organisational impasse whose main symptom was the thesis of "no-party politics."

The communist hypothesis

After the end, unfortunately never fully declared, of the Organisation Politique, Badiou reoriented his arguments regarding the relationship between philosophy and politics. Between 2009 and 2013, he organised a series of international conferences in London, New York, and Seoul with Slavoj Žižek entitled *The Idea of Communism*. The title, though so luminous, confirmed and indeed accentuated what Badiou called in those years "la relation énigmatique entre philosophie et politique." Were these *two* names, one philosophical (*idea*) and one political (*communism*)? Or was it a political name that also presented itself as a philosophical name? Badiou has always vigorously argued, from the perspective of the "conditions of philosophy," that superimposing political names on philosophical ones had been "disastrous" in the era of state communism.[12]

At the first of these conferences, attended mainly by philosophers, the question of the name "communism" was, paradoxically, raised by the only two non-philosophers present, Judith Balso and myself. Balso argued that the "communist hypothesis," that is, the fundamental argument with which Badiou had initiated the discussion, was "a possible hypothesis" for philosophy but also "an impossible name" for politics. For Balso, the "communist hypothesis" had been a failed political hypothesis, and that name could not be revived politically. It could be revived philosophically, but at the risk of suturing politics and philosophy together again. I observed that the name "communism" was being held hostage in China by Deng Xiaoping and his successors. The name "communism" now stands out in the insignia of a state authority that not only directly organises capitalism on a large scale but also works meticulously to prohibit any possible egalitarian political invention outside of that "communism."

Those observations were well-founded but did not solve the enigma of the title. This was further complicated by the fact that all the philosophers present at the London conference agreed that communism was the only political idea since Plato to deserve the attention of a philosopher. Even more relevant is that on that occasion, those philosophers, among the most widely read and studied in the world, despite having divergent positions on the great fields of philosophy, ontology, logic, metaphysics, and ethics, put all their differences on hold. It would be unimaginable to place Badiou, Negri, Žižek, Vattimo, Nancy, and Rancière, to name but a few, in the same philosophical current, let alone have them belong to the same political organisation. Yet, at the London Conference, regardless of any other differences, they unreservedly shared the idea of communism as crucial to philosophy.

In that unprecedented convergence, what I initially read was the intention to endorse a philosophical statement in defence of philosophy. More precisely, an affirmation of the value of the pursuit of egalitarian politics as an existential condition of philosophy. It can be said that the idea of communism in philosophy is a constitutive position, concerned with the absolute egalitarianism of the concept. However intricate, difficult, and full of technicalities a philosophical concept may be, it is either available in principle to anyone, or it is just sophistry for sale to the highest bidder. In this sense, the "idea of communism" was ultimately an affirmation of the "political condition" of philosophy.

It was a highly counter-current affirmation, given that in today's regime of opinion, "communism" has become the name of the insurmountable impotence of any egalitarian politics. Bolstered by the failure of 20th-century state communism, current government discourse often proclaims it an aberration. Any attempt to go beyond capitalism has been branded a criminal plot for decades. The only conceivable "politics" is one that dreams of perpetually guaranteeing the impotence of the governed through the resignation of the masses to the maintenance and unlimited extension of the order of inequalities. Not without some promise of charitable and benevolent limitation.

In London in 2009, however, some great philosophers declared that communism, although inadmissible in any capitalist discourse, is the only true political idea that deserves to be thought about philosophically. If philosophy cannot renounce the absolute egalitarianism of the concept, the dominant anti-egalitarianism and current contempt for communism are powerful adversaries of philosophy. In this sense, I argued that the London seminar was a philosophical statement in defence of philosophy: a group of great thinkers declared, against the tide, the value of the fundamental "political condition" of philosophy. Moreover, Badiou himself, in presenting the volume *L'hypothèse communiste*, which included his speech at the London conference, declared that it was a "book of philosophy."

Facing dissolution

That series of seminars on the "idea of communism" brought together a tangle of political and philosophical issues. For Badiou, the stakes were high at the crossroads of a key passage in his philosophical journey, which would lead to *L'immanence des vérités*, and a radical political impasse, the dissolution of the Organisation politique. The London initiative was a response to a disorientation concerning the two fidelities and their articulation.

The publication of the seminars from 2004 to 2010 allows us to better clarify the value of the "communist hypothesis" that Badiou formulated at the end of that decade. These are two impressive volumes comprising two three-year seminars entitled, respectively, *S'orienter dans la pensée, s'orienter dans l'existence (2004-2007)* and *Pour aujourd'hui: Platon! (2007-2010*). The search for a line of thought capable of reorienting itself has remained a constant theme to this day. The seminar that Badiou resumed in 2021 is entitled *Comment vivre et penser en un temps d'absolue désorientation?* and one of his recent pamphlets is also entitled *Remarques sur la désorientation du monde*.

It certainly cannot be said that Badiou lacks the tenacity to face disorientation. In the second half of the 2000s, it is reasonable to think that the crisis and then the dissolution of the Organisation Politique made it urgent for Badiou to seek new points of orientation. The end of the Organisation Politique brought to a close four decades of organised political militancy, which had been the main terrain of the political condition of his philosophy.

In her memoir *Le roman de la politique*, Natacha Michel, who co-founded the UCF(ML) and then the Organisation politique, mentioned some details of that breakup, while remaining essentially fatalistic[13]. She recounts that on a certain date in 2007, Lazarus decided *on his own* to dissolve the organisation. It was a personal decision, therefore, which she herself cannot explain, presenting it as a sort of inevitable conclusion decided by some obscure destiny, to which she had to resign herself. It is difficult to find answers to major political dilemmas in autobiographical novels.

Natacha Michel writes of a contrast between the philosopher Badiou's desire for "globality" and Lazarus's rigour of "singularity." However, apart from Badiou's constant attention to the singularities of subjective processes, a letter from Badiou in 2007, which Michel quotes in its entirety, clarifies that the disagreement with Lazarus concerned political issues directly. Badiou contested the idea of a "post-Marxism," as Lazarus wanted, "without roots, without antecedents, without genealogies."

I consider the radicalism of that formula as thunderous as it is vacuous. The failure of 20th-century state communism does not in any way imply abandonment, but, on the contrary, requires a fundamental rethinking of the conditions of that defeat, the real stakes, and the internal obstacles that led to its failure. Either we engage in this rethinking, or it

is inevitable that we will join the chorus of total discredit that has been directed at 20th-century communism for decades. Nor does it make sense to say that a new political invention is the precondition for any assessment. These are inevitably two converging tasks.

In the introduction to the volume *L'hypothèse communiste*, entitled "Qu'appelle-t-on échouer?"[14], Badiou quotes a passage from his "romanopéra" *L'écharpe rouge*[15], written in the mid-1970s, where a chorus of workers, defeated after a bitter political struggle, sums up the answer to the question posed in the title: "La mauvaise chose d'échouer se change en l'excellence combative d'un savoir."

I would like to add that the question of "defeat" was essential to Mao well *before* Deng Xiaoping's restoration. Indeed, not only did Mao widely predict it as the most "probable" outcome, but he even turned this prediction into a mass political drive, not a capitulationist observation. The "probable defeat" was a central theme of Mao's position in the Cultural Revolution. He said that the prediction of defeat, despite the anguish it entailed, was intended to "raise everyone's awareness."

For Mao, this prediction was both an impetus to invent new forms of political organisation—this was the main motive behind the Cultural Revolution—and to make a critical assessment of the communist enterprise of the 20th century. "It was not clear," Mao said, what the dictatorship of the proletariat meant. The absence of this assessment, he pointed out, would have made defeat inevitable and would also have made it impossible to invent new forms of egalitarian political organisation.

Therefore, among the "antecedents" we must include not only the "defeat" of state communism (which would be the justification for that "we have no antecedents"), but above all the prediction of that defeat made at the moment of greatest political activism in China, the epicentre of the long 1960s. These were undoubtedly crucial years for all those involved in the controversies that led to the dissolution of the Organisation politique. One cannot appeal to the "singularity of politics" without focusing on the singular paradox at the heart of the last great global political season: a mass mobilisation fuelled by the probability of defeat. A defeat that, moreover, would not have been limited to that revolutionary decade in China, but would inevitably have involved the entire intellectual and political configuration of modern communism.

The main difficulty is that the Chinese Maoists failed to take stock of their own impasses in inventing new forms of political organisation. In particular, they failed to engage in self-critical reflection on the Red Guards' self-destruction in 1967-68. It is true that in the last years of the revolutionary decade, they began with great determination, but failed to complete the program of a political assessment of state communism. Their probable defeat, when it became actual, wiped out this assessment that had just begun. The Chinese Thermidor, inaugurated with the arrest of the Maoists by Hua Guofeng, began with the denigration of that attempt

at assessment, even presented as an "attempt at capitalist restoration", and was supported by the argument, typical of every successful coup d'état, that it had prevented and defeated an attempted coup d'état. Sowing confusion on fundamental political issues was one of the fundamental tools of the "integral negation" of the Cultural Revolution.

However, having undertaken both of these political tasks—invention and assessment—despite the probable, and even imminent, end of an entire era of modern revolutionary politics, shows that the Maoists placed their enterprise beyond the cessation it was destined to encounter. The temporality of the Cultural Revolution was that of an exception to the world, which, although destined to come to an end in *that* world, placed itself from the outset beyond that end. "L'excellence combative d'un savoir" arose from an anticipation both of that closure and of the possible rediscovery of those new ideas in a completely different world. The absolutely eventful character of the Cultural Revolution was explicitly situated in the "long duration" of a political experiment that had spanned several generations and was destined to span many more.

Infinite politics

Political fidelity to the lessons of the Cultural Revolution, including a "combative" assessment of its defeat, is so crucial to Badiou's itinerary that the conclusions of *L'immanence des vérités*, that is, of the entire trilogy of *L'être et l'événement*, concern precisely that revolutionary decade in China. The final chapter, or rather the "suite" that closes the chapter dedicated to "Finite and Infinite Politics," is an analysis of *The 16-point Decision* of August 1966. It is a shining example of a politics that aims to open up to the unlimited multiplicity of the intelligence of the masses, to their ability to guide their own liberation, without anyone being able to claim to act on their behalf. Badiou's detailed reading of the Cultural Revolution's main political document shows Mao's meticulous attention to the possibilities and difficulties of an unprecedented mass intellectuality in politics.

Far from being the *instrumentum regni* of a ruler who stirred up the plebs to shore up his weakened power, as Chinese government propaganda has claimed for half a century, supported by counterrevolutionaries around the world, the Cultural Revolution was the beginning of an immense, literally infinite political experiment. The political thesis that the masses can "liberate themselves," that is, that anyone can creatively intervene in the organisation of collective life, could not be established at once, but would require countless other experiments. "Dozens of other Cultural Revolutions will be necessary," Mao said.

The articulation of finitude and infinity is the knot that *L'immanence des vérités* patiently untangles through an arduous yet fascinating journey through contemporary mathematics. What Badiou demonstrates is that

finitude is by no means the inexorable destiny of the human subject, as the philosophical propaganda of being-towards-death would have it, but is a result of infinity. However, finitude can be a result of infinity in two distinctly different ways, as waste (*déchet*) or as work (*œuvre*). As "waste", it is destined to be "covered up" in the inert finitude of that world. On the other hand, a subjective invention in any field of human existence can become a "work" when it is organised as an exception to its own finitude and projects itself towards its possible "rediscovery" in any other world.

In politics, the tangle is particularly tight. Inert finitude is the immemorial rule of politics as a mere repetition of power struggles among oligarchic factions. Their "wastes" populate the "slaughterhouse of history," as Hegel said, who was nevertheless convinced that beneath it the infinite cunning of reason was secretly at work. Or are they scraps that pile up in the "dustbin of history", as the Chinese revolutionaries said, who were perhaps too convinced that history itself was the guarantee that they had left that dustbin behind.

Egalitarian political inventions are exceptions that need to be "rediscovered" through the creation of new "works". And what is more difficult, these new inventions can only be the work of the great masses of people who, usually pawns in wars between the powerful, unexpectedly manifest an unprecedented collective political intelligence, whose aim is the liberation of humanity in general, not the acquisition of power. The key theme of Marxism, which Mao reiterated in a letter to Qinghua students in 1966, has always been that "the proletariat can only liberate itself if it liberates all of humanity."

The essence of finite politics, what Max Weber defined as the supreme and only "politics as a profession," is the acquisition and division of state power. Finite politics is always the same compulsion to repeat, in which the blind destructiveness of the governmental drive has manifested itself since the Neolithic period in various historical circumstances. At a certain point, someone among the powerful prevails, but then someone else wants to overthrow the winner and impose a new division of state power, repeating the same ritual, notoriously brutal and often bloody.

Infinite politics, on the other hand, is Saint Just's conception of the "spirit of equality," understood not as a comparison between the "equal power" of one and another—today one would say "equal rights"—but as the infinite dissemination among everyone of an "equal portion of sovereignty." For Saint Just, there is no legitimate power, only the 'theory of Good'. This is a deeply 'Platonic' idea, which Badiou would perhaps reinterpret, even in this case, as the 'theory of Truth'.

The Idea of Communism

The reformulation of the "Idea of Good" as the "Idea of Truth" lies at the heart of Badiou's "hyper-translation" of Plato's *Republic*, completed in the late 2000s. The title was initially supposed to be *Du communisme*, but this would not have clarified the strictly philosophical objective of the undertaking, so it became *Alain Badiou's La République de Platon*. The stakes are expressed in the title of the long three-year seminar from 2007 to 2010, *Pour aujourd'hui: Platon!* The seminar is a very intense, absolutely contemporary dialogue between Badiou and Plato, through a detailed journey even through the most labyrinthine passages of *The Republic*.

It is a 'literal' translation, explains Badiou, conducted with the wisdom of a refined Greek scholar, but free to detach the entire scenic structure of the Platonic dialogue from its particular historical and anthropological circumstances. Whether it takes place in ancient Greece or in any contemporary location, the essence of thought remains the same. Badiou puts a new "theatrical direction" to work, which not only makes the cuts and condensations he needs (he later wrote a theatrical version, *Feuilleton philosophique*), but also reassigns the lines and even invents a new character, "the beautiful Amantea, Plato's sister." The presence in the dialogue of a young woman so well versed in philosophy marks the distance from the anthropological circumstances of ancient Greece, but above all, it introduces a lively dialectical contrast with Socrates (sometimes she gives him a hard time), which brilliantly replaces the somewhat boring tone of consensus that often arises among the disciples around Socrates' words. The result is what Badiou calls a translation "assez inflitrée", yet so faithful to the original purpose that it is, the author assures us, "plus proche de Platon que Platon n'arrive à l'être." (p. 317)

The work that spans from his *République de Platon* to *L'immanence des vérités* opens up an immense space of questions, destined to engage new philosophical inventions for a long time to come. A central theme, which touches on the most "enigmatic" node of the articulation between the "two fidelities," political and philosophical, is the elaboration of the "Idea of Communism."

Can we identify a difference between the "communist hypothesis" and the "Idea of Communism" based on a common understanding of what a hypothesis is? Perhaps this is not enough, because in the hands of a philosopher, the self-evidence of what a hypothesis is falters. We could go a step further by thinking that the "communist hypothesis" is in some way on the side of what Althusser called "descriptive theory," to distinguish it from "theory tout court." Descriptive, in the sense of acknowledging that true modern communism has always been the "hypothesis," articulated since Marx in a vast theoretical apparatus, of a possible radical refoundation of the "present state of things."

While, throughout the 20th century, the fundamental political test of communism was its ability to conquer a state, the failure of state communism reactivates the hypothetical character of real communism. The "communist hypothesis" is a political thought based not on what exists, but on the anticipation of the possibility of something that does not exist. Sartre considered this hypothesis indispensable because "without the communist hypothesis, humanity would be destined to live the life of ants."

However, the distinction between "communist hypothesis" and "idea of communism" remains unclear without taking into account the immense work that Badiou did in his seminar *Pour aujourd'hui: Platon!* to clarify the fundamental content of the Idea. In this seminar, which is a detailed analytical exposition of his translation of the *Republic*, Badiou shifts a pillar of the entire Platonic doctrine, retranslating "Idea of the Good" as "Idea of the True." This is a fundamental move that highlights the rational core of Plato's thought, freeing it from the "mystical gangue" in which it is enveloped ("recouvert," one might say) by all Neoplatonic exegesis.

The underlying problem is the very meaning of the word 'Idea'. Of the three different terms Plato uses to designate it – οὐσία, εἶδος, and ἰδέα – Badiou shows a novel articulation, which revolves around the problem of the identity of thought and being, ultimately privileging the role of *eidos*, "form," or putting into form. *Ousia*, a key term in Plato, is usually translated as 'essence' or 'substance', but Badiou clarifies it as 'that which of a being is exposed to thought' (p. 325). But the *idea* is also the same thing, with the difference that *ousia* is the exposure of being to thought seen from the side of being, while the *idea* is seen from the side of thought. *Eidos* is ultimately the formal identity of both.

This conceptual trio is therefore not just a terminological oscillation but, on closer inspection, constitutes the *dynamic* of the identity of thought and being. Leaving aside numerous fascinating arguments on the subject, the emphasis on *eidos* underscores that the main vector is the process of "shaping." *Eidos* is the reorganisation of an order disrupted by the eventful irruption of thought. *Ousia*, *idea*, and *eidos* together constitute what Badiou has called a "procedure of truth," which in this case he names "Idea of the True," through a striking alteration of the letter (but not the spirit, as he explains in detail) of the Platonic text.

The Idea of the True can therefore be understood as the process through which the identity of thought and being is constituted, not as a precondition, but as the result of a process that passes from an eventful discontinuity to a new possible order, which is in turn immanent with respect to that discontinuity. The irruption of thought into the regime of opinion deregulates a given order, which, through an *eidos,* is recast into a new order. The example Badiou gives is the long process of thought that leads from the Copernican revolution to modern science.

A more directly political example could be added, taken from the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. The "spectre haunting Europe" is *the*

emergence of a principle of equality which, through Marx and Engels, *takes shape* as an idea. The "idea of communism" should therefore not be understood as an ideal attributable to the supposed "realm of Ideas" of vulgar Platonism. Rather, it is *communism as an idea*.

The *spectre* is the principle that bursts onto the European political scene in the mid-19th century like disorder, sowing panic among rulers (the Pope and the Tsar, Metternich and Guizot); *communism* is the process by which the consequences of the spectre's irruption *manifest* themselves in a new order; and the *party* (abstracting from any reference to the parties of the 20th century) has the generic meaning of the thought process that organizes this "shaping." Marx and Engels' "Communist Party" is ultimately something like *eidos*, which gives shape to a new possible order, in turn immanent in the principle of that eventful rupture. "Spectre" and "party" are the two poles of the same procedure of truth: the irruption of a principle and the fidelity to its consequences.

In the case of modern communism, the question of the idea is further enriched by a significant complication. The idea of communism, or communism as an idea, is necessarily a process involving numerous stages. The irruption of the principle of equality that heralds the possible existence of an inexistent disrupts an order dating back thousands of years. In Badiou's terms, it is an event that alters the "transcendental" of the historical-social world established since the Neolithic period. It is inevitable that the disruption of this order and the formation of a new order, the *eidos* of communism, will produce a self-defensive automatism that aims to reconstitute a new transcendental capable of restoring the inexistent to its place, that is, to the minimum degree of identity. "We are nothing, we want to be everything," sang *The Internationale*. "You may have been something for a moment, but you are destined to return to nothingness; there is no alternative," repeats the counterpoint of the new transcendental of restoration.

There have therefore been several stages, and there will be many more, in the *eidos* of communism, starting with the first modern appearance of the principle of equality as the absolute dispersion of sovereignty, and culminating in the most recent assertion that the masses are capable of inventing infinite politics on their own. At each new stage, a primary task has been to take stock of the previous stage, what it brought in terms of invention, and its impasse.

What does philosophy have to say about this immense political task? I do not believe that the relationship between philosophy and its "political condition" will cease to be enigmatic. On the contrary, as the stakes grow higher and the challenges become more difficult at each new stage, the relationship will become increasingly tense. There will be a recurring tendency for political thought to expel philosophy, and vice versa, for philosophy to seek to clarify the enigma completely by subsuming politics as an integral part of its intellectual project.

However, the distances and proximities between the absolute conceptual egalitarianism of philosophy and the thinking of egalitarian politics free from sovereignty will long remain fundamental intellectual resources for both.

1. This series of interviews, intended for high school students, was conceived by Dina Dreyfus, an innovator in the field of teaching philosophy in schools and director of programs at the Ministry of Education, who entrusted Badiou, then a young philosophy teacher at a high school in Reims, with the role of interlocutor for the philosophers interviewed. The filming was done by a talented director, Jean Flechet, inspired by the Nouvelle Vague. In one of the most successful passages, for example, Canguilhem and Hyppolite engage in a lively discussion about the category of "truth" in philosophy and whether it is possible for a philosopher to make a "mistake." At this point, the talented director edited the dialogue as if it were taking place partly inside a taxi, interspersing close-ups of the two philosophers debating 'truth' with shots of the car's moving wheels.
2. *Almagestes*, Éditions du Seuil, 1964; *Portulans*, ibid., 1967. Both novels were highly praised by Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir.
3. "Préface à la nouvelle édition", *Le concept de modèle*, Paris, Fayard, 2007, p. 24.
4. Althusser's formulation in terms of "continents of science," viewed retrospectively, can be considered an attempt to resolve the problem of the relationship between philosophy and its "conditions," in the sense in which Badiou later called them. However, Althusser's solution consisted in postulating the co-belonging to the same domain of science of figures of thought such as Pythagoras, Galileo, Darwin, Marx, and Lacan, with a conspicuously formalistic outcome, and in attributing to philosophy the task of fighting alongside every "science" a battle of principle against the obstacles placed in its way by "ideology."
Badiou's position before 1968 is broadly consistent with this perspective. His lectures in *the Cours* are a 'scientific' defence of the 'concept of model' against two manifestations of 'ideology': empiricism and phenomenology. Badiou, moreover, was embarking on his own original path, which Althusser admired, although he reproached him for a certain 'Pythagoreanism', that is, his constant reference to mathematics. However, this only made him even more obstinate, as happens with disciples, as Badiou himself recalled.
5. Badiou later wrote of the turning point achieved with *L'être et l'événement* as an "immanent correction" of his thinking, a renewed search for "rational power, intrinsic conceptual force, the capacity for speculation in philosophy, in a word, fidelity to the great tradition of philosophy as victory over chaos." "Préface à la nouvelle édition", *Le concept de modèle*, p. 17.
6. I discussed this in "Trespassings. Alain Badiou, Politics and Philosophy*." Polygraph,* 2013(23/24), pp. 41–77.
7. "The Sixties and Us," in *The Idea of Communism, Volume 3. The Seoul Conference*, ed. by Alex Taek-Gwang Lee and Slavoj Žižek, London, Verso, 2016, pp. 137–178.
8. *D'un désastre obscur*, Paris, Éditions de l'Aube, 1991.
9. *Cultural Revolution and Revolutionary Culture*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2021.
10. "L'Europa dopo I partiti del Novecento," in Claudia Pozzana and Alessandro Russo, *La Quarta guerra mondiale. E noi?*, Verona, Ombre Corte 2023.
11. Together with Valerio Romitelli, we published the texts of both conferences in Italian. Alain Badiou e Sylvain Lazarus, *La politica è pensabile?,* Milano, Angeli, 1987.
12. "À propos du Séminaire de 1991-92 consacré à l'expression *'l'essence de la* politique'," *Préface* à l'édition du Séminaire, Paris, Fayard, 2018, p. 9.
13. *Le roman de la politique*, Paris, La Fabrique, 2020.
14. *The Communist Hypothesis*, Paris, Lignes, 2009, p. 15.
15. *L'écharpe rouge*, Paris, Maspero, 1979. It was performed at the Théâtre de Chaillot in 1984, directed by Antoine Vitez with music by Georges Aperghis. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8o6pU2rbgI

Preliminaries.
Badiou, Hegel, Parmenides

Armin Schneider

Abstract: The text explores the encounter of two programmatic statements of Badiou with the beginning of Hegel's *Science of Logic*. The mediator of the encounter is the poem of Parmenides. Badiou's statements are: 1) philosophy articulates three concepts, being, truth, and subject, and 2) mathematics is ontology. Both statements are examined in light of Badiou's use of set theory in *Being and Event* and *The Immanence of Truths*, as it unfolds from Parmenidean presuppositions. The beginning of Hegel's *Logic*, on the other hand, is approached by way of three recent interpretations, by Ruda, Rödl, and Hindrichs.

Keywords: philosophy, metaphysics, ontology, formalization, temporalization

In 1984, Derrida initiates a colloquium, in Paris, in order to assess the relations between philosophy in France and philosophy in Germany since 1945. Hamacher, one of the invited speakers, responds with a differential diagnosis: In order to repair its own past and "sustain" itself as "ontology and metaphysics", philosophy in Germany, in "its western part", pays reparations to the "*no-nonsense*-rationalism" predominant in Anglo-Saxon discourse.[1] Hence the complicated relations, in philosophy, between Germany and France, as the flip side of the German-American convergence. A few years later, in 1988, Badiou evokes the same triangle on the opening page of *Being and Event*, yet not in order to diagnose philosophy's end by reparation but in order to announce a new beginning. Heidegger, "the last universally recognizable philosopher", the logico-mathematical "scientific rationality" conserved by American thought, and a "post-Cartesian doctrine of the subject" are gathered to recommence philosophy under the hypothesis that "mathematics is ontology".[2] Acknowledging that this triangular frame of reference would need further clarification today, with regards to its political no less than its discursive determinants, acknowledging also that this frame of reference appears hopelessly narrow, anachronistic, even obsolete today, acknowledging moreover that any frame of reference specified by national determinants would inevitably end philosophy before it even has begun, assuming, therefore, that the localization of philosophy, its impossibility no less than its possibility, in the contemporary conjuncture is a necessary precondition for philosophizing but which exceeds what can be achieved here, the following preliminaries are gathered under a minimal hypothesis: that Heidegger is not the last universally recognizable philosopher. Heidegger is not, therefore, no universally recognizable philosopher. But in order to recommence the new beginning proposed by Badiou, other points of reference need to be assumed.

Hence, supposing that there is no philosophy of Heidegger, for the following preliminaries three assumptions are to be hold as true instead:

Badiou's philosophy-formula, Hegel's becoming-proposition, and the decision of Parmenides.

The philosophy-formula states that philosophy articulates three concepts: being, truth, and subject. Badiou pronounces it on two occasions in particular. Right after *Being and Event* in the *Manifesto for Philosophy*:

> "I postulate not only that philosophy is possible today, but that this possibility does not take the form of a final stage. On the contrary, the crux of the matter is to know what it means to say: take *one more step*. A single step. A step within the modern configuration, the one that since Descartes has bound the three nodal concepts of being, truth, and the subject to the conditions of philosophy."[3]

And again in *The Immanence of Truths*, after a summary, in thirteen points, of the whole trajectory from *Being and Event* through *Logics of Worlds* to *The Immanence of Truths*, Badiou writes:

> "That concludes the complete articulation of the three concepts constitutive of every philosophy: Being, Truth, and the Subject."[4]

Being–Truth–Subject, the philosophy-formula is formula, not a proposition, a bare concatenation of three terms leaving in suspense the form which their articulation may take.

The becoming-proposition is a proposition. It is the first proposition proper of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, which in its opening – "*Being, pure being, –*", "*Nothing, the pure nothing*" – follows a strict discipline with regards to form, which includes a clear cut distinction between what is *proper* articulation and what is not:

> "*The pure being and the pure nothing is therefore the same.*"
> "*Das reine Seyn und das reine Nichts ist also dasselbe.*"[5]

Not a proposition about becoming, the becoming-proposition is the articulation of the minimal stasis of the movement which is the concept becoming.

Parmenides:

> "[...] the decision [...] depends on this:
> [it] is or [it] is not, but it has been decided, as is necessary,
> to let go the one as unthinkable, unnameable (for it is no true
> Route), but allow the other, so that it is, and is true."[6]

The decision separates two paths – is, is not – and it binds thinking to the one, against the other. Hence, it renders the becoming-proposition unthinkable. Hegel, in turn, unconditionally affirms the Parmenidean decision, since in it thinking unconditionally affirms itself, for the first time, as "absolute abstraction".[7] Yet as absolute abstraction the thought of pure being is as empty as the thought of pure nothing, and thinking this thought thinking comes to its initial concretion in the concept of becoming. Parmenides's decision is the absolute contradiction to Hegel's becoming-proposition, and yet it is absolutely indispensable for its proper articulation. Can both together, decision and proposition, articulate Badiou's philosophy-formula? Being, truth, subject – truth and subject are post-evental, the event is what is prohibited from being, what is prohibited from the thinking of being is non-being, what is structured as a prohibition in Parmenides' decision, for Badiou, is what is the absolute abstraction in this decision, for Hegel. Two questions naturally follow: 1. Is there a being, despite the prohibition of the event, of truth and subject? Can being, truth and subject, with all necessary distinctions being made, be said to be 'the same'? 2. Does this sameness articulate a 'becoming'? These are the questions that follow if the being at stake in the Parmenidean decision is taken to speak to the being in Hegel's proposition and in Badiou's formula, if, in other words, this formula is articulated through Hegel and Parmenides. A different question follows if it is not Badiou who is articulated through Hegel, but if it is inversely Hegel who is read through Badiou. Under this supposition, Badiou's hypothesis that mathematics is ontology raises the following quesiton: In what sense is Hegel's proposition actually an ontological proposition, or not, when read in light of Badiou's formula? Only a sufficient clarification of this question will yield clarification of the initial questions, since only then it is clear in what sense the being in Hegel's proposition may or may not speak to the being in Badiou's formula. The point of departure is therefore Hegel's proposition. It begins Hegel's logic of being. So it must be an ontological proposition. In what sense ontological? In what sense a proposition?

Badiou's formula allows to situate Hegel's proposition as an ontological proposition. Since this formula is initially postulated as post-Cartesian. Being, truth, subject: in different order the formula evokes the three Cartesian substances God, substantia cogitans, and substantia corporea.[8] But where does a science of being qua being find its place in the Cartesian division, given that it can obviously not be a science of corporeal substance? What is a question with regards to Badiou's formula itself, as post-Cartesian, leads to the pre-Cartesian constellation in which ontology in fact comes to its *name* for the first time and which assigns it the systematic place from which it is to be taken up by Hegel. Ontology comes to its name only shortly before Descartes through a number of German Protestants deepening an otherwise unnoticed division, proposed by a Spanish Jesuit, of first philosophy – ambiguous since Aristotle

between the science of being qua being and theology – into a separation of general and special metaphysics. And as a matter of fact, it comes to its name, through the infamous Goclenius, as one of three modes of "abstractio materialis" side by side with *mathematics*: "Mathematica haec est et οντολογικη [*ontologikē*], idest, Philosophiae de ente seu Transcendentibus".[9] The given pre-Cartesian separation paves the way for Wolff's post-Cartesian compromise between the Aristotelian scholastic tradition and the Cartesian revolution, with the division between ontology, or, general metaphysics treating being qua being and special metaphysics treating the objects soul, world, and God. This division structures the transcendental analytic and dialectic of Kant's first critique. No less does it structure the three positions of thought toward objectivity in the introduction of Hegel's *Encyclopedia* logic. But against and beyond Kant's critical philosophy, which turns thought to itself in an examination and limitation of the legitimacy of objective cognition, Hegel seeks to regain the pre-critical claim to the objectivity of thought itself. And reclaiming within the modern, post-Cartesian configuration the "simple indivisibility of *thinking* and the *being* of thinking", Hegel equally reclaims what is sustained in it of the pre-Cartesian science of being qua being.[10] Hegel's becoming-proposition is thus a proposition of objective thought, and it is at once an ontological proposition, in that it pronounces what is to be said of pure being thought in its absolute abstraction: *nothing*.

The form which the Kantian critical examination of cognition reveals to be determinative for thought as such is the form of judgement. Those objects of reason which are formed in excess of the binding of thought, qua judgement, to intuition through syllogisms, soul, world, and God, do not grant objective cognition. But for Hegel, the form of judgement, the form of proposition itself is an obstacle for thought, it is "not adept to express speculative truths".[11] This obstacle is articulated, in the *Phenomenology* preface, under the name of the "speculative proposition", but which is there nothing more than the exposition of a problem, and moreover the exposition of this problem in the element of representation: "Representational thinking [...] suffers, to represent it this way, a counter-thrust."[12] The problem raised in the representational exposition of the obstacle of representational thinking, namely, the problem of the form itself of proposition resurfaces, yet in the element of objective thought, that is, of pure presentation, in the becoming-proposition. As the first proposition proper of the *Logic*, the becoming-proposition does not (yet) thematize the form as such of proposition, of judgement, but it shows, *in actu*, what a speculative proposition in the element of pure thought is. Hence Hegel's remarks on the accentuation of the becoming-proposition, echoing precisely the remarks on the rhythm, meter, and accent of the speculative proposition.[13] *Being and nothing is the same*. The proposition poses the *sameness*, the identity of being and nothing. Yet it equally supposes them as different, *being and nothing*. Posing being and nothing

as different yet equally the same, the proposition "contradicts" itself and shows "the movement to vanish through itself".[14] Thus it "happens" in the proposition itself what is supposed to be its content: becoming. However, thus vanishing the proposition is deficient in that its vanishing is the result only of an external reflection on the proposition. Leveling out its deficiency, the proposition demands to pose the opposed proposition: *Being and nothing is not the same*. But what is thus posed is again only the "antinomy" of two propositions, *being and nothing is the same* and *not the same*, whereas their content is supposed to be "One and the Same".[15] The becoming-proposition therefore demonstrates not only that as a single proposition it is an incomplete expression of becoming, but that the very form of the proposition itself is inept to express speculative truths, namely, becoming. And so with the concept of becoming, Hegel gains the elementary operator to *invert* the Kantian order of the determination of thought: It is not the form of judgement that yields the table of categories through which any given is thought. But it is the becoming, the processual transformation of categorical determinations, and moreover of the *form* of this transformation *itself* which generates the form, but which is no other than the content, of objective thought itself, which (eventually) also includes the form of judgement, yet as a form insufficient to express speculative truths. As an ontological proposition of objective thought, in exposing the formal obstacle of thought the becoming-proposition at once unrests its concrete over-coming, which says of being more, that is, less, that is, *not* what is said of it as thought in absolute abstraction: nothing.

The pure being and the pure nothing is therefore (not) the same. Hegel's becoming-proposition, so it seems, is an ontological proposition, of objective thought, posing a problem of formalization. But is it indeed to be taken as an ontological proposition when read with Badiou? Yet if not, how *do* other readings read it as an ontological proposition, in some qualified sense or other? And conversely what objections do those readings provoke from a reading with Badiou? These questions arise in view of three recent interpretations of the beginning of Hegel's *Logic*. All three happen to have appeared in 2018.

The first, Ruda, reads Hegel with Badiou.[16] But with ontology being the matter of mathematics, and not philosophy, it consequently reads the *Logic* precisely not as an ontological proposition but as the conceptualization of a post-evental truth procedure.[17] Accordingly, the *Logic's* beginning proper is not the thinking of *Being, pure being, –* but prior to it the "decision", of the "will", to "contemplate thought as such", yet which is a decision only in an encounter with an event and as an affirmation of the event deciding nothing but that it will have had consequences as a decision imposed by the event.[18] But what is the event without its consequences? It "*is* something that *is not*", strictly speaking not even yet *something* it simply *is not*.[19] With the event as bare disappearing, vanishing, indistinguishably being and nothing, the

becoming-proposition reads as the exact articulation of the "two that form an inseparable unity that is the event".[20] Although the becoming-proposition is here not taken up as the speculative proposition that it is, the micrological reading of the *Logic's* first non-proposition can easily be extended to it.[21] Since this reading scales the problem of formalization down below the level of propositions and words to that of speculative signs. The repetitive structure of the opening of the *Logic,* on the other hand, positions the dash in *Being, pure being, –* just where becoming is positioned in *being ... nothing ... becoming*, such that the problem of formalization posed in the becoming-proposition turns out to be no other than the one posed in the speculative reading of the dash.[22] What this reading suggests is that in interrupting the seriality of the preceding syntagma, the dash opens in thought "another form of temporality: the temporality of retroactivity"[23], thus at once referring it back to the decision preceding the syntagma and projecting the consequences that the thought of the dash (Gedankenstrich) will have had for thought. With or without the dash, read as post-evental the becoming-proposition is not an ontological proposition but its unrest, its becoming is transposed into the articulation of a temporal dynamic.[24]

With the second, Rödl, the opening of Hegel's *Logic* comes into view as an ontological proposition, yet under the primacy of thought, as it is read in light of a "unity" of logic, the science of thought, and metaphysics, the science of what is, a unity, however, which is itself "a consequence of the self-consciousness of thought".[25] Accordingly the beginning proper of the *Logic* is not *being* but *becoming*, since it is only in the concrete unity of becoming that self-conscious thought comes into its element proper. The problem of formalization is exposed as a problematic of judgement itself, not, however, from within the becoming-proposition, nor from another passage of the text of the *Logic*, but in the superimposition of Hegel's *being* with the pure force of assertion, isolated in the judgement-stroke (Urteilsstrich) of Frege's Begriffsschrift, and of Hegel's *nothing* with the same force re-conceived as pure denial, both prior to any determinate content of judgement. The sameness of *being* and *nothing*, on the other hand, is shown to be their concrete unity by virtue of the *thinking* of pure being being the same as the *thinking* of pure nothing.[26] Since the nothing into which the thought of pure being collapses is not mere emptiness but instead it is the power, thus at once the act of thought itself, as Rödl says with Aristotle and against Kant.[27] As this internal reflection of thought thinking itself in thinking nothing, the sameness of being and nothing is a concrete unity in the thought of becoming. And this concrete, determinate unity of thought in turn allows to overcome the absolute abstraction of indeterminate being, and nothing, and therefore the separation of the pure force of assertion, and denial, over and against the content of judgement, in the prospect of a "proper", a "perfect Begriffsschrift" that would always already have inscribed the opposition of *is* and *is not* into any "sentence

letter" *p*.[28] Read in light of the self-consciousness of objective thought, the opening of the *Logic* is thus a contemplation on the form of thought, as the form of judgement.[29]

It is with the third, Hindrichs, that the becoming-proposition shows its properly ontological momentum, but which becomes intelligible only from the perspective of Hegel's overall venture of a "*sublation [Aufhebung]* of previous ontology into a logic of the concept".[30] Ontology, prior to the Aristotelian division of four senses and ten categories of being, is here presupposed, by Hindrichs, to be the presentation of being as such in its veridical being as articulated through predicative and existential being.[31] The claim of previous, pre-critical ontology which Hegel's sublation seeks to reclaim is the claim of the unity of thought and being. In previous ontology, this claim is grounded, in the last instance, in a special concept, a concept which again is claimed to be proven to include its own existence, the rational concept of God. Hegel's sublation, on the other hand, is a reclaiming only on grounds of the critique of the claims of previous ontology. This critique proceeds by exhibiting the claims of ontology in their articulate presentation and showing the failure of this presentation to present the respective ontological claim. The opening of the *Logic* initiates this procedure and at once it opens the field in which it proceeds.[32] Since what *being, pure being* claims to present is nothing other than veridical being as such, prior to any articulation in existential and predicative being. Devoid of any determinate articulation, however, this presentation of veridical being in *pure being* fails, as it does not present anything, and the name of this failure is *nothing, the pure nothing*. But what is thus articulated is the explication of one determination through another, which explicative transitioning is nothing other than *becoming*. In this way the opening of the *Logic* not only opens the "field" of its procedure, veridical being, but it moreover yields the "operation" through which it critically reclaims the claims of previous ontology, "the operation of presentation, failure and transition".[33] Now, given the previous claim of the unity of thought and being, Hegel's *Logic* approaches the conclusion of its reclamation not in the critical presentation of being but in the self-explication of thought, that is, in the logic of the *concept*, and it is here that the corresponding special claim of a concept that involves its own existence is decided. Moreover, it is also here, in the logic of *judgement* and *syllogism*, that the presupposed articulation of veridical in predicative and existential being aligns with Hegel's sublation of previous ontology into a logic of the concept. Since it is the fulfillment of the empty copula of judgment in the syllogism, and the completion of the syllogism in the disjunctive syllogism that achieves the conceptual self-mediation of thought that allows to reclaim what the previous ontological proof only claimed but failed to redeem: the grounding of the unity of thought and being in a concept that includes its own existence.[34] The self-realizing self-mediation

of thought, of the conceptual, thus proceeds "under the concept of God", yet which is no longer the concept of a special object but the "operator of the self-determination of thought".[35] The *absolute idea*, accordingly, concludes the operation of the critical presentation of veridical being in an "unconditioned operation".[36] In this perspective, what initially appears as a problem of mere formalization exposed in the becoming-proposition is scaled up and post–poned to the logic of judgement and syllogism, to be resolved in its eventual ab-solution in the idea. Already in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel attempts to illustrate the problem of the speculative proposition with the "example": "*God is being. / Gott ist das Seyn*".[37] The *Logic*, read in light of Hegel's venture of the sublation of previous ontology, shows this example to be the problem itself, rather than its illustration, and its solution to reside in the self-determination of thought under an unconditioned operation.[38]

All three readings bind the opening of the *Logic* to a question of truth, in a truth procedure, in the assertive force of judgement, in the presentation of veridical being. The first, however, renounces or at least it leaves open the ontological status of the becoming-proposition as a consequence of the expropriation, rather than the sublation, of ontology from philosophy and its entrustment to mathematics. In the second and third, by contrast, the becoming-proposition gains ontological significance in a qualified sense, as a consequence of self-consciousness or as bound under the rational concept of God. But from the position of the first, the restoration of ontology by virtue of self-consciousness no less than God is untenable. This becomes particularly evident in light of Badiou's philosophy-formula and its post-Cartesian implications. Since it is precisely in being post-evental that truth and subject are unbound from any foundational function for a discourse on being qua being, be it in the transparency of self-consciousness or in the figure of God as a guarantee of truth. But how can truth and subject be said to be post-evental without anything being said about the event? And how can anything be said about the event without anything being said about being? The philosophy-formula makes an articulation of truth and subject impossible without an articulation of being. But then Hegel's becoming-proposition must gain ontological significance also when read with Badiou. *Being and nothing is the same*. Instead of reading this sameness as the vanishing of the event, *being* is therefore to be considered as such, *qua being*, and *nothing* is to be considered as such, *qua event*. Now the ontological significance of the proposition is to be spelled out indeed under the supposition that mathematics is ontology, yet in light of its presuppositions not only outside but also *within* the philosophical field. These presuppositions stem not from the post-Cartesian configuration, nor do they stem from the post-Aristotelian filiation in which ontology comes to its name side by side with mathematics. But prior to it they reside in the Parmenidean decision in which thinking is initially bound to being against non-being. This decision

is to be examined under the conditions of formalization not according to a logic of judgement, nor of syllogism, but according to modern post-Fregean mathematics. The Parmenidean decision, in other words, is to be taken not, with Hegel, as an absolute abstraction, but, with Badiou, under the imposition and in the transgression of a prohibition.

In order to comprehend the Parmenidean decision by way of a prohibition and, moreover, to comprehend the particular form which this prohibition takes, two assumptions are to be accepted beforehand to then see if they can be justified with Parmenides or not.[39] Firstly, that mathematics is ontology. Secondly, that the presentation of being is the presentation of the pure multiple.[40] The poem of Parmenides binds thinking to being in the separation of being and non-being, *(it) is* and *(it) is not*, *estin* ... *ouk estin*. But the poem goes further, on the path of being, and shows its signs. The first sign shown is that it is ungenerated, *ageneton*. The last signs shown are that it is one and continuous, *hen*, *syneches*.[41] The poem again goes further, however, since not only does it show but it *proves* that being is ungenerated. Moreover, the proof proceeds as an indirect proof: supposing that being is generated and comes to be it demonstrates the contradiction of this supposition from the initial decision that separates being and non-being. Therefore, that mathematics is ontology is not a hypothesis *against* but it is a hypothesis *justified by* Parmenides. Since it is here, in the proof of the first sign of being, that the thinking of being is initially bound by a demonstrative procedure. The indirect proof in Parmenides's poem thus yields "deduction as the operator of ontological fidelity" and places the discourse on being qua being within mathematics no less than within philosophy from the outset.[42] But whereas it sets the thinking of being free in binding it by a deductive operator, the poem at once inevitably restrains it in prescribing the thought of being to be one. If, however, the presentation of being is to be the presentation of the pure multiple, the mathematical thinking of being must be differentiated, *against* Parmenides, into a logic and an ontology which is bound by but not reducible to logic. Put in modern terms, only first-order logic in conjunction with axiomatic set theory is able to present being as pure multiple. The axioms of set theory prescribe the use of the symbol $\in$ of the two-place relation of belonging.[43] The relation of belonging itself, $\in$, is resembled by any relation satisfying the axioms of extensionality and of foundation in particular.[44] With the axiom of extensionality, what is the identity of $a = a$ in logic is an identity of pure multiples in ontology, since two multiples, or sets, $m' = m''$ are identical, according to the axiom, if and only if all multiples belonging to the one multiple also belong to the other multiple. The differentiation of logic and ontology therefore inscribes multiplicity into identity, which indicates a detachment of the thinking of being as multiple of multiples from the prescription of thinking it as one.[45] The axiom of foundation, on the other hand, re-inscribes within

the ontology of the pure multiple the prohibition that binds thinking to being in the Parmenidean decision. But the prohibition, which in its purely Parmenidean form imposes onto thought the bare unthinkability of non-being, now takes a particular form in the thinking of the pure multiple. Since what the axiom of foundation effectively prohibits is any set *a* that would belong to *a*, that is, to itself as one of its members. However, what the formal structure of the *event* boils down to is nothing other than to be a multiple that belongs to itself.[46] In place of Parmenides's non-being, the axiom of foundation therefore prohibits the event as "what-is-not-being-qua-being".[47] Within the ontology of the pure multiple as "*the thinking of well-founded extensional relations*", bound by deductive logic but detached from the One, the Parmenidean decision, *estin ... ouk estin*, is therefore re-inscribed as the strict division of *being* and what is prohibited from being, the *event*.[48]

Given the exclusive disjunction of either being or event, it is possible to determine how truth and subject can be said to *be post-evental*, and moreover why in the last instance also the discourse on being qua being *itself* must be said to be post-evental. To be post-evental amounts to being temporal. But instead of unfolding after the event, *post*-evental temporality is rather purely *evental* temporality as it springs from the identification of the event itself qua self-belonging multiple. Since what allows for the identification of an event, qua multiple, are solely the multiples that belong to it qua multiple. Yet if it belongs to itself, the identification of the event must precede the identification of the event, and this "self-antecedence in identification" implies the equally retroactive and anticipatory temporality expressed in saying that the event "is solely identical to itself inasmuch as it *will have been* identical to itself".[49] Ontology, on the other hand, not only prohibits self-belonging but it also operates "[i]n the absence of any temporality, thus of any future anterior".[50] And nevertheless it is only from within the field of ontology that a *being* of truth and of the subject becomes thinkable that implies their post-evental *temporality*. Since not only for Parmenides but also for the ontology of the pure multiple, being is continuous. The continuity of the pure multiple, however, convokes the demonstration of the undecidability of the pivotal proposition regarding its size, Cantor's Continuum Hypothesis.[51] Both its affirmation and its negation are demonstrated, by Gödel and Cohen, in models of the universe of sets. The inner model of constructible sets restricts the power-set operation to definable subsets, the method of generic extensions proceeds by way of the addition, to a ground model, of a generic set that avoids any specification by definable subsets of the model. Informally, Cohen recounts the challenge of proceeding from the model to its extension by way of a generic set *a* as follows: "How could one decide whether a statement about *a* is true, before we have *a*?"[52] The challenge is resolved by defining a relation between elements of the generic set and

statements in the model such that the same statements are true in its extension. Informally, the definition amounts to saying that an element of the generic set, a forcing condition, forces a statement (in the model) *if and only if* the statement is true (in the extension). Leaving technicalities aside, the upshot of Cohen's achievement for the ontology of the multiple is twofold. Firstly, Badiou pushes his achievements further by reducing what is already a new approach to truth for Cohen to the *veracity* of statements and distinguishing it from the being of *truth*. The being of truth, for Badiou, is the generic multiple. Uncoupled from being a value of statements, or propositions, truth is thus a form of being itself. Secondly, the subject is re-conceived, by Badiou, from a link, according to the changed terminology, between the being of truth and the veracity of statements. This link is the relation of forcing, between an element of a truth and a statement, that is defined as equivalent to the veracity of that statement. The subject is thus re-conceived, from the relation of forcing, at a point of undecidability, since it is ultimately in the forcing not of any statements but of the undecidability of the Continuum Hypothesis that Cohen's result is achieved. From within the field of ontology, therefore, a being of truth and of the subject becomes thinkable in the generic multiple and the relation of forcing. Notwithstanding the supposed absence of any temporality from ontology, however, the being of truth and subject implies the anticipatory temporality of the future anterior. Since as a formed multiple the generic truth only belongs to the resulting extension, whereas it is to be presupposed already within the initial model, yet to which it does not (yet) belong, in order for its elements to force statements. This hiatus, between model and extension or between situation and new situation, is bridged over in the atemporal *bi-conditional* of the formal definition of forcing. It is indicated as temporal in Cohen's informal question regarding statements about *a before having a*. It is reformulated, by Badiou, as the anticipatory temporality of "statement[s] of the subject-language" that "*will have been* veridical for a situation in which a truth has occurred".[53] The atemporal bi-conditional of pure formalization is thus transposed into a dynamic procedure of the subject as the anticipation-retroaction of a truth. The being of truth and subject therefore implies a temporality which is the *same* as that implicit in the identification of the event, in a transgression of its prohibition which nevertheless does *not* legalize self-belonging within the discourse on being qua being. From within itself, ontology captures the being of what originates outside itself. But in a hyperbolic reflexive turn, therein ontology ultimately yields the schema also of its *own* historicity. Capturing the post-evental being of truth and subject, ontology *itself* becomes thinkable as post-evental, as a situation in which truths occur, as a truth procedure. In the last instance, Cantor then figures as if inhabiting a situation, that is, a model, that is, a set to which set theory does not (yet) belong, but in the extension of which by set theory it will have been veridical as set theory.[54] In less exaggerated

terms, this amounts to clarifying the initial assumption presupposed by the ontology of the pure multiple: It is not that mathematics is ontology, but that "mathematics is the historicity of the discourse on being qua being".[55] The latter is not a relativization of the former. On the contrary, as a "meta-ontological thesis", that is, as a proposition of a philosophy that is irreducible to a discourse neither on being nor of the event but that is nothing unless it institutes the articulation of both, the thesis opens ontology toward what its prohibition excludes outside itself and what its deductively bound transgression unfolds from within itself, toward its being a subjectivized-subjectivizing truth procedure.[56]

Parmenides' poem proves being to be ungenerated. The mathematical ontology unfolding therefrom unfolds into the thought of its own genericity as genesis and becoming. It seems as if in the *procedure* of truths no less than in the presentation of the *multiple* Badiou's decision shows itself to be taken against the very Parmenidean signs the proof of which sets a mathematical thinking of being free in the first place. But this perspective, opened up in *Being and Event*, towards "*an evental occurrence of being*" shifts in view of its *absoluteness* in *The Immanence of Truths* in at least two regards.[57] Firstly, the possibility of a reflexive historicization of mathematical ontology by philosophy is blocked through the special status of mathematical works with respect to their absolutization. A "work of truth" is now introduced and defined as a "finite fragment of an (infinite) truth procedure".[58] Despite its finite and static being, the work bears a mark of its "becoming" in its index, which links the work at once to the truth procedure of which it is a fragment and to the event from which this procedure unfolds.[59] The index of the work allows its dynamic to gain the absoluteness of the work. Leaving aside the technicalities of this absolutization, what matters for the present context is only that it is with mathematical works alone "that the absolutization of these works does not require them to have an index".[60] They don't require it because mathematical works themselves define and examine the absolute place, or referent, which non-mathematical works of truth are indexed to in their absolutization. But with the index being superfluous for mathematical works themselves, it is no longer their own dynamic and becoming which is conceived by way of the forms and formalizations they generate.[61] Secondly, what comes into view instead is a properly Parmenidean ultimate horizon of mathematical ontology.[62] Again this Parmenidean dimension is articulated, by Badiou, in terms of a "prohibition".[63] But rather than concerning being and the event as prohibited from being, the prohibition now concerns a relation between the absolute and being. And rather than taking the form of an axiom, the prohibition results from the proof of a theorem (Kunen). With the absolute as V, the universe of sets, its approximation in the ascending hierarchy of the infinities of large cardinals reaches a limit in Kunen's theorem. Since this theorem shows that there is no relation of V to itself other than the

relation of identity, or that there is no non-trivial elementary embedding of V into V. This "prohibition imposed by the pure identity of the absolute" has two aspects.[64] On the one hand, it prohibits the existence, within the ascent of infinities, of a highest being, or infinite set, that would be the witness of the non-trivial relation of the absolute to itself ruled out by the prohibition. But therefore it also confirms, on the other hand, "that the absolute [itself] does not exist insofar as existing would mean that the absolute is thinkable *in the form of a set*".[65] As a consequence, the signs which Parmenides's poem shows of being are reclaimed, through Kunen's theorem, not as signs of being but as signs of the inexistent absolute. Identity being the sole relation of the absolute to itself, it is "one and rigid", or immobile, since any mobility within it would require a kind of permutation, thus a non-trivial embedding of V into V, but which is prohibited by the theorem.[66] Finally, being proven by way of an indirect proof, the theorem shows the immobility of the absolute by way of the same deductive procedure in which the poem shows being to be ungenerated.[67] Therefore, although mathematical ontology necessarily inverts the signs of its Parmenidean presupposition in the procedural thinking of the pure multiple, they revert in the one immobility of the inexistent absolute.

With Badiou, the non-being of the Parmenidean decision is the event as self-belonging multiple. It comes to be thought in the dynamic of a truth-procedure, yet without thought therefore unbinding itself from an absolute ontological referent. – Given this knot of thinking, being and non-being, can Hegel's becoming-proposition gain ontological significance also when read with Badiou?

With Hegel, the non-being of the Parmenidean decision gains a Spinozian signification. Superimposed with the formula "*omnis determinatio est negatio*", it unfolds a dynamic of negativity.[68] But conversely Hegel's Parmenidean *being, pure being, – sine omne determinatione* is at once to be thought as Spinoza's substance, or God, and thus re-inscribed in the modern, post-Cartesian configuration. – Given this Spinozian undercurrent of Hegel's *Logic*, and the equally Spinozian backbone of *The Immanence of Truths*, how does the operation of becoming proceed in view of the ascent of large cardinals that unbinds Spinoza's infinity of infinite attributes from the One of monotheism?[69]

Returning to the question of the status of Hegel's becoming-proposition allows to disclose what this question and the preceding considerations altogether can be taken to be preliminaries for. Toward the end of *The Immanence of Truths*, before spelling out the conceptual function of the index of a work of truth for its absolutization in Plato, Badiou remarks that the same could be done for the case of Hegel and alluding to the "'work' of the negative" he suggests: "For Hegel, it is the capacity of creative negativity that constitutes the index of every dialectical work geared toward the absolute."[70] Spelling out this

suggestion is what the preceding considerations can be taken to be preliminaries for.[71]

Given the Spinozian corollary proposed above, the following can be remarked in brief as a preliminary point of departure. A work of truth is defined, by Badiou, as a finite fragment of a truth procedure, that is, of a becoming. A truth procedure is a becoming in the un-separation of being and the event. The opening of Hegel's *Logic* in being, nothing, and becoming yields determinate being or being-there (Dasein). If being is a stand-in for Spinoza's substance, being-there is its finite mode.[72] Hegel's being-there is the first finite fragment of becoming, it is therefore the finite fragment of a truth procedure that is a work for Badiou. The operation of being-nothing-becoming is put to work in being-there such that being-there contains "the first negation of negation".[73] As a finite fragment of becoming, Hegel's being-there is therefore a work of truth by virtue of the work of the negative.

The question regarding the ontological status of Hegel's becoming-proposition is the question of the ontological status of the operation (being-nothing-becoming) prior to there being a work of truth and a work of the negative. The question has two sides. Firstly, if the initial operation is itself eventually bound by an unconditioned operation, and if thereby a work of truth is 'geared toward the absolute', is the operation therefore bound by a concept of God? Can the operation be unbound from the concept of God and nevertheless be unconditioned and absolute? Secondly, is the initial operation (being-nothing-becoming) an ontological operation, or not? Or, conversely, is the initial operation a temporal operation, or not? In Badiou's case, the ontological procedure yields a temporal schema, of future anterior, yet at the same time it operates deductively and in the absence of any temporality, be it in the indirect proof of Parmenides or in the complex machinery of forcing when abstracted from its implicit temporality. With regards to Hegel, the question then is whether also the initial operation is two-sided, in other words, if it can be said to operate in the absence of any temporality. Localized in the becoming-proposition, this question cristallyzes in a problem of formalization, and accordingly it amounts to the question of the relation between temporalization and formalization which, after all, is a question in Badiou no less than it is in Hegel.

Hegel's *Logic* does not begin unless from a decision, the decision to think thought as such. In Hegel's *Encyclopedia*, the "decision of freedom of the will to think" is "contained" in a need, the "need to philosophize".[74] The encyclopedic need to philosophize is articulated in yet another philosophy-formula, pronounced within the post-Cartesian configuration in yet another, post-Kantian, variation. Since in accord with the tripartite system of spirit, nature, and logic, it is the need to philosophize "about the objects which the instinct of reason has indicated to representation as absolutely essential; namely, about the human and the human

determination, the external world, and God".[75] In Jena, Hegel articulates the need of philosophy prior to its encyclopedic configuration. This articulation allows to conclude, preliminarily, yet not in indecision: "only in a restricted sense it can be my opinion to clarify the need of philosophy, to clarify it entirely would amount to produce the whole of philosophy."[76]

1 Hamacher, 2013, pp. 24, 14, translation forthcoming.
2 Badiou, 2013, p. 1 ff.
3 Badiou, 1999, p. 32, trans. mod.
4 Badiou, 2022, p. 449.
5 Hegel, 1984, p. 69. – *In other words, what is taken to be proper articulation in the opening of the logic is what is marked, by Hegel, in italics. – All quotations from Hegel are translation of the author from the German text.*
6 Parmenides, DK 8, 15–18, after Gallop, 2013, transl. mod.
7 Hegel, 1984, p. 70.
8 Descartes, 2005, §§51-52. That 'subject' takes the position of res cogitans should be clear from the final meditation of *Being and Event, "Descartes/Lacan". Regarding 'truth', see for example The Immanence of Truths: "The reality of what presented itself as "God", and must today take the name "truths", lies on a different subjective plane from the one to which Descartes confined it, i.e., the explicit representation of ideas." (Badiou, 2022, p. 167)*
9 Goclenius, *Lexicon Philosophicum (1613), lemma abstractio, quoted after Vollrath, 1962, 266. Goclenius' three modes of abstraction mirror the Aristotelian division of theoretical sciences, physics, mathematics, and theology (Metaphysics E.1), but with the name of ontology 'landing' in mathematics, that is, on second place, the internal ambiguity of what it names, Aristotelian first philosophy, becomes all the more apparent. This ambiguity is inscribed in Protestant scholasticism, grappling with Lutheran anti-philosophy, as a kind of alienation between the science of being qua being and theology, brought to a compromise in the division of general and special metaphysics. – See also Hindrichs, 2021.*
10 "Die einfache Untrennbarkeit des *Denkens und des Seyns des Denkenden", Hegel, 1992, §76.*
11 Hegel, 1984, p. 78.
12 Hegel, 1980, p. 43.
13 See Hegel, 1984, p. 77, and 1980, p. 43 f. – It is one thing to state the obvious convergence of speculative and becoming-proposition in the remarks on rhythm, meter, and accent. Another thing is to expound what those rather obscure remarks actually *say. What is in question here is nothing less than an immanent rhythm of speculative, objective thought itself. And this question amounts to the more general question of the relation of poetry, Dichtung, and philosophy. One possible way to pose this question, following Schestag, would be to read Hegel's counter-thrust, Gegenstoß, as an echo of Hölderlin's caesura, which is a counter-rhythmic interruption, gegenrhythmische Unterbrechung.*
14 Hegel, 1984, p. 77.
15 Hegel, 1984, p. 78.
16 See Comay and Ruda, 2018, and Ruda, 2019.
17 "For Hegel, as for Badiou, philosophy only thinks events", Ruda, 2019, p. 64.
18 Hegel, 1984, p. 56.
19 Ruda, 2019, p. 63.
20 Ibid.
21 See Ruda, "Hegel's First Words", in Comay and Ruda, 2018.
22 The repetitive structure of the opening of the *Logic is also analyzed by Dolar, 2017.*
23 Comay and Ruda, 2018, p. 103.
24 It should be added, however, that the ontological problematic, which for Badiou concerns untying the grip of the One, is not absent from *The Dash when Ruda concludes: "It [being, pure being, A.S.] will have been Un–Eins as the real (being of the) beginning, the (real) real of and in the beginning of being and of nothing." (Ibid., 105) This can be read in at least two ways, either as opening a new possibility within the ontological problematic or as transposing it into a problematic of truth procedures (one of them being ontology).*
25 Rödl, 2018, pp. 102, 99.
26 See Ibid., pp. 112 f.
27 See Ibid., pp. 113, 100.
28 See Rödl, 2018, pp. 110, 116.
29 Ironically, although Rödl boldly claims *becoming to be the beginning of the Logic, and although the form of judgement is the central concern of his reading, the becoming-proposition itself is not quoted by Rödl, whereas the immediately preceding and succeeding propositions are. In fact, one could take the becoming-proposition – carefully avoided by Rödl – to be the symptomatic point, or the navel of his entire reading, the point where external tilts into internal reflection, where the separation of force and content begins to dissolve.*
30 Hindrichs, 2018, p. 148, emphasis A.S., see also p. 124 ff. "Previous" refers here to the pre-critical, post-Cartesian ontology, as it is discussed, by Hegel, in particular in the three positions of thought to objectivity of the *Encyclopedia logic (see above) and in the preface and introduction of the Science of Logic. – Hindrichs reconstructs Hegel's* ~~ontological program against the backdrop of both previous ontology *and its Kantian critique. Hegel's inversion of the Kantian order of the determination of thought was briefly alluded to above. For the present context, only the background of pre-critical ontology is relevant.~~
31 Ibid., p. 120 ff. A provisional schema for the presentation to be expounded by ontology is provided in the "articulation-formula of being qua being": "It is true (veridical being), that there is something (existential being), that is such and such (predicative being)." This schema is provisional in as much as Hegel's *Logic obviously does not proceed from the supposition of something as that which primarily exists. The primacy of veridical being over its differentiation into existential and predicative being is analyzed*

for ancient Greek philosophy in Kahn, 2009a.
32 Ibid., p. 128 ff.
33 Ibid., p. 131.
34 Ibid., p. 147 f. – Following Sandkaulen, Hindrichs mediates the gulf between the opening of the *Logic (being, nothing, becoming) and the conclusion of the disjunctive syllogism in the critical re-claiming of the ontological proof, the gulf, that is, between the unity of thinking and being in being, on the one hand, and in thinking, on the other, by taking into view Hegel's Kantianizing working through of Spinoza's definition of substance (see p. 141 ff.). According to Spinoza, substance is that which is in itself and can be conceived through itself. It is thus defined with respect to two sides, being and thinking. The first is the subject matter at the end of the logic of essence, but where the concept of substance is at once examined along the Kantian categories of substance–accident, cause–effect, and reciprocity. The same trajectory is taken again, but now along the forms of thinking, in the logic of the concept in the three forms of the syllogism of necessity as categorical, hypothetical and disjunctive syllogism. This entire constellation is summarized, by Hindrichs, again in terms of Hegel's critical presentation of the claims of previous ontology: "Instead of illuminating the asserted unity of thinking and being, [Spinoza's concept of substance] merely posits it per definitionem. [...] The concept of substance claims the unity of conceptual relation and mode of being, but it does not articulate it. For the articulation of its claim it therefore needs other concepts. [...] And since the category of substance, besides being-in-itself, only asserts being-conceived-through itself, the path to its further articulation has to depart from the latter." (p. 143) "[Hegel's logic of the concept] spells out the claim of the category of substance in categories that exceed/transcend the categories of being and its essence and which present the conceptual in as much as it relates to itself." (p. 144)*
35 Ibid., p.149.
36 Ibid., p. 150.
37 Hegel, 1980, p. 44.
38 It should be added that in unveiling the rational-theological problematic in Hegel's *Logic, Hindrichs effectively inverts the reading-protocol of Lenin during his Swiss exile in the winter of 1914/15. Beginning with the presupposition that he will read the Logic without God, the chapter on the absolute idea lets Lenin remark the surprise that barely any of its words actually speak of God. See Arndt, 2023, pp. 226-230. Hindrichs's reconstruction thus allows to be read in at least two ways, either as restoring rational theology or as meticulously showing how Hegel dismantles it.*
39 See Badiou, 2013, "Introduction" and Meditation 1–3. Although the Parmenidean "knot" of "being/non-being/thought", extensively investigated before as a prohibition in the 1985-86 seminar, is evoked right at the beginning of *Being and Event (p. 2), the opening meditations appear to justify its initial assumptions primarily vis-a-vis Plato's Parmenides. For the present context, all Platonic references are left aside.*
40 One way to formulate the second assumption is to formulate it as a consequence of a prior assumption, the assumption that the One is not. One way to motivate this prior assumption is to view it as a consequence of the critique of onto-theology. One way to display the problematic of onto-theology is to read Hegel's *Logic as an ontology bound by an unconditioned operator. One way to understand the problematic of onto-theology in Hegel's Logic is to understand it as a consequence of the ambiguity of Aristotelian first philosophy between a science of being qua being and theology.*
41 Parmenides, DK 8, 2-6.
42 See meditation 24 of Badiou, 2013, as well as sessions 7-11, particularly session 9, of Badiou, 2025 (see also the introduction to the Parmenides seminar by Reinhard). – The full force of Badiou's mathematico-philosophical interpretation of Parmenides in fact only comes to the fore in contrast with its main polemical addressee: Heidegger. Furthermore, Badiou's interpretation then also requires a corollary in order to unfold its force. Since also Heidegger, in his 1932 course on Anaximander and Parmenides (published 2012), principally underscores the apagogic reasoning in the respective passage of the poem and even emends the Greek text (DK 8, 12) in order to render this line of reasoning more comprehensive (Heidegger, 2012, pp. 153 ff.). (Unfortunately the Parmenides translation by Graham used in the English edition of Badiou's seminar *obscures the structure of the indirect proof again as it translates the ambiguous line (DK 8, 12) in the opposite way as Beaufret's translation in Badiou's French text: "Nor ever from what-is-not..." instead of "... de ce qui est ..." (Badiou, 2025, p. 168). But with Graham's translation, the examination of possible sources of generation under the hypothesis, for reductio, that being is generated is incomplete, because with the line considering what-is-not the proof as a whole (DK 8, 6-18) would only consider non-being, but not also being, as a source of becoming.) In any case, however the ambiguous passage is construed, that the proof of the first sign is an indirect proof is not too controversial, neither between Badiou and Heidegger, nor in scholarship on Parmenides (see for example Kahn, 2009b, p. 158, Mourelatos, 2008, p. 99, or Rapp, 2007, pp. 117 ff.; as a counter-example see McKirahan, 2010, pp. 159-160). Given that Parmenides's indirect reasoning is not controversial, the corollary needed for the force of Badiou's interpretation to unfold*

is that Parmenides's indirect proof and the respective procedures of Eleatic reasoning more generally are the necessary condition for Euclidean demonstrative mathematics to emerge. This thesis, which makes Parmenides's poem a birth place of Greek mathematics, is developed in Szabo, 1978. And it is with this thesis, which interrupts its solely poetic origin by supplementing philosophy with its mathematical condition, that Badiou seeks to go against Heidegger (denken: dichten...). – Ironically, Badiou's 1985-86 Parmenides seminar, in its regressive strategy proceeding from Aristotle (on Parmenides), via Plato (on Parmenides), to Parmenides, follows the exact same trajectory, on a smaller scale, as Heidegger's lecture courses do in the early 1930es: from Aristotle's Metaphysics in 1931, to Plato's Republic in 1931/32, to Anaximander and Parmenides in 1932, to other things in 1933...

43 The symbol ∈ for the relation of belonging is often paraphrased by 'element of'. The association of the Latin *element with the Greek epsilon, however, is an anachronism. Contrary to this anachronistic association, the symbol ∈ can be traced back to the Greek esti (see for example Enderton, 1977, p. 16, who attributes the initial use of ∈ qua esti for the membership relation to Peano). With ∈ abbreviating esti, set theory as the theory of the pure multiple can immediately be inscribed into the decision for estin of Parmenides's poem. However, qua esti, ∈ runs the risk of being re-associated with the predicative being of the copula again – x ∈ red, x is red – and the formalization of set theory could again be intermingled with the linguistic form of judgement. But for Badiou, the power of set theory lies precisely in its liberation of thought from the form of judgement and of predication.*

44 C.f. Mostowski's Lemma.

45 "And then [if the axiom of extensionality regulates the relation of identity by way of the relation of belonging] you have something that leads into ontology and that is not, as Parmenides thought, logical self-identity (being is what is absolutely the same as itself, and therefore the One) but the non-logical symbol of belonging, ∈ (a form of being is invariably a multiplicity of multiplicities). The ontology of the One, in assuming that identity is the sole relation, introduces a conflation between logic and ontology, which the true ontology of the multiple keeps separate." (Badiou, 2022, p. 331)

46 See Badiou, 2013, "Meditation 18. Being's Prohibition of the Event".

47 Ibid. p. 181. For the explicitly Parmenidean undercurrent of the prohibition, see ibid., p. 254.

48 Badiou, 2022, p. 333. The alternative reformulation of the ontology of the multiple as a thinking of relations allows to point out its Parmenidean underpinning more economically than its initial presentation in *Being and Event, which hinges on the interpretation of the axiom of the empty set as the only axiom with an existential statement (besides infinity). The empty set as the single guarantee for the existential being of any multiple underscores the subtractive dimension of the ontology of the multiple. – In this regard, of the ontological status of set theory, it is remarkable that Gödel insists on "a close relationship between the concept of set [...] and the categories of pure understanding in Kant's sense. Namely, the function of both is 'synthesis', i.e., the generating of unities out of manifolds (e.g., in Kant, of the idea of one object out of its various aspects)." (Gödel, 1990, p. 268) The parallel that Gödel draws is remarkable, and in fact puzzling, because the Kantian categories are constitutive for objectivity only on condition of a given sensible. But it is rather questionable as to what, if anything, should be an equivalent of the given sensible in the theory of pure sets, beyond the unsensible, ungiven, but axiomatically decided existence of the empty set. Which could be one reason to draw a parallel with Hegel's concept, rather than Kant's categories, since the former does not depend on a given sensible for the objectivity of thought. This constellation is further complicated if one takes into account that Hegel's word and concept of becoming explicitly displaces and re-conceives the Kantian notion of synthesis: "Werden ist diese immanente Synthesis des Seyns und Nichts; aber weil der Synthesis der Sinn von einem äusserlichen Zusammenbringen äusserlich gegeneinander Vorhandener am nächsten liegt, ist mit Recht der Nahme Synthesis, synthetische Einheit ausser Gebrauch gesetzt worden." (Hegel, 1984, p. 83)*

49 Badiou, 2013, p. 199.

50 Ibid., p. 431.

51 To the knowledge of the author, Badiou himself does not explicitly draw the distant yet obvious connection between Parmenides's *syneches and Cantor's Continuum Hypothesis, although the centrality of the question of the continuum for the transition from the implicitly "logicist thesis" of Theory of the Subject to the ontological presuppositions of Being and Event is remarked in the introduction of the latter (ibid., p. 5).*

52 Cohen, 2002, p. 1092.

53 Ibid., p. 422, emphasis A.S.

54 See ibid., p. 418.

55 Ibid., p. 14.

56 The reflexive historicization of ontology by philosophy could be called recursive, or iterated forcing, if this were not already a technical term for set theory itself (c.f. the chapter "Iterated Forcing", in Kunen, 2013). *It could thus be called iterated meta-ontological forcing, indicative of the iteration 'passing through' philosophy. In Being and Event, Badiou suggests not only an iterated but also a transversal reflexivity of*

ontology and the other conditions of philosophy. In this perspective, ontology, that is, set theory is a text, or a discourse, with a symptom, the "Cantor-Gödel-Cohen-Easton-symptom" (Badiou, 2013, p. 295). For the symptom in Marx and Freud/Lacan, see for example Tomšič, 2015, "The Fetish and the Symptom", or Žižek, 2008, "How did Marx invent the symptom?". – Two further remarks: 1. In mathematical formalization, Cohen's forcing relation, between condition and statement, is conventionally written with a double judgement-stroke: ⊩. 2. Badiou's philosophical appropriation of forcing and the generic set could be taken as the key to uncovering a respective configuration of predicative and veridical being. The question of existential being, on the other hand, would require considering the status of the empty set (see above). In the opening meditations of *Being and Event, the empty set ø is introduced as the empty mark, within consistent presentation, of unpresented inconsistent multiplicity. The reference to inconsistent multiplicity is taken up from Cantor, who in his letters to Dedekind interchangeably refers to "absolutely infinite or inconsistent multiplicities" (letter from 28. July 1899). In other words, Being and Event displaces Cantor's absolute, or God, into the subtractive mark of the empty set. Not inconsistently then, The Immanence of Truths reverses the displacement again and glosses the absolute referent of mathematical ontology, V, as "the great void / le grand vide" (Badiou, 2022, p. 43).*

57 Badiou, 2013, p. 14.
58 Badiou, 2022., p. 452.
59 Ibid., p. 456.
60 Ibid., p. 512.
61 It could be asked if the subtle shift in perspective regarding the status of forcing and the generic is the indication of a more fundamental tension in Badiou's overall use of set theory. Since after all it is Cohen who ended up in a formalist stance with regards to mathematical truth, as has been pointed out by Woodin on several occasions (see also Kanamori, 2009, p. 115). Despite his partisanship for Cohen, however, Badiou enthusiastically refers to Woodin and the Inner Model Program (see Badiou, 2022, p. 67), but which after all is the attempt to approximate V with a refined version of Gödel's L that incorporates large cardinal axioms. If they are indeed two, then how are those two tendencies – Gödel and Cohen, absoluteness and procedure – reconciled, in the field of set theory and in Badiou's conceptual apparatus?
62 See "Section VI. Parmenides' Revenge" of *Immanence of Truths.*
63 Badiou, 2022, pp. 433 ff.
64 Ibid., p. 437.
65 Ibid., p. 434.
66 Ibid., p. 432.
67 Ibid., p. 441.
68 Hegel, 1971, p. 288.
69 See Badiou, 2022, pp. 40 ff. and 323 ff.
70 Badiou, 2022, p. 461.
71 To start from the beginning, one would return again to Badiou's own reading of the beginning of Hegel's *Logic from the 1970es, in his commentary on Zhang Shiying's The Rational Kernel of the Hegelian Dialectic. See also Ruda, 2015, ch. 6, "Working Through Working Through: The Immanence of Thought, or Returning to Hegel?".*
72 The reformulation of Spinoza's substance and mode as being and being-there is taken up, by Hegel, from Jacobi (see Hegel, 1984, p. 100, and Jacobi, 1998, p. 247).
73 Hegel, 1984, p. 103.
74 Hegel, 2000, p. 581.
75 Ibid.
76 Hegel, 1998, p. 260. – The work leading to the preceding preliminaries includes an interview with Hugh Woodin, conducted in December 2025 in Providence, RI, and Cambridge, MA, to review recent developments in set theory, the Inner Model Program, and the Ultimate-L conjecture. For technical reasons, the interview could not be included in the publication. – Some of the questions which the preceding preliminaries examine date back to a workshop with Ray Brassier and Frank Ruda on Badiou and Hegel, organized at Humboldt-University Berlin in 2019.

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First approach to a Third Manifesto of Philosophy

Thomas Rudhof-Seibert

Abstract: Alain Badiou is a philosopher of epochal significance if only because he captures the fundamental crisis of the present age, and thus of history itself, in a manner that is both unique and compelling. He defines it as a crisis of its truth procedures, as the process in which science, art, politics and love are absorbed by technology, culture, administration and sex. In the operations of fidelity that seek to escape absorption, the following paper draws on early Heidegger and Sartre to develop a fifth procedure of truth. Not externally attached to other truth procedures, but inscribed within them, it is named here, in its essence and according to its subjectivity, the truth procedure of existence, but understood as the truth procedure of philosophy and its subject.

Keywords: Badiou; Foucault; Sartre; Heidegger; Hegel; existence; God; human; humanism without humanism.

> The call we have just heard is directed rather
> at all of humanity.
> But at this point and at this moment
> we are humanity, whether we like it or not.
> Samuel Beckett 1971, p. 197. Cf. Badiou 2006a: 63
> Translation from German.
>
> Some of those days
> you'll miss me, honey.
> Jean-Paul Sartre 1981, p. 270, 272, 274.

If Alain Badiou's first commitment of thought is to defend philosophy against anti-philosophical scepticism, he follows the early Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre. This is already indicated in the title of his three-volume magnum opus *Being and Event* (1988/2006b, 2006/2010, 2018/2022), which explicitly refers to *Being and Time* (1927/1962) and *Being and Nothing* (1943/1996). What they have in common is "the triplet of being, the subject and truth" (Badiou 2011c, p. 117, cf. also Badiou 1998: 119), which the two earlier books explored in a "universal phenomenological ontology" that, as an "analytic of existence, has made fast the guiding-line for all philosophy at the point where it arises an to which it returns." (Heidegger 1962, p. 62)

Of course, the commonality in their commitment does not exclude differences: foremost among these is Badious' decision not to make the subject of his thinking an "idea of existence in general" and its "authentic potentiality-for-Being-a-whole" (Heidegger 1962, p. 313 resp. p. 301 et seq., cf. §61ff) or even "desire to be God" (Sartre 1964: p. 724 et seq.) and therefore also not to assume any "primordial truth of existence" (Heide-

gger, loc. cit., p. 355). In this respect, the subject of his thinking is solely the particular and separate possibilities of subjectivation and existence that open up to human living beings through their participation in the four "truth processes" or "truth procedures" of art, science, politics and love. It is noteworthy at this point that, for the philosopher Badiou, philosophy does not produce its own truths, and therefore is not a truth process in its own right, nor does it encompass its own subjectivity. For Badiou, its special task lies solely in determining the epochal "compossibility" or the epochal "space of compossibility" of artistic, scientific, political and amorous truths – we will come back to this. (See above all Badiou 1998: 23, 53, 89, 115. Translation from German)

Badiou breaks with Heidegger at the moment when the Freiburg rector atones for his political betrayal of philosophy by turning to anti-philosophical scepticism. However, this does not detract from the recognition of his enduring indispensability; on the contrary, right at the beginning of his first major work, Badiou expressly states that Heidegger is "the last philosopher" who "can be universally recognised" (Badiou 2006b: 15. Translation from German). From a whole series of similar references elsewhere, the passage in the conversation with Fabien Tarby is particularly relevant to our context, in which Badiou specifies in a carefully considered list why the thinking of *Being and Time* is one of the first stipulations (not only) of his thinking: "Heidegger (was) a great thinker, even though he was a petty-bourgeois Nazi. This does not diminish the significance of many of his analyses, on temporality, on the *phenomenology of anxiety*, on *equal primordiality* (...), on the figures of alienation, on the history of philosophy, on poetry." (Badiou/Tarby 2017: p. 106. Modified translation from German, emphasis added) Badiou's repeated reference to the "rather beautiful text" in which Heidegger explains "that truth and freedom are basically the same thing: 'the essence of truth reveals itself as freedom'" (Badiou 2015: 52. Cf. Heidegger 1954: 12). Finally, it is worth noting that Badiou explains in several places that he has incorporated Heidegger's "stroke of genius" into the core of his own thinking, namely "to hold fast to the fundamental distinction between knowledge and truth, or thinking and cognition." (Badiou 1999: 73)

Humanism and Anti-humanism

If Badiou's relationship with Sartre is somewhat more complicated, it is because fidelity and distancing apply here to the philosophical teacher to whom Badiou owes the beginnings of his own thinking. It is no coincidence, and significant for us, that he expresses this in a manner that is impressive in its intellectual integrity, precisely in the interview with which his *Ethics* concludes – we quote in extenso: "What Sartre taught me was, I would say, simply, almost in a naïve sense, existentialism. But what does existentialism mean? It means maintaining a connection, a bond that can

be re-established again and again between the concept on the one hand and, on the other, the existentiell instance of choice, the instance of vital decision. The conviction that the philosophical concept is not worth an hour's effort if it does not, even through very complex mediations, respond to, illuminate and order the instance of choice and vital decision. *And in this sense, the concept must always be a matter of existence*. Sartre taught me this." (Badiou 2003a: 137f. Translation from German. Emphasis added. Here and in the whole text we follow the distinction between 'dem Existenziellen' and 'dem Existenzialen' in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, which is rendered as 'Existentiell' and 'Existential' in the English translation.)

The reason for his distancing himself from Sartre lay in the latter's definition of existentialism as – in Badiou's pointed terms – "radical humanism." But although Badiou himself seems to take the side of a "radical anti-humanism" introduced by Foucault and thus diametrically oppose Sartre, the difference is far less clear-cut than the choice of words suggests – we quote again in extenso: "As is the wont of the dialectical thinking of contradictions, there is a unity of the two conflicting orientations. That is because both of them treat this question: What becomes of man without God? (...). Radical humanism and radical anti-humanism agree on the theme of Godless man as opening, possibility, programme of thought. That is why the two orientations will intersect (...) in particular in all the revolutionary episodes. (Badiou 2007, p. 171). In Badiou's own work, this dialectic is evident precisely at the point where he initially attributes to humans the status of mere animal beings. On the same page, this reductive thesis is followed antithetically by an ethically and politically charged concept of humanity, which is then immediately relativized dialectically by an insertion: "There is a two-part answer to this question. The first part is that humans are not at all different from animals. (...) The second part is that humans are capable of perceiving events. (...) This is what I would call – *if one absolutely wants to maintain this idea* – the humanity of humans in relation to animality. Yes, humans are entirely animals, but animals that, under certain conditions, are capable of doing things that cannot be derived from their animal nature." (Badiou/Ruda/Völker 2007: 45)

Correspondingly, the question of the conclusions to be drawn from the "two-part" nature of humans remains, for Badiou, even while writing his third major work, a philosophically and ethically-politically "open question" and thus an "unregulated problem." It depended and still depends on the possibility of asserting, alongside the subjects of science, art, politics and love, a "philosophical subject" and thus also the previously excluded possibility of a subject in general ("Subjekt überhaupt"). Philosophy would then still not produce its own truths, but in its own subjectivity it would nevertheless be a fifth truth process, in that it would have to work out not only the epochal compossibility of the truths of art, science, politics and love, but also their compossibility in general ("Kompossibilität über-

haupt") based on an "primordial truth of existence", which itself would be inscribed in all other truths and truth processes. We will come back to this. (See, among others, Badiou 2016: 76ff, Badiou/Tarby 2017: 126f). It should be noted, however, that Badiou himself did, ultimately, *not* take up this possibility. This marks the point at which we place our own intervention into the matter of thought itself. The phrase "matter itself" is chosen deliberately and highlights another commonality between Badiou, Sartre and Heidegger. For even though we will continuously and, where necessary, extensively quote passages from the three philosophers, we are not concerned with the philological question of how the aforementioned thinkers might be "read," nor with the academic game of compensating the alleged weaknesses of one thinker with the supposed strengths of another. Instead, like them, we are concerned with the truly open question of the "humanity of human beings" as the highest of our possibilities, a possibility that unfolds not only in texts, but in the aforementioned triplet of being, subject or existence, and truth. Its internal dialectic is here the very subject of philosophical and ethical-political discourse.

The situatedness of universal truth

In the two manifestos he devoted to philosophy (Badiou 1989, 2009), Badiou reflects on the situational and temporal nature of his thinking, which does not contradict but rather enables an "approaching the absolute" (Badiou 2022: 321-373). While in *the First Manifesto for Philosophy* he focuses on its militant opposition to anti-philosophical scepticism, in *the Second Manifesto* he confronts an even more dangerous situation. In it, he sees not only philosophy but also its extra-philosophical conditions threatened in their very existence, insofar as "technology, culture, administration and sex have taken up the generic place of science, art, politics and love." (Badiou 2011c: 120f)

This danger has since intensified to such an extent that philosophy can only defend itself by bringing itself and its last resources into play: a supreme effort that Badiou, in his book of the same title, has described as the effort of "metapolitics." (Badiou 2003b)

First and foremost, it is important to emphasise the dialectical nature of the crisis of the present age. It is not simply understood as an empirically (ontically) tangible crisis of the given political-economic world order, but rather, in a manner not dissimilar to Heidegger, as an (ontological) crisis of being itself, and thus also of truths and their truth-subjects, which has broken out in the fourfold crisis of science, art, politics and love. In sharpening his difference from the late Heidegger, Badiou then writes that the danger of the eradication of science, art, politics and love, diagnosed by both of them, is not, or at least not solely, due to a (ontological) nihilism unleashed in the history of being and truth and thus in the metapolitical subjectivation of human beings, but rather to the profane-empirical (ontic)

"rule of capital" and its political economy, which he had just distanced himself from in the first move. In the third move, its prima vista nihilistic effect – the social enforcement of a "generalized atomism" that so radically "unbounds" being that "the reign of the manifold is unfathomable depths of what is presented without exception" – is expressly welcomed by Badiou in a seemingly surprising turn, because for him the resulting comprehensive "desacralization" of the world itself is a "necessary condition" for granting thought the access to being and truth that is so badly needed right now (Badiou 1999: 55f).

This, in turn, is because, for Badiou, the manifold, surrounded by nothing but the void, is in fact nothing more and nothing less than the ontological truth of being itself, revealed in the current crisis as radically as never before, and therefore also as our abysmal ground. In the perspective of this third move, Badiou abandons the late Heidegger, who was, as it were, taken along in the first move, in favour of the early Heidegger, who, in an equally surprising turn, had expressly welcomed the anxiety-filled "being held out into the nothing" as *Dasein's* "transcendence," which he understood as the literally meta-physical "transcending of being as a whole," as the "authentic" movement of our being and thinking itself (Heidegger 2010, p. 106. The English translation of *Being and Time* consistently uses the German term "Dasein." Cf. Heidegger 1962). Due to the specific Heideggerian use not only of the term 'Dasein', but also of the term 'Existenz', we will always use both of these German terms when appropriate.)

In doing so, the early Heidegger further clarified the unsecured processing of multiplicity in the void or the nothing by coining the neologism "Mannigfaltigung" (multiplication) for this primordial, i.e. unconditional process, a Mannigfaltigung/multiplication which as such also and precisely determines the being of Dasein. (Heidegger 1978: 171ff) In this way, the early Heidegger, like Badiou later, affirmed precisely the desacralising effects of this literally fundamental ontological insight and therefore programmatically conceived philosophy as "fundamentally atheistic" and, in this sense, as a "hand raised against God". (Heidegger 2013: 29. Translation from German) Sartre, the third member of the trio, conceptualised the directional sense of transcendence, accomplished as a crossing over from the groundless, purposeless and unityless Mannigfaltigung/multiplication)of the manifold to the void or the nothing, from "mere" meta- to a rigorously "anti-physical" transcendence, thereby expanding the always ethically and politically reflected "hand raised against God" into a hand raised against any kind of nature understood as home, and ultimately into a hand raised against being itself. (Sartre 2000, p. 240, 243 and 2005, p. 30f., 257. Cf. also de Beauvoir 2000, in nuce p. 77. Translation from German). If the fundamental crisis-prone nature of human habitation in a being understood only as a Mannigfaltigung/multiplication of mere multiplicities is understood by all three philosophers as the basic fact, inescapably having to exist in a ceaselessly multiplying "not-at-home" (Heidegger 1962: 233f),

beyond which there is nothing but the void or the nothing, Sartre affirms the initially negative finding in view of its political potential as the "perpetual dream of anti-physis," because only in such a space can the possible be "made possible by us" (Sartre 2005: 30f. Translation from the German including the neologism "vermöglichen"): "Anti-physis, classless society or emancipation of man" (Sartre 2000: 243. Translation from German) Badiou explicitly takes up the dark tone of this hope, which is drawn precisely from what is initially negative, insofar as, after the "deposition of the gods" and their afterlife, for him too "everything is here, always here, and (...) the power of thought lies in the egalitarian dullness that has a firm and declared experience of what is coming to us here." (Badiou 2002a: 21. Translation from German) If there are truths in what befalls us that demand our fidelity, this does not mean, however, that this coincidence and our fidelity have a meaning that transcends us. On the contrary – and in counter-move to the later Heidegger: The truths appear "in absolute insignificance" because there is "no mystery of being," but only "this bath of otherness," which is "the anarchy of being (...), the absence of meaning (...): manifoldities that go into infinity and have nothing but meaningless void as their ultimate end." (Badiou/Truby 2017: 68, 154; Badiou/Ruda/Völker 2007: 51f, in nuce also cf. Badiou 2002a: 195. Translation from German)

"There is only"/"except that"

However, although Badiou affirms the definitive "deliason" from every "one" and "whole" in *the Second Manifesto* as well, he is much more sceptical there about its effects on the four processes of truth. He therefore now explicitly seeks ways to defend the "active autonomy" of science, art, politics and love against their consumption in technology, culture, administration and sex (ibid.: 121). This is precarious, however, because for Badiou, a subjectivation of truths and thus their "active autonomy" exists only in the threatened procedures themselves – outside of them, for him, there are only "individuals," i.e., human living beings who are no different from other living beings. In doing so, he directs the confrontation with the (ontic-ontological) crisis of being under the rule of capital philosophically, but also artistically, scientifically, politically and amorously, towards a critique of the epochal ruling 'natural belief', which he mainly in his second major work *Logics of Worlds* summarises under the name of 'democratic materialism'. To this he attributes two interconnected and palpably nihilistic dogmas: "There are only individuals and communities" and "There are only bodies and languages." In the course of a "materialist dialectic," he then adds to these dogmas the phrase "except that there are truths," whose power he derives precisely from their "except that." The truths grasped in the status of their (Fr.) "sinon que" are thus neither additions or supplements to individuals and communities or bodies and languages, nor do they result from a synthesis in which they

would be expressions of the bodies named by language or condensations of communities in their individuals. Appearing only and exclusively in their "except that," the truths of art, science, politics, and love, like their philosophically disclosed compossibility, are not something that is already (co-)given in or with bodies and languages or in and with individuals and communities. Instead, they are exceptions bursting forth from the void or the nothing, from and to the regime of bodies and languages or from and to the regime of individuals and communities. In an once again dialectical turn, however, they are then immanent to these regimes precisely as such exceptions, because and insofar as they withstand the ontological indisputability of the "nothing but" of bodies and languages or, individuals and communities: "There are only bodies and languages, except that there are truths." And: "There are only individuals and communities, except that there are truths." (Badiou 2010a, p. 17-25. Translation from German)

In the dialectical relation of the repeatedly juxtaposed dimensions of the truth- and being-historical/ (seins- und wahrheitsgeschichtlichen (metapolitical-ontological) and the (ontic-)political dimensions of the crisis, the concept of the "event" comes into play, which is the main concept of Badious' entire thinking, not only but also inspired by Heidegger. An event is always the event of a truth that, as a truth introduced by its event and thus eventful in itself, always appears in a particular historical situation and is therefore always particular because it is situated in time, space and history. The fact that every truth is universal and eternal despite its situatedness and thus in its temporal, spatial and historical locality and particularity results first and foremost from the circumstance that, in its immanent exceptional status, it cannot be derived from this situation itself and therefore cannot be limited to it. This prima vista paradoxical determination proves itself historically, insofar as it can be shown that and how a truth situated by its event as this truth can be "actualised" again and again, always anew and always differently in later situations and, understood in this way, is indeed eternal – at least as long as there are events and people who bear witness to it by remaining faithful to them. (Cf. in nuce Badiou 2022, p. 19 and ibid. in the introduction by Kenneth Richards, p. 15. Cf. also in the Second manifesto, p. 129)

Back to the most radical individuation

However, we have now reached the point of our own intervention, where we inscribe the truth procedure of existence and its own specific truth into the truth procedures of art, science, politics and love. While Badiou himself has repeatedly discussed (and consistently rejected) this possibility, as mentioned at the beginning of this article, a particularly eminent passage on this topic can be found, significantly, in the very last sentence of his second manifesto. There he refers emphatically to Jean-Arthur Rimbaud's verse in which the poet articulates his desire to possess "the truth in one

soul and one body" (ibid.: 118). The truth of this verse is "existentiell" in a radical sense because Rimbaud is not referring to the participation in one or the other truth procedure, but rather to precisely that "potentiality-for-Being-a-whole" (in one soul and one body), which the early Heidegger had sought in the one and "primordial truth of Existenz," for us enabling inscribed in the truths of science, art, politics, and love (Heidegger 1962: 264, 343, 355). According to Heidegger, its distinction from all other truths lies in "the possibility and necessity of the most radical individuation," in which a Dasein makes its very Existenz a procedure of truth, which in its mineness ("Jemeinigkeit") is at the same time the truth of all existing beings, and therefore also imposed on their universal phenomenology. (ibid., p. 62). If this Dasein in its being is not a synthesis of body and language or of individual and community that can be grasped in however way, it is because Heidegger would have already contested taking bodies and language or individuals and communities as the starting point. He therefore would not have expressed the two dogmas of "democratic materialism," which he himself too had declared to be the enemy of thought, in these already democratic-materialistic formulations, but would have attributed to them, without any loss of critical acuity, the phrase "There are only forms of life and language games," borrowed conceptually from Ludwig Wittgenstein. The seemingly insignificant difference then lies in the fact that the not merely synthetic but always already performed unity of life form and language game, albeit constantly modifying itself historically, constitutes his own concept of "Dasein" in its manifold forms. As the phenomenology of its "average everydayness" expounded in *Being and Time* shows, this Dasein is so completely and unreservedly absorbed in its life forms and language games that, as Heidegger aptly puts it, "proximally and for the most part" it is nothing but these life forms and language games: There is literally nothing hidden "behind" them – except for the nothing that Badiou calls the void, albeit in a variation that is not merely terminological. Nothing but also the possibility of an event that breaks into the life forms and language games of Dasein from this nothing or the void and presents it with their "primordial truth" as the "truth of its Existenz".

The initial advantage of this approach would be that the phenomena of human life and speech would not have to be located in animality in a "first part," i.e., they would not have to be reduced to phenomena of animality. Instead, they are granted their own being from the outset, the being of a living, speaking Dasein that is thus always already "befindlich" (in German both: "located" and "tuned") in a world carried out linguistically and physically. This Dasein, alienated from itself (once again) "proximally and for the most part" in its life forms and language games, yet nevertheless generic in itself, then unexpectedly and inconceivably encounters, in declaredly rare moments, the "except that" of the truths that happen to it.

Heidegger clarifies this generic-existential openness to the accidental "except that" of its truths through the radical distinction between Dasein

and Existenz, which Badiou and many other reviewers have not sufficiently appreciated and which, incidentally, Heidegger himself did not always maintain. According to this difference, Existenz and the truth it attests to are not, as Badiou rightly demands, given as properties with or in Dasein, but are nothing more than a de facto rare and always momentary, and therefore always indeterminate, i.e. eventful possibility of Dasein. With definitional clarity and rigour, yet necessarily radical because of its unconditional indeterminacy, this truly decisive difference is captured in *Being and Time* in the categorical, i.e. existentially meant, sentence: "Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence – in terms of a *possibility* of itself: to be itself or not itself." (Heidegger 1962, p. 33, italics mine) In the appendix to the 1929 published Kant book, only made available in the complete edition, Heidegger explains this distinction with regard to its always only possible, i.e. never predetermined and never assured "except that" of the eventful, momentary chance of a truth – I therefore quote in extenso: "What I call Dasein is essentially determined not only by what is called spirit, and not only by what is called life, but what matters is the primordial unity and immanent relatedness of a human being who is, in a sense, bound in a body and, in this bondage to the body, stands in a unique relationship with beings, is located in the midst of it, not in the sense of a spirit looking down, but in the sense that Dasein, thrown into the midst of beings, as a free being, makes an incursion into this beings that is always historical and, in a final sense, accidental. So accidental that the highest form of Dasein's Existenz can only be traced back to very few and rare moments of Dasein's duration between life and death, *that the human being only exists in very few moments, but otherwise move in the midst of it's being*." (Heidegger 2010, p. 289f; translation from German, emphasis added) This passage was quoted in its entirety because its last sentence once again and unambiguously confirms its compatibility with Badious' intention to think of the subject of a truth as an immanent exception to the regimes of bodies and languages or individuals and communities. If it is said by definition that Dasein "moving in the midst of its being" from birth to death "exists only in very few moments," then its Existenz cannot be given in itself, in Heidegger's words, it cannot belong to the beings "present-at-hand" or "ready-to-hand", i.e., it cannot be an object of knowing cognition and productive practice. It therefore cannot be any specific property of this Dasein. Instead, it can and must be nothing but a pure performance, can and must be nothing but an act – but also a performance and an act that is not in a "first part" animalistic but instantaneous and always already existential at the same time, i.e., generic – as the immanent exception of this Dasein from itself, which "is" its authentic Existenz.

Because this is so, even Dasein's truth, grasped in and with its Existenz, is not his ever-present and therefore unlosable possession, but rather nothing more than a possibility that suddenly befalls him and often immediately escapes him again, his perhaps most radical and therefore

only in the indissoluble "equiprimordiality" of the contradictions to be decided upon abandoned both-as-well-as: "Dasein is equiprimordially both in the truth and the untruth." (Heidegger 1962, p. 265) The indissolubility of this both-and therefore also forms the core of the equally indissoluble "ambiguity" of all life and speech of Dasein, whose abysmal precariousness Heidegger captures in the equally abysmal sentence: "Everything looks as if it were genuinely understood, genuinely taken hold of, genuinely spoken, though at bottom it is not; or else it does not look so, and yet at bottom it is." (ibid., p.217) This ambiguity therefore only presents once again only eventful, i.e. only in the unforeseen and unpredictable moments of rupture that Heidegger seeks to unfold in his phenomenology of anxiety, which Badiou explicitly adopts in his work and Heidegger in turn owes to Sören Kierkegaard. The anxiety that constantly assails Dasein is the "basic state-of-mind" ("Grundbefindlichkeit") of its being, under whose always unexpected and never intended coincidence, or rather occurrence, it is dislodged from its everyday forms of life and their familiar language games, but also and precisely from their "They-Self" (Man-Selbst) of the Being-with (Mitsein) of Dasein and Dasein, which combines all alienations. (ibid., p. 225 et. seq.) Only with the anxiety-filled dislocation from the They does a Dasein enter into the exceptional possibility of its Existenz as its always only respective Being-in-truth – if it does not, as is and remains the case "proximally and for the most part," escape into a briefly interrupted but then inconsequentially continued being-and-remaining-in-untruth, in which it returns under its domination "by the way things are publicly interpreted" (ibid., p. 254) A little later, Heidegger devoted a phenomenology, also inspired by Kierkegaard and detailed over 150 pages, to the "basic state-of-mind" of boredom, which he endowed with the same force (Heidegger 1983, p. 89-245); in Sartre, nausea plays a similar role to that of anxiety. Unexpected, momentary and therefore also unintentional, nausea, boredom and anxiety are, in the strict sense of the word, events of existence and, as such, are to be understood as events of what Heidegger, with equal rigour, calls the "primordial truth of Existenz". This definition must be understood strictly because it can only be grasped literally in the "Ur-Sprung" ("Ursprung", the German word for "origin", literally means "primordial leap") in which a Dasein first springs up its truth and thus its never ready- or present-to-hand given Existenz in order to remain faithful to it permanently, i.e. until its death, if successful.

However, to return to the point at hand: both "before" and "after" this leap, we are never just animals, not even "human animals," but always Dasein, i.e., a being that is generic insofar as it is characterised by the possibility of a singular Existenz, which as such is never more, but also never less than a possibility, "something" at least that, as far as we know, does not apply to animals. In order to see what this ontological emancipation of our being from animality into what is understood as primordial humanity has gained for the crisis of truths, we now turn to the question

of how, in the Being-with of Dasein and Dasein, the possibility of a multi-headed Ko-Existenz, i.e. a shared Being-in-truth, can arise. This is necessary because, like any truth, the "truth of Existenz" can only prove itself in its ultimate validity through the at least possible participation of all in this truth, all without exception. But it is also necessary because the crisis of truths was imposed on us under specifically capitalist, i.e. political-economic, rule and is therefore also an ethical-political crisis.

Questions of method

First, however, we must take a closer look at the ontological difference in which Heidegger distinguishes between beings present- or ready-to-hand (objects produced by practice or knowing cognition) and beings in the mode of Dasein (possibility of Existenz). If the beings present- or ready-to-hand are grasped in conceptual understanding along the categories that apply to it, the conceptual understanding of Dasein and Existenz is not oriented by categories, but by "existentiale." (Heidegger 1962, p. 79 et seq) Strictly speaking, they are of course categories, but ones that are intended to reveal the being of Dasein and its possibility of existence purely as a possibility, i.e. as an eventful act or performance, and thus separate it from the categorically determinable (ready- or present-to-hand) beings, which also include animal beings.

If the specific status of these existentiale in their ontological difference from categories is still controversial and difficult today, it is because they are supposed to grasp, in a generalisation that is not meta- but transhistorical, a being that exists only as "in each case mine" and "at the time" ("jemeinig" and "jeweilig", cf. the glossary of German expressions in Heidegger 1962: 513), i.e. only in radically historical singularity: "Dasein is at time ("in der Jeweiligkeit", TRS); insofar as it is what it can be, it is in each case mine ("jemeinig", TRS). The determination is a consistent, constitutive one in this being. Those who cross it out have lost what they are talking about in their subject matter." (Heidegger 1989, p. 15; translation from German). According to the duality of life forms and language games primordially constituting Dasein, Thomas Rentsch has resolved this difficulty – of losing in conceptual generalisation precisely what is meant in its pre-conceptual singularity ("Jemeinigkeit" und "Jeweiligkeit") – with methodological rigour: "Existentiale do not name characteristics of human beings, but forms of life situations. They must not be misunderstood as theoretical entities, but are hermeneutic guidelines for an a priori analysis of the human situation. Their universality does not consist in simply asserting their validity for all situations in life, but in the methodological insight that they outline guiding questions that cannot be dispensed with for a phenomenological description of the form of life as a whole. As transcendental concepts of the form of life, they stand, as it were, like headings above the task of narrative phenomenology that is then to be

accomplished, which must be oriented towards our experiences and our language games in life." (Rentsch 2003, p. 168f; translation from German).

The difference between Dasein and Existenz (as the exception to Dasein that is immanent to it) must therefore be supplemented by the difference between the "existential" and the "existentiell": "Existential" are the forms of linguistically articulated forms of life associated with the phenomenological description of Dasein and Existenz, while "existentiell" are the respective, always singular acts and performances themselves, whose universality must then be constantly re-proven by phenomenological description, since relevant modifications cannot be ruled out. It should be noted that Heidegger was methodologically and thematically aware of the necessarily and permanently problematic character of the transhistoricity of his existentiale. He attributed essential modifications of the existential structure to the "primitive Dasein" explored by ethnology, which are evident in its use of signs (Heidegger 1962: 76ff) and even more so in its temporality (Heidegger 2010: 255ff). These modifications could be so profound that the primacy of "futurity" or "project" resp. "projection" attributed to Dasein in an existential sense would have to be historically limited to the extent that "primitive Dasein" might conversely have to be attributed a primacy of "thrownness" or "having been". What is important for us here is not the correctness or incorrectness of the statements on "primitive Dasein" and its obviously problematic designation, but rather the problematisation of the historicity of the existentiale.

This context then raises the question, which is not only methodological but also ethical, of whether Kierkegaard's and – always forgotten, not to be forgotten! – Max Stirner's foundation of Dasein and Existenz on its mineness and Being-at-time, later affirmed by Heidegger and Sartre, is affected by Badiou's critique of the "merging of subject and individual", which he attributes to a tradition stretching from Descartes to Sartre – one of the reasons why his renunciation of a subject in general implies the renunciation of "ethics in general". (In nuce Badiou 2013, p. 19 and Badiou 2003a: 28. Cf. Stirner 1995) Badiou would be right if the "jemeinig-jeweilige" Existenz, which Stirner conceives as always "unique" ("einzig"), referred only to the psychophysical private person in the sense of his formula "There are only individuals and communities". In the conceptual duality of the existential and the existentiell, however, this accusation can be rejected insofar as Dasein and Existenz in this duality are never meant *only* as such an individual, but always as a potentially "singular universal" or a "besonderes Allgemeines" (Sartre 1975, p. 123-151, emphasis mine). For this reason, immediately after completing their first major works, both Heidegger and Sartre attempted an existential-existentiell revision of the Kantian ethics – Heidegger in lectures in the late 1920s/early 1930s, Sartre in the drafts for his moral philosophy, which he never completed but which he programmatically expounded in his 1951 lecture on humanism. Heidegger summarised their common point in 1929/30 in an imperative

that he himself shamefully betrayed shortly afterwards: "To transform the humanity of us humans into our own Dasein." (Heidegger 1983: 509; translation from German) However, this imperative then constitutes – and this is the point of our intervention – an "ethics in general" which, with Kant, radically formal interprets Dasein as a 'purposefulness without purpose,' whose practical determination is then left to the freedom of each Existenz in its "mineness." Significantly, Badiou touches on this point when he points out that Samuel Beckett, the writer most important to him, also refers to Kant's general ethical formula in the innermost commitment of his prose: "For I dared to contemplate the task I had to perform only when I placed it in this atmosphere – how shall I put it – of purposefulness without purpose – why not?" (Badiou 2006a: 67. Beckett 1975: 130; translation from German) We will meet Beckett again here.

Returning at this point to the question posed earlier about human Co-Existenz, the existential-existentiell revision of the Kantian ethics leads us to Sartre's existential revision of Hegel's dialectic. With it comes the "desire of being" (Sartre 1966: 721 et. seq) already mentioned here, to make oneself not only the Dasein of "humanity of us humans," but an Dasein that, like God, would be its own cause and in this sense not only existential, but also existentielly generic, i.e., of its own origin and in this sense an end in itself.

On Life and Death I

The central importance of this point in *Being and Nothing* is evident from the fact that, according to my count, the book returns to it no fewer than nine times in its concluding section, in some cases over several pages. (Sartre 1966: 712-799). If the realisation of becoming God or generic ultimately fell to the "absolute spirit" in the case of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who was decisive for Sartre here, the agreement between Hegel, Sartre and also Heidegger hinges on the concept of the "self." Hegel states in one of the most important passages of his Phenomenology that it – this self in its existentiell singularity – is "putting the life of the absolute spirit into practice." (Hegel 2018, p. 458) However, if Sartre, unlike Hegel, does not consider what Hegel already considered achieved to be achievable at all, i.e. never truly attainable, this does not rob his own dialectic of the élan necessary for its continued "putting into practice" – on the contrary: when Sartre describes the desire to be God in the last sentence of *Being and Nothing* as a "useless passion," he does not mean to say that human-reality should renounce this passion or could even renounce it (Sartre1966: 784). In a nutshell: Sartre's talk of the desire to be God is a concept borrowed from religious experience and language to describe a way of being that, philosophically speaking, can no longer be rationalised in terms of an "absolute spirit," but rather in terms of absolute Existenz. This implies that "human reality" – Sartre's translation of the term Da-

sein – follows this passion not only in special moments, but already in its "average everydayness," and then especially in all the acts that Badiou assigns to the procedures of truth: in art, science, politics, and love. The last two procedures, i.e. politics and love, are of particular importance here – a distinction that Badiou himself also makes and explains in detail (Badiou 2022: 469-587). This, in turn, is because, according to the dialectic of absolute Existenz understood in this way, has its origin and actual locus in the dialectic of master and slave, which Sartre explicitly continued by inscribing it into human reality itself. Its decisive moments are, first, an primordial (self-)awareness of the generic and therefore non-animal character of this reality, which is always "being-for-itself," i.e., singular in itself, and second, the "equiprimordial" necessity of sharing this ever-present truth co-existentielly, i.e., of proving it as the truth of all human reality. For Sartre, "Hegel's brilliant intuition" (Sartre 1966: 321) consists in the fact that existential-existentiell beings can and must communicate this truth to each other only in a life-and-death struggle. This is because only "putting one's own life in the line" (Hegel 2018: 111) proves the difference that existentially separates human reality from the mere life of animality. If all animal life is subject to the natural compulsion for self-preservation, Dasein in its generic freedom and truth can "risk and bear the loss of everything and anything": "To know its limits means to know that it is to sacrifice itself" (Hegel 2018: 223 and 466. See also Rudhof-Seibert 2023).

We do not need to trace the dialectic of master and slave in its complex world-historical course here, but can limit ourselves to the three moments that are essential (not only) for Sartre. The first has already been mentioned and took place in the very first struggle, which phenomenologically marks the beginning of the entire history. According to Hegel, this very origin of world history does not end in what is ultimately merely a chance victory for one party, favoured by muscle power, skill and the luck of the moment, but with the subjugation of the other party, who prefers to survive in servitude rather than "put his own life in the line" and thus helps his opponent to attain the position of master. The history that followed and continues to unfold is dialectical because human reality, in its generic and that respect inalienable freedom, has always revolted against all conditions of domination and servitude and will continue to do so.

The second moment lies in Sartre's sceptical reservation, already mentioned here, against Hegel's resolution of the dialectic of master and slave. According to Sartre, the "desire of being" of human reality for its absolute Existenz is so radical that it cannot be pacified under any circumstances, and therefore its "antiphysis" becomes both a "useless passion" and a "perpetual dream" – a circumstance that, for the Marxist Sartre, would remain decisive even in a communist society. According to Sartre, the truth of human Co-Existenz therefore lies in the never-ending, perpetual conflict: "The for-itself is the foundation of all negativity and all relation. The for-itself is relation. Such being the case, the upsurge of

the Other touches the for-itself in its very heart (...) Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others." (Sartre 1966: 472f, 475).

On Life and Death II

The third moment combines the first two and owes more to Heidegger than to Sartre, although Heidegger never adequately addressed the master-slave dialectic. At the same time, this third moment allows us to reject the reservations that both Sartre and Badiou raised against Heidegger's conception of Dasein as "being-towards-death." (Sartre 1966, p. 680-707; for Badiou, see, among others, 2022, p. 176ff; for Heidegger in nuce, see, of course, Heidegger 1962, p. 279-311) As in the relationship between Dasein and Existenz, there is also an insurmountable difference here, which Heidegger understands as the difference between the initially and mostly lived inauthentic being-towards-death and the authentic being-towards-death lived only in rare moments, or, more precisely, as the difference between being-towards-death and the existential "freedom towards death" that is always only grasped by a few and always only in an eventful, momentary way: "Anticipation reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility of being itself, primarily unsupported by concernful solicitude, but of being itself, rather, in an impassioned freedom towards death-a freedom which has been released from the illusions of the 'they', and which is factical, certain of itself, and anxious." (ibid., p. 311)

To explain this point in the brevity required here: when Sartre and Badiou follow Spinoza against Heidegger, according to whom a "free man (...) thinks of nothing less than death" because his "wisdom (...) is not a reflection on death, but a reflection on life" (Spinoza 1976, p. 247. Cf. Badiou 2022: 176), then they mean what Heidegger, for his part, refers to as "perishing" ("Verenden") and "demise" ("Ableben"), i.e., death merely "as a phenomenon of life." (Heidegger 1962: 284, 290f) When Heidegger, on the other hand, speaks of death as both existential and existentiell, as a phenomenon *not only* of life *but*, in the true sense, of Dasein itself, he does not mean the moment or the more or less brief period of perishing and demise, but rather the relationship to death that is realised in Dasein as an eventful, momentary "anticipation of death" ("Vorlaufen zum Tod"), for which he reserves the existentiale "Dying" ("Sterben", ibid.: 291). In a definitional distinction from the dying and passing away meant by Spinoza, Sartre and Badiou: "*Death is a way to be, which Dasein takes over as soon as it is*." (ibid.: 289) Only from this existentially accomplished relationship with death can a being – in Spinoza's words – attain the "wisdom" of its "freedom towards death," thinking of nothing less than its perishing and demise, because its wisdom is not a reflection on demise and perishing, but a reflection on Existenz and existing. This wisdom does not need to be expressed in words, but has implicitly guided all those who exist and

who have decided in freedom to “”put one’s life on the line.” Because this wisdom belongs to freedom, i.e. the free relationship to death, it has also led in countless cases to refraining from such “putting in line” at the given time – what is decisive is not recklessness, but the existential performance of the free relationship to death. Its particularity can only be surmised from the outside: even if the entire dialectic of master and slave is rightly based on the relationship between domination and servitude beginning in world history with the death-fleeing submission of the first servile self, no one will ever really be able to know whether the renunciation of “putting one’s life on the line” was not made in a conscious, i.e. knowing and free decision. This reservation does not alter the fact that any overcoming of a relationship of domination always depends on the decision to risk one’s life – this and nothing else is the core of the “primordial truth of Existenz”: its very essence of being and thinking. Badiou and Sartre’s critique of Heidegger’s concept of “being-towards-death” remains valid if it is understood not as a critique of being-towards-death, but of being-towards-perishing and dying, which constitutes the existentiell core of democratic materialism – Heidegger would agree with this. The fact that Badiou, conversely, came close to the authentic being-towards-death and, at the same time, not coincidentally, to Sartre’s associated existentialism of “useless passion” can be glimpsed in an admirably literary and philosophical way in the interpretation he devoted to Samuel Beckett’s for him most important book, *Worstward Ho* (Beckett 1989). He describes this book, with direct reference to Heidegger, as a “stenogram on the question of being” (Badiou 2001, p. 121; translation from German). If we deliberately speak here of “only” an inkling, it is because the following section deals with the philosophical determination of a truth of art (Beckett’s prose) and thus with a core task of philosophy, but of the thirteen concept or names introduced there in an extraordinarily dense sequence, only five belong to philosophy (being, void, nothing, being, thinking), five belong to literature (turbidity, skull, head, grave, cemetery), two belong to both registers (words, humanity), and one belongs in a controversial way to the special debate between Badiou, Sartre and Heidegger (Existenz), which is our own topic. We offer this reservation as a guide to the reading. (ibid., pp. 119-161, all translations from German)

O turbidity, pass away!

Worst Ho is important first and foremost because Badiou, together with Beckett, discusses the void and the nothing that, in his ontology, surround or envelop the groundless, purposeless and uniform Mannigfaltigung/multiplication of multiplicities. Badiou takes the concept of “turbidity” (ibid., p. 122) from Beckett’s “Stenogram” as the third name of being, which he then relates directly to Heidegger’s ontological difference in its distinction from the void: “Heidegger was aware of this with being and beings.” If

being as the first condition – "so that there is a question at all" – is given the "singular name void," it needs the name of turbidity to grasp pure being (void) in its "appearance": "Being as the enabling of appearance is turbidity," in Heidegger's words: the existing. (ibid., p. 129) Nothing, in turn, holds void (being) and cloudiness (the existing) together in their difference: "Fusion of void and turbidity in nothing." (ibid., p. 145)

In turbidity, i.e. among the manifold beings that multiply themselves, there is then one very special being that first conceives and articulates the entire constellation of being, nothing and beings, or of being, void and turbidity, i.e. puts it into words. Badiou bestows upon this thinking and therefore speaking being the name "humanity," which he then, following Beckett, defines more precisely with the names "head" and "skull": "The head (is) reduced in its representation, on the one hand, essentially to its eyes and, on the other hand, to its brain, from which words seep: two holes in the front of the skull, that is thinking (...), thinking in the form of existence as a skull." (ibid., pp. 125-127). With the thinking being – humanity, the head or skull and the words seeping from this skull – Beckett, and subsequently Badiou, introduce another, final name for being: "What was turbidity, void or an unnameable place becomes a graveyard. (...) What is the symbol of existence other than the gravestone on which the erased name and the equally erased dates of birth and death are inscribed? (...) Neither murkiness nor void, but graveyard." (ibid., 158f)

The goal of this dense and beautiful philosophical excursion into the truth of art (literature, prose poetry) is, however, an ethical one. On the one hand, Badiou refers to Beckett's constantly repeated phrase about walking or continuing to walk: "Try again. Fail again. Better. Or worse. Fail worse. Even worse again. Until sick forever. Throw up forever. Go forever. Where neither forever. Always and forever." (ibid., p. 134. Beckett 1989: 9, translated from German) On the other hand, however, he refers to the title of the book itself, which indicates the direction of moving on: "Worstward Ho. Towards the worst." The directional indication summarises the meaning of moving forward in the concept of "passing away", which refers to the grave and thus to the cemetery, the last name of being: "O turbidity, pass away." (ibid., p. 147. Beckett 1989, p. 23) Regarding the first phrase, that of moving towards the worst, Badiou then says in his decisive intervention that it should not be understood as a mere description, but as an ethical imperative: "We must remain on course for the worst. Towards the worst is an imperative," namely the imperative of walking as speaking or saying and thus of having to continue speaking or saying (ibid., p. 136 et seq.). He then summarises the second turn, that of passing away, as the "hypothesis of absolute passing away" presupposed by the imperative in our minds, i.e. in our thinking, but then says that it fails and must fail: "The 'O turbidity, pass away' remains ineffective. As we have seen, one can always say 'O turbidity, pass away', but the turbidity does not care at all. What is important for us here is that the mind is incapable of passing

away, except, of course, when the turbidity passes away, that is, when everything passes away." (ibid., 147f)

Immortality

Badiou has thus placed Beckett at the centre of his own ethics – or allowed Beckett to place him there. It is, above all, an "ethics of truths" that, in the status of "except that," eventfully approaches what alone "is," that is, bodies and languages or individuals and communities. The "sole principle" of such an ethics is therefore "the possibility of the impossible": "The possibility of the impossible, which is exposed by every loving encounter, every scientific re-foundation, every artistic invention and every sequence of emancipatory politics, is the sole principle - against the ethics of living -,well whose real content is the deciding of death - of an ethic of truths." (Badiou 2011b, p. 39). With regard to our own and our-shared Existenz, the ethical "possibility of the impossible" requires us to become "immortal" in our need to continue and to speak: "But Man, as immortal, is sustained by the incalculable and the un-possessed. He is sustained by non-being (non-etant). To forbid him to imagine the Good, to devote his collective powers to it, to work towards the realization of unknown possibilities, to think what might be in terms that break radically with what is, is quite simply to forbid him humanity as such. (ibid., p. 14. On the "immortal," see also pp.10, 12, 15f,27, 32, 35, 41, 43, 49ff, 55, 59, 61, 67, 71, 74ff, 78f, 82, 84, 86) However, Badiou then explains this statement, which at first glance seems diametrically opposed to the existential truth of freedom to die, as follows: "The Immortal exists only in and by the mortal animal. Truths make their singular penetration (percée) only through the fabric of opinions. We all need to communicate, we must all express our opinions. It is we ourselves, as ourselves, who expose ourselves to the becoming-subject. There is no history other than our own; there is no true world to come. The world as world is, and will remain beneath the true and the false. There is no world that might be captive to the coherence of the Good. The world is, and will remain, beneath Good and Evil. (...) Its sole being lies in the situated advent (l'advenue en situation) of a singular truth. So it must be that the power of a truth is also a kind of powerlessness." (ibid., p. 85. Emphasis added)

The fact that we are nevertheless in a space of compossibility in this world, which Badious' philosophy shares with that of Heidegger and Sartre, follows, on the one hand, from the latter circumstance, namely that the power of a truth is always a powerlessness and remains so: it makes the ethical imperative of having to pass on the possibility of an impossibility into what Sartre called the "useless passion" that we can neither abandon nor be allowed to abandon. Secondly, it follows from a closer definition of the concept of immortality. This does not, of course, refer to the im-*mortality* that is ontologically denied to us as mortal beings. Rather,

it refers to the *im*-mortality we achieve when we do not shut ourselves away in our mortality, but consciously step out of it into the not at-home (or further), i.e. transcend it, where our freedom is the "essence of truth". According to Badiou, Heidegger revealed this essence of truth, which is equiprimordial with freedom, in the "rather beautiful text" of the same title – the term "essence" being taken in a verbal sense, as it is everywhere in Heidegger, Sartre and Badiou. The discussion conducted here so far only has to add that we are not "mortal animals," but have always been mortal immortal beings, humanity of us humans in our own and unique Dasein and Existenz. With Heidegger, it should be specified here that the existential symbol of being, the grave, and thus the name of being, the graveyard, belong to Existenz, i.e. to a free relationship with death.

The ugliness and beauty of truths

If we now – which is the aim pursued here – relate the immortal, passionate truth of Existenz to the crisis of truths that Badiou diagnoses in the current state of science, art, politics and love it proves to be the reserve that the fidelity to truths must activate if it is to survive this crisis and, if successful, overcome it. This is also because philosophy can now specify what constitutes the *compossibility of truths in general* beyond their epochal compossibility. This brings into play yet another commonality between Badiou, Sartre and Heidegger, which has already been mentioned here. For although our truths are articulated in words that seep out of a head with two eyes sitting in the front of the skull, this does not mean that their articulation is, in the traditional sense, merely a matter of seeing and saying. Despite his reservations about a "truth of Existenz," Badiou has explicitly recognised Kierkegaard's, Heidegger's and Sartre's phenomenology of anxiety as the "basic state-of-mind" of Dasein (similar to boredom and disgust). This implies, first of all, the insight that truths are not only a matter of seeing and saying, but always also of affectivity – in the case of the truth of being (and Dasein), namely that of anxiety, boredom and disgust. Badiou, for his part, has therefore also assigned a primary affect, i.e. a basic state of mind, to the truths of art, science, politics and love. In doing so, he counters the truth of being as the "not at-home" of the turbid Mannigfaltigung/multiplication of the multiplicities everywhere surrounded by the void and the nothing, revealed in the event of anxiety, first of all with the affect of happiness that constantly accompanies the fidelity with which a subject binds itself to an artistic, scientific, political or amorous truth. Happiness as the unambiguously positive affectivity of fidelity – Badiou has devoted an entire book to it (Badiou 2016) – is then differentiated once again in relation to the single truth procedures. Here, happiness is assigned to the truth of love, while the truth of politics is accompanied by the affect of enthusiasm, that of science by the affect of joy, and that of art by the affect of lust (Badiou 2011a, p. 406ff. Badiou/Tarby 2017: 119, 172).

If one asks to what extent the various affects of the various truths and truth- or fidelity-procedures are compossible with one another and, in this compossibility, provide the reserves to defend the autonomy of truths against their capitalonihilistic consumption in technology, culture, administration and sex, one is immediately referred to the greatest of all anti-philosophers, Friedrich Nietzsche. In 1888, in one of his most important posthumous fragments, he had also linked the truth of being, already revealed in his *Birth of Tragedy,* as an "ugly" truth to fear and disgust, and therefore turned to art: "For a philosopher to say, 'The good and the beautiful are one,' is infamy; if he goes on to add, 'also the true,' one ought to thrash him. Truth is ugly. We possess art lest we perish from truth." (Nietzsche 1988: 500; cf. also Nietzsche 1993; translated from German, italics added by us)

Badiou, however, can escape punishment because he explicitly acknowledges the "ugliness" of the truth of being, as Nietzsche rightly claimed, but in return can convict Nietzsche of the cardinal error of "sewing up" the truth with only one of the four (or five) truth procedures. (On the problem of "sutures" in nuce Badiou 1999, pp. 61-69) Badiou could therefore reformulate Nietzsche's posthumous fragment from a half-truth into a whole truth as follows: "The truth of being is ugly; we have the truths of art, science, politics and love so that we do not perish from the truth of being." In this relationship between truths, he would have determined at the same time what their compossibility in general consists of, preceding and transcending any epochal compossibility. And: he would have convincingly explained why philosophy and its ethics are "affirmationist" in that they can truly affirm both the tragic character of being and the radical critique of art, science, politics and love of this tragic nature. (Badiou/Ruda/Völker 2007) That would be the power in all powerlessness, in which the "consistency" of his *ethics* as a doctrine lies not only and not primarily in fidelity to truths, but in a "fidelity to fidelity" that precedes every specific procedure of fidelity and, if necessary, repeatedly teaches first of all what "be faithful to fidelity" means. (Badiou 2011b: 53, 47, in context 44ff) This, developed to its ultimate conclusion, would be the truth of Existenz. Fidelity to fidelity thus proves to be a repetition of the problem, dating back to Kierkegaard and in this respect core-existentialist, of the "choice of choice" presupposed by every particular choice of good and evil: "In this choice, one does not yet decide whether one wants good or evil; one only chooses that one wants, and thus the opposition between good and evil is established. Those who choose the ethical choose the good, but entirely in abstracto." (Kierkegaard 1956, p. 265; translation from German)

The test case: humanism without humanism

But what would be the price to pay for this consistency? To put it bluntly, Badiou would have to change sides in the humanism debate between

Sartre and Foucault and thus return to the position he started out with in . He could then also delete the insertions that relativize his repeated and always emphatic references to the "humanity of humans". Would this make him unfaithful to himself? We don't think so. Instead, this step backwards would prove the decisive power of truthfulness, which lies not in rigid adherence to the status quo, but in the permanence of his critical reworking. Badiou has already developed this striking revaluation of the term in relation to its common meaning in *Ethics*, in which he explicitly defines fidelity as an inventive practice, "since the event was excluded by all the regular laws of the situation (...).An evental fidelity is a real break (both thought and practised) in the specific order within which the event took place (be it political, loving, artistic or scientific). Faithfulness to the event is a real (thought and practised) break within the order in which the event took place." (ibid., p. 41f) And: He would not, of course, simply resume his own beginning in the step back where he once rightly left it, but would transform it into something truly new precisely through repetition. With regard to the dispute between humanism and anti-humanism, this would result in the third figure of a "humanism without humanism," which will be called this because in it there is a truth of man alone in the conscious "putting one's own life in line" which (not only) for the philosophers discussed here has always been the price of truth that cannot always be paid tangibly. In Badiou's thinking, the "truth of Existenz" understood in this way referred to the "point" sought in all his paths, at which the "rotation" is decided anew, in which a subject either remains true to its truth and thus to itself, or "reactively" separates itself from it or "obscurely" closes itself off from it (in nuce Badiou 2011c, p. 92ff). It is no coincidence that Badiou speaks of his "heroic determination and his demonstrative discipline" and, consequently, a little later of his "radical choice": terms whose existentialist tone is as impossible to overlook as it was and is impossible to overlook in the concept "fidelity to fidelity" as a "choice of choice" (ibid., p. 114f).

Literally striking force does not come about by chance in the truth procedure of politics, whose crisis precedes the crisis of other truth procedures insofar as it directly concerns the rule of capital, which consumes not only the planet and all life, but also all truth procedures and thus the "humanity of us humans." In view of the danger of the totalisation of this domination and the subjugation of all majorities to its regime, Badiou would have to modify his position on the specific point where he draws a radical distinction between the truth procedures of art, science and love on the one hand and those of politics on the other. For while he always describes the first three as "aristocratic" procedures, he considers politics to be a "topologically collective" procedure: "The fact that the central activity of politics is assembly is a local metonymy of its essentially collective and therefore fundamentally universal nature." (Badiou 2003b: 152; translation from German). However, because the "idea of communism" as the truth of politics has been gradually becoming the preserve of ever

smaller minorities since the end of the 20th century, politics is also transforming into an aristocratic practice in this sense. This is possible because the truth-aristocracy of art, science and love could only be understood in a dialectical twist against the common meaning of the word, insofar as truth as such can necessarily only prove itself as the truth of all, i.e. non-exclusive and non-elitist. Badiou coined the only seemingly paradoxical term "proletarian aristocratism" and assigned it the task of being "elitist for all" in a manner that must always be reflected upon. Its subjective or existential resource can only rely on "what in each individual is not subject to evaluation in terms of the average, the majority, similarity or imitation." According to the course of our discussion, however, this is precisely where the "truth of Existenz" lies, which Badiou elevates in the passage just quoted to the "non-democratic resource" of the freedom of each and every individual. (Badiou/Ruda/Völker 2007: 31ff)

A materialist dialectic that appropriates this freedom can then continue to rely on Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *Manifesto* as it's very first manifesto. There it is said literally – although unfortunately often read the other way round – that "*the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all*" and thus for the classless "association" of humanity. (Marx/Engels 2010: 27) The dialectic will have to reactivate the underlying connections that can be found in the concept of humanity between the "truth of Existenz" in its "most radical individuation" and the truth of Marx' and Engels' "human generic being" affirmed by Badiou in a similar interplay of consent and doubt. Under today's conditions, however, it will also have to rely on Badiou's own core concept of the event. Badiou himself has explicitly pointed out that the epochal unpredictability of both the Russian and Chinese revolutions was part of their eventful character: At the time, only minorities who were methodologically uncertain of themselves, albeit determined in their convictions, had referred to either of these upheavals. Badiou describes their attitude as "aleatory optimism" in view of the unpredictability of every event, but in the same passage he advises that "we should not lose ourselves in the alternative between optimism and pessimism. For this alternative leads nowhere" (Badiou 2015: 129f.). Nevertheless, materialistic dialectics will be able to rely on this "eschatological reservation" above all else. (Barth 1994: 32)

Conclusion: 4 + 1

If this means we must engage more seriously than ever before with the aristocratic minority of truth processes as understood here, then the question raised here of a fifth truth process that is not tacked on to the four truth processes of art, science, politics and love, but inscribed within them, becomes even more urgent. This is not because it could solve the crisis of truths in the blink of an eye, but because it allows us to better understand this crisis. Following the preceding discussion, it would first have

to be described as the truth process of Existenz and, at the same time, opened up to the concepts of "humanity of man" and the human "Gattungwesen." Based at the same time on the "existence of a philosophical subject" (Badiou 2016: 77), which is not to be understood in the professional sense of the word, it could also be described as the truth process of philosophy, with the reservation that it is not concerned with the creation of additional truths, but with the concept of their epochal compossibility and compossibility in general. The latter would then be won within the relationship developed above between the "ugly" truth of being as the indissolubly turbid Mannigfaltigung/multiplicity of mere multiplicities framed by the nothing, the void and the graveyard, and the lustful, joyful, enthusiastic and happy truths of art, science, politics and love. It would have to be tested on the materialities of these processes: on sensuality (art), on the letter (science), on the collective or association (politics) and on difference (love). (Badiou/Ruda/Völker 2007: 26f). It would find its own first and last point of probation and verification in the existentiell execution of "ethics in general," whose strict formalism grants the particular ethics the freedom to decide on their matters. If the truth process of philosophy and philosophical Existenz ultimately remains to be thought in its dialectic with religion and religious Existenz, then it is not only because Heidegger's "Potentiality-for-Being-a-whole " and Sartre's "desire to become God" were convincingly confronted with their theological origins. For just as Sartre elevated the impossible possibility of absolute Existenz on the last page of his magnum opus on the "reversal of Christ's passion" (Sartre 1966: 784), Badiou chose none other than Paul as the key witness to his main concept of the event and its fundamental universalism. He has read him as the "poet" of a "narrative" or "fable" and has certainly not done justice to the matter of Pauline thought on this one point. (Badiou 2002b: 8, 12f; Translation from German) Insofar as the dispute over this truth will remain the proletarian-aristocratic affair of a perhaps lost minority in a world staggering towards its nothing, its void and perhaps its graveyard, we leave its determination to the key witness of the very cause of the universalism of our Existenz. Badiou has reminded us of the two most important truths that Paul left to all human beings without exception: that we are not under the law of any situation whatsoever, but under the grace of the event, and that in faithfulness to this grace we are no longer Jews or Greeks, no longer men or women, no longer servants-and-maids or masters-and-mistresses, but the militants of the power *and* powerlessness of our truths, which are at once ugly and uplifting. (ibid., p. 120 et seq., 139 et seq. Paul, Romans 6:14 and Galatians 3:28 respectively)

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Dance as (a Metaphor for) Thought, Part Two: A Reconfiguration of the Badiouian Conception of Dance

Evan Supple

Abstract: Badiou's texts on dance are remarkable insofar as they mark the long-overdue recognition of the discipline as a legitimate object of philosophical-aesthetic examination; however, these texts betray the spirit of Badiou's overarching project and are hence arguably not Badiouian enough. Despite his recognition of dance, his treatment of it ultimately relegates it to the same marginal position it occupies throughout the rest of philosophical-aesthetic history. In this study, I put Badiou's commentaries on dance into conversation with his more systematic philosophy and demonstrate how his conception of dance falls within the domain of what he vehemently rejects: "democratic materialism." I argue that if his conception of the dancing body were congruent with what he designates the "subjectivizable body," then dance would garner status as a legitimate artform in his corpus.

Keywords: aesthetics, Badiou, body, dance

Badiou's texts on dance are remarkable insofar as they mark the long-overdue recognition of dance as a legitimate object of philosophical-aesthetic examination. Although dance was not entirely absent within twentieth century thought—it is loosely treated by Bergson, Langer, Deleuze, Valéry, and Mallarmé—but after Nietzsche, dance largely lives on the margins of continental aesthetic thought.[1] Even for Nietzsche, who would "only believe in a God that would know how to dance,"[2] dance functions more as a metaphorical "operator" than as an object of his project, which is to say that it serves as a way of communicating a discourse rather than being explicitly taken up itself.[3] Prior to Nietzsche, in modern philosophy, the situation is even worse: one encounters the systematic exclusion of dance from Hegel's *Aesthetics* and Schelling's *Philosophy of Art,* and Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. Indeed, dance was not authoritatively deemed worthy of rigorous, primary philosophical treatment in modernity until Badiou, who has now dedicated three texts to it: the landmark "Dance as a Metaphor for Thought" in his *Handbook of Inaesthetics,* and two chapters in *The Century* and *In Praise of Theater.*

Despite the momentousness of Badiou's commentaries, they have garnered little attention from scholars working in continental aesthetics.[4] Even in Dance/Performance Studies, the work has nourished little scholarship, save for the salient contributions of Botha[5], Brannigan[6], Clark[7], and Pouillaude.[8] Badiou's writings on dance serve as valiant contributions to Dance Studies and continental aesthetics and have implications not only for the latter domains, but also vis-à-vis philosophy in a broader sense, particularly since Badiou regards dance as a metaphor for thought and thus as intimately linked with his overarching philosophical itinerary. Notwithstanding, Badiou's commentaries are problematic *from a Badiouian perspective*—that is, they are not Badiouian enough. Badiou, a fierce critic

of what he calls "democratic materialism" falls into tendencies in these texts which betray the spirit of his own project. The task of this paper is to highlight these inconsistencies, rectify them, and suggest a revised version of Badiou's position on dance, which will illuminate it as a critical site for exploring truth and embodied subjectivity in the 21st century. I suggest that the dancing body is not the body endowed with given capacities. Rather the body only truly Dances once it has encountered a fundamental incapacity, or impossibility, in itself.

Badiou's Conception of Dance

Badiou's *Dance as a Metaphor for Thought* is his earliest, most comprehensive treatment of the subject. He begins by soliciting Nietzsche, for whom "[d]ance is innocence, because it is a body before the body. It is forgetting, because it is a body that forgets its fetters, its weight. It is a new beginning, because the dancing gesture must always be something like the invention of its own beginning".[9] Furthermore, dance is play insofar as it is absolved of the mimetic duty, and it is affirmation insofar as it does away with the shameful body of Christianity. Dance relies on nothing transcendent but is rather the source of its own effectuation. The dancing body in the true sense is not the body "subjected" to choreography, which Nietzsche cannot see as anything other than an external restraint imposed from without, but rather that which exemplifies "the capacity of bodily impulse," albeit an impulse capable of self-restraint.[10]

Badiou accepts most of the framework laid out by Nietzsche and develops it further to realize his own position (although it is worth mentioning that one would have a difficult time describing any of the rest of his project as Nietzschean, making this a curious move on Badiou's part). It is useful to quote Badiou in full on what he takes his Nietzschean exegesis to suggest[11]:

> Dance would provide the metaphor for the fact that every genuine thought depends upon an event. An event is precisely what remains undecided between the taking place and the non-place—in the guise of an emergence that is indiscernible from its own disappearance. The event adds itself onto what there is, but as soon as this supplement is pointed out, the "there is" reclaims its rights, laying hold of everything. Obviously, the only way of fixing an event is to give it a name, to inscribe it within the "there is" as a supernumerary name. The event "itself" is never anything besides its own disappearance. Nevertheless, an inscription may detain the event, as if at the gilded edge of loss. The name is what decides upon the having taken place. Dance would then point toward thought as event, but *before this thought has received a name*—at the extreme edge of its veritable

> disappearance; in its vanishing, without the shelter of the name. Dance would mimic a thought that had remained undecided, something like a native (or unfixed) thought. Yes, in dance, we would find the metaphor for the unfixed.[12]

It is outside the scope of this paper to delimit Badiou's concept of the Event in full philosophical detail[13]; however, put in general terms for those unfamiliar with his work, an Event is an emergence of radical novelty in the form of a new possibility into a "world" (a closed, purportedly self-identical historical situation) which thereby inaugurates a "truth"—the unfolding, by a subject, of the Event's consequences vis-à-vis the world, which, because of the Event's fundamental universality, or "genericity," are themselves of universal import. Truth is radically heterogeneous to the knowledge of the world in which it takes place. It destabilizes a world's horizon of possibility—namely in the domains of politics, science, art, and love—by virtue of the fact that it discloses a possibility hitherto excluded or unknown. Because of its heterogeneity—in one sense, its resistance to discursive predication—it cannot be comprehended using the world's conceptual resources, and thus is ephemeral, hence Badiou's above description of it as "its own disappearance." Only by according it a supernumerary name can the Event be somehow inscribed into, or potentially revolutionize, the coordinates of that world and its consequences subsequently unfolded. In the case of art, for example, the aesthetic Event "is the incorporation into the artistic truth procedure's resources of forms that could not please before because they were regarded as formless".[14] The truth-procedure formalizes what has hitherto been excluded from the notion of form. Understood in the context of the above-quoted passage, dance, a purely ephemeral art, serves as a metaphor for the irruption of formlessness into a world without being minimally formalized by the supernumerary name, reinforcing the common-sense assumption that dance is absolutely non-discursive. Badiou uncritically imports the latter assumption which will have implications for how dance factors into his larger project.

Important to note for what follows, however, is that an Event always takes place in or on the edge of a world, as an exception to it. The Event and the truth-procedure to which it gives rise are subtracted from the world's nexus of relations, but nonetheless function as a supplement to the latter and are in a sense negatively related without being wholly external. An Event marks not a pure beginning in the sense of being an erasure of the old and the inception of something entirely new, but a destabilization of the world's ontological, epistemological, and normative coordinates, and thus of its order of time.[15] It is a break with the world, with no continuity between the world and the post-evental truth procedure, but one which happens within the world. The consequences of the introduction of a new possibility are unfolded within that world one "point" at

a time by a subject—a subject which is brought into being precisely by its fidelity to the Event, which amounts to not allowing it to vanish as a worthless aleatoric contingency and faithfully unfolding its implications for that world. The Event is indeed contingent, but inasmuch as its consequences are unfolded and supplement the world, one can say of it that it *will have been necessary.* The procedure of which it is the impetus involves the retroactive determination of the contingent Event as necessary. As Ruda puts it, the Event is "that which creates the conditions of possibility for a voluntary and free subjective affirmation ... An event is thus the creation of the conditions of the possibility of the consequences of an event—that is, of the event itself."[16] The event retroactively creates its own possibility. It cannot be deduced from the world in which it irrupts given its heterogeneity to that world and thus the *capacity* for the "free subjective affirmation" cannot be said to antedate the Event as something given. In a sort of short circuit, the Event creates a capacity (of the subject), which is the Event's condition of possibility without being a condition that exists prior to its occurrence.

Returning to Badiou's long passage quoted above, if dance is identified with the Event, it must be non-worldly and thus heterogeneous to worlds as such. Because of this, Badiou understands it to be purely spatial and non-representational since it is, understood this way, pre-discursive (it will become discursive one point at a time as its consequences are unfolded, but at this point, it will no longer be dance, but rather theatre, cinema, or poetry) and prior to time (only with the attribution of a proper name will it become temporal). Badiou concludes the text with a radical argument he claims to be supported by Mallarmé's position on dance (a reading with which Pouillaude justifiably takes issue[17]): "Dance is not an art, because it is the sign of the possibility of art as inscribed in the body."[1819] Dance exhibits the (thought-)body which is *capable* of art, but which does not itself define or exemplify a singular art, since art proper is not outside of time; however, given his insistence that dance is prior to the introduction of the name, and hence also to the subject which does the naming, one can only conclude that Badiou is intimating a capacity which antedates the Event and the subsequent emergence of a subject, making it something *given*.

If one turns to Badiou's brief treatment of dance in *The Century,* his position does not differ drastically from *Dance as a Metaphor for Thought.* Here, he reiterates his understanding of dance as ephemeral: "it is only act. The paradigm of a vanishing art, dance does not produce works in the ordinary sense of the term."[20] While here Badiou ambiguously points to the act as that which enables formalization—the task of all subjects of truth—Badiou elsewhere deems problematic those aesthetic trends of the twentieth century which subordinate the work to the ephemeral act (for example, the privileging of performance over theater). "The idea of the ephemeral," he states "is believed to be new, but it is only the alignment of art with the

circulation of consumable commodities and with the usury of products, which is the material basis of Empire. To resist Empire is to affirm *the work,* all the while avoiding the pompous praise of its power."[2122] Indeed, the work, a finite instantiation of the infinite, plays an integral role in the production of truth, and has utility vis-à-vis our atonal historical moment by serving as a point of orientation for the subject by arresting the endless flux of interchangeability encouraged by the "democratic materialist" regime of Capital. Despite the clearly reproachful sentiment of the latter quotation, Badiou claims that dance is invariably synonymous with ephemerality (namely because, according to Badiou, it cannot be notated, a claim which has been criticized by authors such as Pakes[23] and Pouillaude[24]), which forces us to question the status of his apparent reverence for it.

On this note, one should highlight that it is difficult, based on these texts, to get a sense of what kind of dance Badiou is specifically referring to. While he admits that his work on dance is not meant to take dance on its own terms but rather in those "such as it is given welcome and shelter by philosophy," he surely has some idea of what dance is in order to have drawn such a metaphor in the first place, or to have felt that such a metaphor ought to be drawn at all.[25] He cites Isadora Duncan and Merce Cunningham[26]; however, neither of these artists exhibit the degree of purity (i.e. its subtraction from knowledge/grammar, representation, and the self) that Badiou demands of dance. Even an improvising body does not fit the bill—in fact, it may end up reinforcing exactly what the Event is meant to undo, which is to say an ego-driven attachment of the self to itself and the encyclopedia of the world which authorizes its self-understanding. As Pouillaude claims, "[s]tarting from oneself, as both point of departure and horizon, runs the risk precisely of never going beyond oneself and remaining entrenched there ... If the body's return to itself is really to herald liberation, then a supplementary determination is needed."[27] Read in relation to Badiou, such a supplementary determination could be understood as the Event—that which destabilizes the closed coordinates of the dancing body and its personal self-understanding. On the flipside, however, if we point to a body performing a choreography based on a codified vocabulary set to music, then Badiou, following Nietzsche, would charge it with being "subjected."[28] I claim, as I will continue to demonstrate below, that this aporia is a fault of Badiou's own understanding of dance. If dance is a metaphor for the Event, which is an exception*,* then dance must have something of a negative relation to that which it is not, without being determined by the latter *per se*.

We can now turn to the final text, the chapter "Between Dance and Cinema" in *In Praise of Theater*. Here Badiou argues that "dance tries to show what a body is capable of. It is the experimental field not only of the body's expressive powers, but its ontological powers as well."[29] In other words, dance serves as an answer to Spinoza's famous statement that we know nothing about a body until we know what it can do (which amounts

to a denial of certainty, given that we will not, at least on the terms of his project, ever exhaustively know all that a body can do, leaving us only with an idea of an ever-becoming body). While here it reads as a statement of reverence, Badiou elsewhere condemns the postmodern art circuit for its reactionary anti-classicism, "whose single resource is Spinoza's phrase: 'We do not know what a body can do.'"[30] I will return to the underpinnings of this claim below, but for now it is worth pointing out that Badiou's problem with this amounts to a problem with the assumption that anything, such as a truth, which would arrest the immanent becoming of purely natural bodies (and thus the endless deployment of their immediate sensuous potential, though a deployment which will only produce more of the same rather than facilitate the body's transcendence of its own immediacy) by giving us a clear idea of what a body can in fact do, even if what it can do is retroactively authorized. What is more, it also amounts to a problem with the presumption that there is a given transcendental condition for truth. Spinoza's comment that we know nothing until we know what a body can do implies that since the body is endlessly becoming, we will never have full knowledge of what a body can do, and thus we will never arrive at truth. Were we to have decisive knowledge of the body, then we could obtain truth; however, for Badiou, as I have shown, truth is without a transcendental condition, insofar as it shatters the very transcendental from which it emerges. Why, then, considering all of this, does Badiou claim that art has a transcendental condition, viz. the body which is "capable of art"? And why does he claim that there is something useful about the body functioning as an "experimental field" for its own "powers"? The problems with this claim will become clear below in the explanation of "democratic materialism."

Building upon this, Badiou proceeds to argue that dance is "the representation of that which the body is capable of *without reference to the Idea*. Dance is sufficient on its own as an allegory of immanence, pure celebration of the body's resources."[31] To clarify, regarding the Idea—a central, albeit somewhat polysemous concept in Badiou's project[32]—he states that it is "the conviction that a possibility, other than what there is, can come about ... An Idea is associated with an event because the event is the creation of a possibility and the Idea is the general name of this new possibility."[33] The Idea is a "is a precondition for producing new knowledge; as such, it always takes a form, but its task is also to propose new form."[34] It is both immanent and transcendent in the sense that it is heterogeneous to the world's coordinates but must be embodied by the subject and give rise to finite works that are but localizations of the truth. As such, it is a schematic site of thought, enabling a move beyond the worldly needs of human(-animal)ity. As Badiou elsewhere claims, however, that which does not herald the Idea is condemned to democratic materialism—the most pejorative designation in his lexicon. An Event is irrelevant (and cannot even be said to have taken place) if it does not give rise to a subject which un-

folds the Idea, so dance being a metaphor for the Event becomes banal. In other words, while Badiou's gesture toward dance is commendable, he has ultimately only further denigrated it in his own language. What the body is capable of without reference to the Idea is purely human-animal functionality (a functionality amenable to commodification, as he often stresses[35]), which is of no interest from the perspective of truth.

To summarize, dance for Badiou points to a *capacity* of the human body. It points to the body's *capacity* for art. In other words, it points to a pre-evental givenness of the body as a set of resources or a schema of the possible, reminiscent of the Aristotelian or Merleau-Pontian body. As I will show below, there are two conceptions of the body in Badiou's work: the polemical conception of the vulgar body of the human-animal and the conception of the body of a subject—a "new body" or a "subjectivizable body"—capable of making a truth appear within a world insofar as it is the latter's material support, but which only emerges as such a body after the Event and *with* reference to the Idea. It is the former conception which forces one to draw the conclusion that it is this to which Badiou chalks up the dancing body, which not only is problematic in terms of its implications for understanding dance but is also inadequate vis-à-vis Badiou's own philosophy, at least if we believe we can put forth a properly Badiouian, affirmative conception of dance. Put simply, Badiou's existing conception of dance is founded upon the assumption that dance only relies upon the resources of the finite human body and not the subjectivizable body. I suggest that there is another position to be posited when one thinks the dancing body as synonymous with the second conception. This will force us to overturn Badiou's position which deems the dancing body a set of resources to be endlessly deployed—as the body of possibility—and make the case for dancing body as a site of *breakdown* (within the closed coordinates of a world), or *impossibility.* Such a body will indeed be "capable," but this capability will only emerge retroactively, which is to say, the Event will have created its own conditions of possibility, and thus, the dancing body, and dance itself, cannot be without reference to the Idea. This not only opens up a new understanding of the dancing body, but also undermines the assumption that dance is fully subtracted from language (even if its imbrication with language will be minimal, particularly in relation to theater or poetry) and hence utterly ephemeral. To make this case, we must first turn to Badiou's account of the body.

Which Badiouian Body?

One of Badiou's fundamental gestures, which encapsulates the stakes of his entire project, is a move away from what he terms "democratic materialism"—the rampant belief that "there are only bodies and languages," that bodies alone can be said to have "objective existence"[36]—toward what he terms the "materialist dialectic," which asserts that "[t]here are only

bodies and languages, *except that there are truths*."[37] It is the introduction of this exception—a third term which does not negate the first two, but which destabilizes the dualism's authority—which enables a move beyond the nihilism of our relativistic, postmodern moment insofar as it demonstrates that, to paraphrase Hegel, the Absolute is indeed *still* with us, even if it has been "worked-through," to paraphrase Freud.

Logics of Worlds opens with a preface in which the above-mentioned move is introduced and underpinned by a polemical account of the body. Badiou reproaches Antonio Negri—a thinker emblematic of the "postmodern," a framework synonymous with democratic materialism—for whom "the body is the only concrete instance for productive individuals aspiring to enjoyment."[38] Badiou claims that contemporary *doxa*, whose foundation is the latter axiom, "reduce[s] humanity to an overstretched vision of animality." In this framework, "[m]an, under the sway of the 'power of life', is an animal convinced that the law of the body harbours the secret of his hope."[39] Put in more properly philosophical terms, bodies are of the realm of substance, of the worldly "there is" (and in terms of humans, are typically marked by a narcissistic hedonism, which is to say, an inability to transcend their immediacy); however, truths, supplements to the body/language dualism, are exceptions to "what is." That is, they cannot be located within a particular epistemological framework (a "world") which authorizes the saying of the "there is." They are rather heterogeneous to knowledge, to the realm of objectivity, and thus also to the body qua given organic entity. Nonetheless, if truths are not to be reduced to mythical moments of transience or instances of theological grace, they must enter the realm of appearing by being materialized in a work. Subjectivizable bodies materialize truths by creating works.

Important to note here is Badiou's distinction between body and subject. Badiou, of course, does not propose a wholesale negation of the biological body, but seeks to contain it, such that it is not regarded as the focal-point or apex of human experience, such that it is not condemned to being "the living institution of a marketable enjoyment and/or a spectacular suffering."[40] The body is significant only to the extent that it supersedes the task of merely managing or optimizing its affects. Badiou begins the systematic component of *Logics of Worlds* by asking a question the answer to which will only become fully intelligible by the book's conclusion: What is a singular subject? He argues that "[i]t is the active (corporeal, or organic) bearer of the dialectical overcoming of simple materialism."[41] If a body, he states, "avers itself capable of producing effects that exceed the bodies-languages system (and such effects are called truths), this body will be said to be subjectivated."[42] Although his conception of the subject is not "bio-subjective," for "a subjectivizable body can equally well be the army of Spartacus, the semantics of a poem, the historical state of an algebraic problem…", there are exceptional cases in which "subjectivizable body" indeed refers to the form of an (human-)animal body, but in this

case not as simply another thing among things, as it is when it is *just* a human-animal body, but as something not reducible to the objective.[43]

The subject is the very "except that"—that which has no "place" in the world in which it arises—of the materialist dialectic's central axiom. The subject must emerge from a world and exist on the boundary separating a world from its outside. The subject is not an absolute beginning but an exception, and it persists in its being by treating "points" within the world. Points are nodes of the existing world, "whose structures [the subject] stretches and opens," which face the subject with a yes or no decision as to whether they are amenable to the truth it is unfolding or not. In some cases, the points can be totally affirmed, in some cases they can be negotiated, reformed, or adapted, and sometimes they must be negated entirely.[44] The subject cannot be reduced to what it was prior to the Event, for the *subject is the world's very impossibility*. The subject does not solicit a set of pre-existing capacities to do its work. The subject is indeed "capable" of unfolding a truth, but its capability only emerges with the Event, which is to say, emerges in and through, or rather *as,* an impossibility which corresponds to nothing objective or given in the world. It is this impossibility that will authorize it to do its work of making truth appear. What does this mean for dance?

Dance As a Metaphor for Thought, Part Two

Before merging the claims of the above sections together, one more detail is required. Badiou's project is overtly atheist and thus there is no substantial "big Other" which can be said to preside over what "actually happens." While a world typically presupposes such a big Other in order to retain its stability, the Event is precisely what shatters the possibility of such an entity. There is no big Other who authorizes the happening of an Event from a distance—an Event can only be said to have taken place insofar as there is a subject which claims that it has. Badiou, in claiming that dance is a metaphor for the Event, but before it has been named and thus before subjectivization, inadvertently assumes the position of a "third-party," by claiming a sort of objectivity of the Event's ephemerality that can be pointed to without the "engaged gaze" that is the subject. There is no Event without a subject, and thus dance is either irrelevant from the standpoint of truth, or else dance is not simply a metaphor for the Event, but involves a subject and thus must be included in the realm of art itself, rather than functioning as a mere transcendental, which, as mentioned above, is incommensurable with the notion of art qua truth insofar as truth has no transcendental condition, other than the one it retroactively creates.

To bring my argument to a close, I propose a more generous reading which will deliver us a revised Badiouian conception of dance. If one retains the basic thesis that dance is a metaphor for the Event (even if its status as a metaphor will shortly be undermined), and one remembers

that the Event is predicated of more than just ephemerality in the temporal sense, then one will be able to claim that dance qua Event must also be an exception to what is. If we also retain the basic claim that dance is of the order of the human body as such, then we can claim that dance, qua Event, emerges as a breakdown of the body's horizon of possibilities (or of a certain codified movement language's coordinates). Rather than celebrating what the finite human-animal body is immanently capable of, in the sense of sensuous capacities and functions, dance will engender *an incapacity* (of the finite)—one cannot stop here lest we fall into the democratic-materialist valorization of passivity—*in order to give rise to a capacity of a different order, namely of the infinite.*[45] Such a claim allows us to circumvent the antinomy into which Badiou falls and think not of a particular *style* of dance in line with the criteria he lays out, but rather to think about dance as a site not just for metaphorizing the Event, but rather of the Event itself. The claim necessarily entails the introduction of a distinction between *dance*—understood as mere athleticism, social dance, or catharsis/self-expression—and *Dance*.[46]

In this vein, Dance may indeed involve human-animal bodies—often moving, often to music, often in a highly-coordinated way that is not reducible to everyday-locomotion nor sport, whose bodies may quantitatively exceed themselves, but never qualitatively other themselves, at least within the framework of each particular game—but these bodies have the potential to become alienated from their own capacity to endlessly self-deploy (or at least do so without a distance from themselves or in a way that is mediated by the Idea) and the concomitant narcissistic attachment to self.[47] To provide a schema for how exactly this breakdown occurs or what it in fact means would be antithetical to the spirit of Badiou's work, insofar as it would put me in the position of the "big Other," the non-existence of which I just stressed. One can say, nonetheless, that insofar as the dancing body "breaks down"—in other words, gains distance from the contingency of the movement language it has inherited, or the "self" it purports to be satisfying or expressing—it is opened to the possibility of treating what that movement language has hitherto excluded. The subjectivized Dancing body is not simply capable of more vocabulary, or of moving differently, for this would be a simply quantitative (or qualitative, in the weakest of senses) difference in relation to what the body was prior to the Event, but rather is endowed with the capacity to treat points in its world of movement, in a way which is decidedly *with* reference to the Idea.[48] When it does Dance, it may employ similar techniques or follow similar impetuses as it did prior to the Event; however, it will do so in a way that is exemplary of thought, by virtue of its involvement with the Idea. In other words, it may appear similar (from the standpoint of the world's transcendental) to the pre-evental body, but it will now rely on a truth which has endowed it with an "infinite capacity" that is not reducible to any pre-evental given capacity of the body. The Event will not obviate

the organic body's capacity to execute certain steps or sequences; however, only with the Event will the dancer have the capacity to *Dance*—or, what is the same: *to think*—rather than simply move in a coordinated, musical, often visually pleasing way. Before continuing, I should note that such Dancing is not a representation of the "content" of the Idea, for the latter is a pure schema that enables the unfolding of the Event's consequences. Dance remains non-representational, but rather as an emergent production of itself, commensurate with the core of the six principles Badiou initially posits in "Dance as a Metaphor for Thought."

With all this in mind, Clark is indeed onto something when he cautiously suggests that there may be something like "a Badiouian 'Cunningham Event,'" to the extent that Merce Cunningham's dances, for example, "absent themselves from predetermined emotive response, and re-orientate the dancer's body through a rethinking of the role of weight and balance" which, I might add, is counter to codified ballet but which uses much vocabulary from the latter as its point of departure.[49] Clark also points out that while Cunningham is not working with a movement code in the traditional sense, there is a weak grammar undergirding his choreographic procedures and the schemata he creates for performing those works.

The Siegal Event

Despite the merits of Clark's contribution, I would like to very briefly conclude with another example. Richard Siegal—an American choreographer who danced as a soloist in William Forsythe's Ballet Frankfurt, and whose choreographic works can be found in the repertoires of many of the world's foremost ballet companies—has embarked on a trajectory that I claim exemplifies the thesis I have laid out in this paper. Siegal's company, Ballet of Difference[50], takes as its mission an interrogation of ballet's relevance in the twenty-first century—a time in which ballet is lampooned from every corner, namely for being a relic of a bygone era and for not having risen to the long overdue occasion of sloughing off its historical (viz. racist and sexist) baggage. For Siegal, ballet indeed represents a relic on multiple fronts; however, there remains both a real aesthetic, as well as an emancipatory potential hibernating within ballet—not only in its technical form, but also in its "Idea,", or lack thereof rather, especially vis-à-vis the current historical moment—that ought to be brought to bear on both our context and on itself.[51] Siegal's work, responding to Jennifer Homan's overarching claim that ballet is dead[52], questions whether this is really so. He does this in a way that is not reducible to Cunningham's "democratization" of movement "from the rigid strictures of ballet," in that he remains faithful to the potential of ballet itself.[53]

On the institutional front, Ballet of Difference fosters a working climate for its artists fundamentally different from most European ballet companies.[54] Dancers' verbal and physical contributions are not only

welcomed but encouraged in both dialogues about the work and the creations of the works themselves, thereby subverting Badiou's Nietzschean reduction of choreography to "subjection."[55] The company celebrates difference in terms of cultural identity but also in a more fundamental sense, in that it takes difference as such for the ground from which it creates form and unity, rather than presupposing an originary sameness as ballet has historically been guilty of. One can draw a parallel here to Badiou's insistence on being qua being as "indifferent multiplicity" rather than a self-same ground immanently imbued with truth to be revealed. From such indifferent multiplicity, truths are created through a process of formalization. Form, for Siegal, is not imposed from on high, but is developed immanently, often by emphasizing balletic form as a psychosomatic process rather than the imposition of antiquated poses, patterns, and modes of comportment once connotative of power and royalty.

Siegal's mission is manifest in each of his works, but the 2022 evening, *Xerrox Vol. II,* is perhaps most emblematic in this regard. The creation—an evening length work set to the electronic music of Alva Noto—began with a discussion with the ensemble centered around questions such as "How, if at all, is ballet relevant today, or is it dead like Jennifer Homans argues?"; "What do we mean when we talk about ballet?"; and, "Is ballet as a formal vocabulary separable from its oppressive history?" Together, we deliberated on these questions verbally on a few occasions, but we also interacted with them physically as we collaboratively created the piece together. These questions were embedded in us and informed the physicality of the work from start to finish, such that one could claim that it was demonstrative of exactly what Badiou terms a truth-procedure. The creation consisted of "treating points" in the world of ballet, sifting out what did and did not belong in ballet today. Beyond the incorporation of different body-types and the subversion of traditional gender roles, we scrutinized details such as the placement of the arms, the amount of tension held in the body, the relationship to music, and the general sense of comportment toward the audience and between fellow dancers. Siegal's staging, set design, and musical selections also performed this interrogative labour vis-à-vis the canon to which it was responding. This process brought many of us to an impasse, albeit a productive one: no longer were we capable of simply regurgitating vocabulary and proceeding unreflexively with business as usual, but rather, the physicality developed out of this set of ideas and became simply that which harboured those ideas, or made them appear. This is precisely what I refer to when I claim that dance can bring a dancer (or choreographer, or spectator) face-to-face with a fundamental impossibility in which her work has until now been grounded, both in terms of the natural body and the world out of which it emerges. This also undermines the assumption, of which Badiou is guilty, that dance is entirely subtracted from discourse. While the introduction of the Idea does not necessarily solve the analytic problem of dance's inabil-

ity to be notated and thus easily reconstructed, it does enable us to emancipate dance from democratic materialism and thus authorize its association with truth and subjectivity. Given that the issue of notation, beyond the enabling of a work's persistence through time (or rather, of its capacity to be subtracted from the corrosive power of time), is fundamentally an issue of a discipline's legitimacy as a real artform, this alternative solution enables us to reveal dance's philosophical legitimacy via an alternative route. On the point of reconstruction, the lack of notation (besides a video recording) makes this a still problematic task; however, as Bleeker points out, reconstruction is also a matter of *reenactment,* for example, of "the artistic thought embodied in the creations of others."[56] Reenacting these thoughts, which I take to be crucial to reconstruction but not the entire task, "is not a matter of (or an attempt at) redoing the thinking process of the choreographers who created these dances, but rather of grasping the logic of thought embodied in the dance."[57] The trace of the Idea enables the reactivation of the spirit of the work in the future, which is arguably a more rewarding discovery than dealing with notation.

The final product of *Xerrox* ultimately laid out a set of coordinates for future works to situate themselves within, or rather, in its own truth-procedure, it became part of a broader truth-procedure that transcended its singularity.[58] *Xerrox* as a work is an exception to the world (of ballet) from which it emerges and itself treats points within that world. In dancing this work, I (and I was not alone in this) was emancipated from the immediacy of my organic body, given that I was dancing a set of ideas rather than simply repeating choreography, participating in something which transcended the immediacy of my body. The movement of dance and the movement of thought were indistinguishable, collapsing the distinction between the mind and body in a novel way. *Xerrox* confronted us and our public with an impossibility. This impossibility thwarted the continuation of *ballet*'s uncritical deployment; however, in so doing, it gave rise to *Ballet*. Our finite, sensuous capacity to dance was undermined. In exchange, we generated an in(finite)capacity to d/Dance.

1 I am speaking solely of continental aesthetics here. I acknowledge the analytic contributions of Sparshott (1995) and McFee (1992) which appear prior to Badiou's landmark text.
2 Nietzsche 1917, p. 40
3 Pouillaude 2017: 12n15
4 I note the exception of Rancière who has incorporated dance into his work on aesthetics in the last two decades, even entering into dialogue with Badiou's chapter on dance in *Modern Times* (2022) and *Aesthetics and Its Discontents* (2009).
5 Botha 2013
6 Brannigan 2019
7 Clark 2011
8 Pouillaude 2017
9 Badiou 2005a, pp. 57-58
10 Badiou 2005, p. 59
11 Botha (2013) has critiqued Badiou's interpretation of Nietzsche, which has implications for the further development of Badiou's own position, by claiming that Nietzsche does not just use dance as a metaphor, but also finds it to be an instrumental practice in the development of the embodied self. Her text then reconsiders Badiou's ultimate claim that dance is not an art; however, she has a different agenda than I do here, in that she does not identify Badiou's own inconsistency in relation to his overarching project.
12 Badiou 2005a, p. 61.
13 I have outlined this previously in, for example, Supple (2025). For a comprehensive outline of Badiou's philosophy of the Event, refer readers to Badiou's *Being and Event* trilogy itself, as well as to the introduction of *Infinite Thought* (Clemens & Feltham 2006).
14 Badiou 2022, p. 474
15 While the Event functions as an exception in Badiou's *Being and Event,* it is not until the second book in his system, *Logics of Worlds,* that he begins to use this term regularly. Without this language from the second book, it is understandable why one might interpret the Event in more quasi-theological terms, as something more like a miracle coming from without, rather than as the disclosure of a world's constitutive contradiction, or exclusion, which enables it to maintain its self-identity, illusory as the latter may be. Nonetheless, it is crucial for the purposes of this text, that one gives heed to the Event's exceptionality, which not only exfoliates its theological connotations, but which allows us to avoid thinking of the Event as something utterly pure, rather than as illuminating a breakdown in the world on the edge of which it takes place.
16 Ruda 2015, pp. 107-108
17 Pouillaude 2017, p. 91
18 Badiou 2005a, p. 69
19 One should note here that in the final book of his *Being and Event* system, *Immanence of Truths,* Badiou includes dance within his catalogue of the arts without any mention of its status as a non-art or as art's transcendental condition (Badiou 2022, pp. 472-473).
20 Badiou 2007, 159
21 Badiou 2005b, n.p., italics added
22 A sentiment closely aligned with Adorno's critique of modern art insofar as 'art' in modernity takes precedence over art*works*, and for this reason, the latter are condemned to remaining merely "work[s] in progress" (Adorno 2022, p. 36).
23 Pakes 2020
24 Pouillaude 2017
25 Badiou 2005a, p. 63
26 Clark (2011) makes the case that Cunningham may indeed represent a properly Badiouian style of dance, though because I reject the premises of Badiou's existing schema for identifying "true" dance (i.e. which actually functions as a metaphor for thought), I cannot agree with this, at least not quite yet.
27 Pouillaude 2017, p. 276
28 The fact that Badiou is one of the first continental thinkers to re-insist on order, form, and discipline—albeit in a way that is distanced from an arbitrary, "non-truthful" (viz. the militaristic preservation of the authority of a world)—makes his Nietzschean aversion to choreography rather puzzling.
29 Badiou 2015, p. 48
30 Badiou 2005b, n.p.
31 Badiou 2015, p. 62, italics mine
32 For an in-depth exploration of the Idea in Badiou, see Klepec 2019.
33 Badiou 2013, p. 14
34 Klepec 2019, p. 287
35 Ruda perspicaciously addresses this in the Epilogue to *Indifference and Repetition* (Ruda 2024).
36 Badiou 2019, p. xvii
37 Badiou 2019, xx, italics added.
38 Badiou 2019, p. xviii
39 Badiou 2019, xviii
40 Badiou 2019, p. 25
41 Badiou 2019, p. 3
42 Badiou 2019, p. 3
43 Badiou 2019, p. 25
44 Badiou 2015, p. 39
45 It may be useful to further clarify what's at stake for Badiou here by distinguishing his position from Agamben's. Agamben claims that there is an operation of power—more "insidious" than that which works to separate humans from what they can do—which "does not immediately affect what humans can do—their potentiality—but rather their 'impotentiality,' that is, what they cannot do, or better, can not do" (Agamben 2011, p. 43). Impotentiality here connotes the negativity that enables resistance; however, this amounts to an embrace of finitude for Agamben, given that nothing positive is borne from this impotentiality. For Badiou, on the other hand, incapacity is

precisely the condition for transcending the order of finitude and becoming subject.
46 While this distinction may appear to rely on an antiquated metaphysical distinguishing tool, I claim that it is entirely plausible within Badiou's project to do so. He differentiates between, for example, the political and politics. While the latter is a truth-procedure, it emerges out of the political situation of a world.
47 One could also bring in André Lepecki's claims regarding the "still-act" in dance, which is to say, the incorporation of stasis into dancing itself (similar to what John Cage has done by incorporating silence and indeterminacy into music)—a gesture which undoes "the unquestioned alignment of dance with movement" (Lepecki 2006, pp. 14-15).
48 This resembles the approach of "questioning" described by Burrows & Ritsema (2003), which is a process of questioning movement through movement, without being directed by a pre-existing mental image. Where the Badiouian approach I am laying out diverges from Burrows & Ritsema's is its evental nature, which it enables it to treat points in a specific world/grammar, and in so doing, transcend the democratic materialist paradigm.
49 Clark 2011: 58
50 In which I had the privilege of spending the final four seasons of my own ballet career. Here, I will add that while this may, to some, indicate an over-proximity to the object on which I am about to write, I choose to give heed to Badiou, for whom it is fruitful to have such proximity, both aesthetically and philosophically, given that one is rarely graced with the chance to work alongside an artist still living.
51 Although space prohibits me from elaborating on this claim too much, it is nonetheless worth drawing a parallel between Siegal's project and the way Frank Ruda has characterized Badiou's project as an "idealism without idealism" (Ruda 2015). In a sense, Siegal could be responsible for what one might term "ballet without ballet", which is to say, a worked-through ballet that is faithful to its fundaments, while also rigorously divesting it of what it is not actual. Put otherwise, much like Badiou's project is somewhat of a negation of the negation, in the sense of being a (materialist) return to idealism in a way that is mediated by post-idealist criticism, Siegal represents a return to ballet in a way that is mediated by its various negations and offshoots (i.e. post/modern dance, performance art [often improvisation-based], street and ballroom dancing, and non-Western movement languages), but which is not reducible to an example of mere hybridizing.
52 Homans 2010
53 Clark 2011, p. 57
54 Badiou is rather mute about how art institutions function beyond his criticisms of 'academicism' (Badiou 2019, p. 30); however, I find it to be in alignment with his position to claim that institutional reforms can be an element of a truth-procedure, given that institutions and their norms are typically reflected in the work they produce, particularly when it comes to performance art.
55 I acknowledge that this is not necessarily new within concert dance as a whole; however, such reforms have often occurred at the expense of ballet. I believe that the novelty of Ballet of Difference lies in its capacity to transform the field itself without a wholesale negation.
56 Bleeker 2017, p. 221
57 Bleeker 2017, p. 221
58 For Badiou, a single work is not a truth-procedure, but rather one localized "instance" of a truth-procedure which encompasses that work, even if the latter begins through a single work or small cluster of works (Badiou 2005a, p. 12). The work itself is the subject and one could say that, in the case of a collectively-created and performed work, the members of that collective compose the subject.

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Via Subtractiva: On the Identity of Thinking and Being

Tzuchien Tho

Abstract: This article examines the transformation of the concept of subtraction through the Parmenidean framework set out at the start of Badiou's inauguration of mathematical ontology. With the end of the *Being and Event* trilogy, how has this concept changed and what remains of the project? It is argued that the terrain has shifted towards the problem of the same and other indicated by Parmenides fragment three. A theory of diffracted alterities, a Xenoplatonism, therefore follows in *The Immanence of Truths*, one that relies on the structures of elementary embedding explored in recent set theory.

Keywords: Eleatism, mathematical ontology, determinate negation, generic sets, large cardinals

0. The end of mathematical ontology?

Alain Badiou's publication of the final volume of the *Being and Event* trilogy, *The Immanence of Truths* in 2018 presents an opportunity for a synthetic reflection on his ontological project since the publication of the first volume in 1988. Despite some obvious philosophical continuities, some of the strategies and concepts have changed significantly across these three decades. With the closing of the three volumes on mathematical ontology, earlier in the same year (2018) of the publication, Badiou presented an account of his system that included a recantation of the thesis "mathematics=ontology".[1] Did Badiou abandon mathematical ontology with the closing of this project? This is not the place to sort out that complicated issue, only to note the openness that Badiou has left his philosophical project.

In order the trace the contours of this opening, we take a retrospective look at a central philosophical orientation in his work. Here we define the strategy of thought via *subtractiva* and trace its operation in Badiou's work. This clarification can show how to understand Badiou's relation to the Parmenidean expression of the identity of thinking and being by identifying the difference that allows the two to coincide. In other words, the identity of thinking and being can only be judged by a unity produced in their difference. Badiou's unique approach to theorizing this difference, in the "via subtractiva" proposed here, contextualizes the three volumes of *Being and Event*, through the context of the immanence of otherness, being determined by its self-alterity.

For our purposes here we only focus on the first and third volumes given their engagement with set theory in contrast to the algebraic concepts of the second volume. In each volume of his works on mathematical ontology, the localization and characterization of alterity form the configuration of what is at stake in these different stages. The fundamental reasoning is that since the subtractive path forecloses the givenness of unity, thinking and being are not pre-given entities

that can be brought into an identification. Instead, identity can only be established by the internal generation of the non-difference between thinking and being. In *Being and Event*, this is developed through Gödel incompleteness and the forcing of generic sets. We name this procedural subtraction, tied to the major theme of truth procedure in his work of this period. Here, alterity is developed as the excess of multiplicity over its ordering. In *The Immanence of Truths*, alterity is developed as the non-identity of the whole, and the diffraction of immanent infinities. We call this diffractive subtraction, noting the absence of procedural subjectivity in *The Immanence of Truths*.

This contrast is not meant to indicate contradictions in the system but instead to illustrate some features of the transformation of the subtractive path. This allows us to identify the problem of the "missing" subject in *The Immanence of Truths*: diffracted alterity.

1. Subtraction is not (a) method

Is subtraction a method? One might be drawn to calling this Badiou's underlying method. However, Badiou generally rejects the term "method". There are two reasons to understand why this is.

The first reason concerns the nature of philosophy. In Badiou's notion of the renewal of philosophy, philosophy does not orient towards truth through its own resources, this orientation must be activated by events occurring outside of it. These truth procedures (in science, politics, arts, and love), are not dependent on philosophy. It is the inverse dependence. If philosophy were to be oriented towards truth, it must be practiced under the condition of these truth conditions. This practice, among other things, historicizes philosophy's own activity in the horizon of its time by showing the compossibility of truths, a speculative synthesis of some combination of the four conditions.

Philosophy would then be transversal and unbound by methodologies which are localized in the conditions themselves. Philosophy is therefore a hybrid ground for the imposition, without pre-given valence, of many different methods as they show up often in his work. Hence, it isn't the case that there is no method in Badiou, it is that there are plural methods located in the historical horizon of truth procedures.

The second reason emerges from ontology which, in this context, was defined *against* philosophy. In Badiou's criticism of method in the course of *Being and Event*, he identifies four endeavors [*tentatives*].[2] Though Badiou doesn't name them as such, we can call them orthology, radicalism, and idealism. These endeavors correspond with the gap opened up, essentially, by the incompleteness of mathematical ontology. This can be presented through Gödel incompleteness or Cohen independence proofs for the axiom of choice, but other notions of incompleteness as well. In short, this is the problem of the excess of

being over its possible orderings. The first orientation, orthology, seeks to "correct" this excess of being either by devising a new language, a kind of *mathesis universalis*, or by a reductive condensation of excess to order. The second orientation, radicalism, attends to the *roots* of the matter by aligning being with the excess itself. Instead of reducing or condensing excess to aspects of what is already ordered, here we valorize the multiplicity as multiplicity. The third orientation, idealism, operates through the posit of a transcendent function, a form of multiplicity, which contains ordered multiples and their excess. Here Badiou surprisingly identifies this third orientation with the large cardinal axioms of modern set theory. This is intimately linked with our later discussion, but it could be noted here that Gödel had already speculated about the resolution of open problems in set theory by positing large cardinals that cannot be proven in ZFC. Here new axioms are included to extend the possible orderings which initially appeared as excess in the models of the original system of axioms.

The fourth approach is transversal to all these approaches. Here, Badiou means that it is consistent with these approaches, but does not become reduced to them. It is transversal to these rational strategies, and though Badiou does not use the term here, this is a subtractive approach. Here he notes:

> It holds that the truth of the ontological impasse cannot be seized or thought in immanence to ontology itself, nor to speculative metaontology. [...] Its hypothesis consists in saying that one can only render justice to injustice from the angle of the event and intervention. There is thus no need to be horrified by an un-binding of being, because it is in the undecidable occurrence of a supernumerary non-being that every truth procedure originates, including that of a truth whose stakes would be that very un-binding.[3]

The impasse of ontology, its excessive incompleteness, cannot be adjudicated in an ontological manner (either through immanence or transcendence). Instead, it requires the externality of a truth procedure to ontological ordering. To put it reductively, mathematical ontology can only indicate the excess of being (the excess of multiplicities) over all possible configurations. This excess can be disposed of in other ways, namely the three ways (orthology, radicalism, and idealism) as methodological orientation. The transversal and subtractive view therefore steps out of the ontological impasse at once by sustaining the impasse itself, refusing the resolution of the tension in each of these ways, but also supplementing an orthogonal expansion, the "supernumerary non-being", in terms of the truth procedure.

These two anti-methodological reasons in fact refers back to the same point: the excess of truth over being. While the rationality of truth occurs within ontology, marked by being's own incompleteness, truth

itself is unable to be given in terms of the variable possibilities of being. In other words, the being of truth can only ever be "forced" and undecidable. What is crucial here is to treat thought as aligned with this transversal and subtractive path, instead of subordinated to the configurations of order. Hence, just as truth presents an "unbinding of being" for ontology, philosophy must also "subtract" from its presupposed autonomy by a submission to these extra-philosophical truth conditions (science, politics, art, love).

This methodological rejection is therefore the grounds for a method of no-method. In practice, this often looks like a pluralism based on the ideal of compossible truths in the historical horizon of a philosophical project. Yet this transversal subtractive approach is also formulated as an alternative to the traditional interpretation of Hegelian dialectics. Indeed, the simplest expression of subtraction is the unbinding of thought from the one. This is the rejection of the givenness of unity all the way from the atomic-unit entity, whatever that might be, to the unit-totality of the whole. The unity of basic entities is a product of a process (of counting), rather than a given. Conversely, the non-existence of the "all" refers to Russell-style paradoxes: does the collection of all collections collect itself? Therefore, the dialectical coil does not quite begin to unroll.

What kind of alternative does subtraction offer against dialectics? In some places, Badiou treats subtraction as the "negative" edge of negation, balancing negation between subtraction and destruction. This strategy is therefore distinguished from others by maintaining a distance from "method" but not offering a destruction of it. In terms of the state of any knowledge, the subtractive approach remains within the situation but negates the order of the situation.

> A subtraction ...is no longer dependent on the dominant laws of the political reality of a situation. It is irreducible, however, to the destruction of these laws as well. A subtraction might well leave the laws of the situation intact. What subtraction does is bring about a point of autonomy. It's a negation, but it cannot be identified with the properly destructive part of negation.[4]

The difference between subtraction and Hegelian negation is therefore the determinateness of the negation, and with it, the implication of totality and teleology. The necessity of reconstituting contradiction via determinate negation identifies dialectics with ontology. Hegelian totality is drawn out and actualized through self-otherness, and self-identity, and the dynamic reflexivity of these two moments. Teleology is then the process of this relation. Overcoming is therefore a form of destruction, a negation of abstract identity, and the suspension of foundation. The negation of what exists then is brought into greater concreteness. But these and other historical problems with Hegelian dialectics brings Badiou to offer an

alternative. On this point, Badiou explicitly turns against the Hegelian/Marxist tradition:

> We need an "originary subtraction" capable of creating a new space of independence and autonomy from the dominant laws of the situation. A subtraction, therefore, is neither derived from, nor a consequence of destruction as such. If we are to propose a new articulation between destruction and subtraction, we have to develop a new type of negation or critique, one that differs from the dialectical model of class struggle in its historical signification.[5]

What does it then mean to think in this path of subtraction? Citing Malevich, Badiou affirms here "a new day in the desert". For Malevich in 1927, this is the suspension of the organized world of the mirrored real/ideal images through which one lives. Here Malevich notes:

> No more "likenesses of reality", no idealistic images—nothing but a desert!
>
> But this desert is filled with the spirit of non-objective sensation which pervades everything.
>
> Even I was gripped by a kind of timidity bordering on fear when it came to leaving "the world of will and idea", in which I had lived and worked and in the reality of which I had believed.[6]

Badiou's efforts in ontology drive for a dynamic alterization based on inconsistent multiplicity. This othering is therefore not a self-othering per se, and thus not poised toward the Hegelian telos of self-closure qua concept. Yet, without self-closure, what is identity and what is other than identity cannot be easily secured. This may be one of the more crucial and subtle reasons why Badiou turns to mathematics to articulate this dynamic. The ontology of inconsistent multiplicity, having subtracted from the ordering structure of unity, finds the process of alienation in the intra-ontological configuration of structure.

Without getting into any of the details, this alterization relies on the gap between the production of structure and its own excess. In standard readings, it is emphasized that Badiou does not have to rely on the pre-givenness of unity by generating unity, qua the unit-entity, through the mark of void ∅. Together with the other axioms of set theory, the mark of the void therefore "separates out" consistent multiplicity from the pure multiplicity (assumed as "without one"), generating a well-ordered universe of structured multiples (consistent) through iterated counting. Inconsistent multiplicity is therefore something of a product of structure, this is how we qualify pure multiplicity after the determination of the infinite or transfinite

well-ordered universe of multiples (sets). What is less emphasized is the fact that this universe of multiples is nonetheless no settled matter. It appears immediately that its multiplicity exceeds our means of analysis. In other words, there are structures that co-arises with the universe of consistent multiplicity which is not accounted for. Hence, if we consider the configurations of multiplicities as possible places or positions within a domain, there are positions that cannot be analytically discerned by the tools with which we set up the domain. These "generic" positions or multiplicities are therefore multiples that demonstrate an excess of structure. While excess or exception is often, in the history of thought, treated under the aegis of chaos or inconsistency, this configuration of excess is instead an excess of consistency itself. This is why truth, for Badiou, is aligned with this form of excess instead of the inconsistent multiple standing behind the ordering function of the mark of the void.

The development of this excess of structure, as opposed to the exception to structure, is central to Badiou's work. He notes that the subtractive action is to "subtract it [reality] from its apparent unity so as to detect within it the minuscule difference, the vanishing term that constitutes it. What takes place *barely* differs from the place where it takes place."[7] The concept of the generic, drawn from Cohen's generic sets, which cannot be identified by anything other than the fact that it exists, identifies the figure of the minimal difference.

With this, we should be able to clarify "subtraction" in the proper sense from Badiou's other notions. The generic should not be taken as a form of universal generality, not even when it is used in an ontological context. Subtraction is far from eliminativism, the reduction or negation of what knowledge or being can do without. It is not reductionism either, the reduction of reality to some ultimate plane identified with the "real". The subtractive path proceeds neither from the verticality of a transcendent function nor the horizontality of equalization but, as we mentioned, from a transversal or diagonal path. The crucial point here is that it does not negate in a determinate way because it remains in the place of what is, while constituting a negation by means of the introduction of a form of what is not yet. It is neither confrontation and incorporation, nor is it a "line of flight". Instead, it is the immanent reconstruction based on the fact that *what is* is always incomplete, and more varied, and more indeterminate than what can be ordered through representation. In this sense, what is universal isn't simply what emerges from being and the differences that *erase* particularity. Instead, it is the active construction of a generic particularity (a string of singularities) that identifies or demonstrates the incompleteness of a whole, as the actuality of excess of structure over structure. No universal qua totality can therefore close the loop on multiplicity itself.

In brief, the subtractive approach of ontological alterization does not require unity because the effective opposition to structure is not

inconsistency or lack, but a surplus of structure. This reveals a necessity of the non-coincidence between being and itself. This is not because of an initial posit of an identity of being, to which something could be different or the same. Instead, this internal excess of being to itself demonstrates an identity through the gap between a generative structure and those multiples that fall outside that structure. The difference that constitutes identity is thereby gained as the result of the refusal of a completed one-totality. More than the theory of pure and structured multiples, it is perhaps here that Badiou's turn to set theory, and its 20th century history appears eminently reasonable. Fundamental debates about axioms, entities, and structure are not (mostly) about consistency, but rather about whether these plural structures are legitimate according to standards of mathematical practice, philosophically warranted, or sufficiently elegant in the eyes of the theorist. Hence the *other* of structure and reason, through which identity is determined, is not inconsistency and unreason, but being's own excess.

2. The limit of nature and subject

The way that the strategy of subtraction is advanced corresponds most classically to Badiou's theory of the subject and the event in *Being and Event*. We have already noted how Badiou employs mathematical ontology to offer a theory of being that designates an internal difference between ordered multiplicity, which he calls nature, and its excess, a domain of multiplicity that escapes well-ordering. Unlike traditional dialectics, the dynamics of subjectivity is not generated out of the non-identity of being with itself, and the drive to reflexive identification. Incompleteness is not a result of a disavowed contradiction somewhere that becomes latently effective. Indeed, incompleteness is an aspect of the very consistency of mathematical ontology. The incompleteness here refers to the fact that there is at least one truth of the system that is not provable by the system itself. There is then a critical gap between the system of analyzable (possible) places or multiples and truths of that system which cannot be decidable from the analysis. In other words, there are multiples that escape the well-ordered universe constructed by some system of axioms.

In *Being and Event*, the Cohen generic sets that Badiou treats as the marker of the excess of being over order represent the multiplicity that is inexhaustible by the structure of set construction and its logical control. The subject is identified by generic sets because of this self-consistency of the construction of truth outside of conventional order. These truths that fall outside of ordering therefore identifies the subject. In turn, the subject identifies the subtractive path, it identifies the actuality of minimal difference, one from which the subject constructs a new truth, not as destruction of order, but as an excess of it.

It is worth noting that across Badiou's work, we find many instances of this configuration of incompleteness. The nature/subject distinction is only the interpretation appropriate to the philosophical or meta-ontological project *in Being and Event*. This insistence on incompleteness as an excess of structure, rather than its failure, goes back to his earliest published works, typified by his response to J. A. Miller's theory of suture. Already in the 1969 "Marque et manque: à propos du zero", Badiou refuses the Lacanian alignment of subjectivity or agency with the suppression of a structural necessity of implicating contradiction with the origin of the system.[8] For Miller, the "unconscious" of mathematical structure qua repressed therefore unfolds structure as a repeated iteration of this primal repression. Structure is thus the iterated effect of the subject's reflexive and repressed alterization, and the "sutured" gap of consistency and inconsistency. Refusing this move, Badiou instead treats the generation of structure as a production indifferent to logical conditions. It is only with the emergence of structure through that machinic iteration that successive results of validation and consistency are applied to layers of concatenated inscriptions.[9] Within this debate, Badiou uses the psychoanalytic concept of psychosis to distinguish science (and in particular, mathematics) from neurotic subjectivity. There is therefore no repression, hence no suture.[10]

Though the framework and terms of Badiou's thought moved on after the 70s, what remained in the foreground is this insistence on the internal difference of the indifferent. That is, much like the terms of his critique of Miller, the mutual identification of structure and subject qua difference is not constitutive, but the result of the excess of the process. Hence, the nature/subject distinction is a modality of this configuration that appears early in Badiou's work. This configuration, which we shall put in general terms, therefore posits reflexivity as an aspect of structure, not its latent disavowed origin or horizon. This strategy therefore refuses the neurotic topology, an "inside" of structure maintained by the disavowal of the "outside". Instead, inscription (multiplicity) and its conceptual control are placed on a stratified and incomplete process of development. This early configuration provides the shape of the subtractive approach which treats the relation of thinking and being not as identified in the sense that they are "the same", but rather as indifferent. On the one end, no difference is yet able to render them distinct. As differences multiply, no difference is capable of rendering them equivalent.

3. Eleatic dialectics

Given the framework of the subtractive strategy, we are able to revisit the grounds of this identity of thinking and being. The contents of Parmenides's poem *On Nature* have been present in the history of metaphysics from in Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and so on. We have to

forego this rich history and focus here exclusively on the key fragment III, which Badiou often cites albeit in a simplistic way, without much further philological explanation. The passage reads:

> τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι ... [to gar auto noein estin te kai einai][11]

A very literal translation would be:

> For thinking and being are the same thing...[12]
> Denn [das Seiende] denken und sein ist dasselbe.[13]

This overly literal translation is common in French translation by Beaufret.[14] This is adopted by Badiou and Feltham's English translation.

> [L]e même lui est à la fois penser et être...[15]
> The same, itself, is both thinking and being.[16]

Two commonly cited English translations (Burnet and Zeller) have the fragment rendered:

> [F]or it is the same thing that can be thought and that can be.[17]
> The same is for thinking and for being... [18]

These all mean quite different things and there seems to be no end to what can yet be said about this passage. However, we shall have to satisfy ourselves with a brief discussion. The central question in interpretation is whether to treat thinking and being as substantives, a dativel infinitive, or something else. In other words, the question is whether thinking and being are the same thing, whether there is something that can be thought can also be, or alternatively, anything that can be thought can also be, and vice versa.

Given the grammatical context, scholars like Coxon argue against the use of the substantive infinitive.[19] This rendering, closer to the Burnet translation above, is to assert a common entity that is *for* thought and being. Here, that which can be thought is the same as that which can be. This is poised against the more traditional reading of the coextensiveness of thinking and being, emphasized in the classical reading by Diels and Beaufret, which also tends to be the implied interpretation of Badiou's frequent readings. These important details offer different solutions to how to understand the status of the one and non-one in the Parmenides work, in particular, the possible discourse on what is not, or what both is and is not. The result is the puzzle of the poem explicitly performing what is apparently rejected by the poem, the discourse on the multiple.

Plato can be understood as following Parmenides in accepting the terms of the puzzle but admitting the discourse of what is not through the foregrounding of unity. Appearances therefore gain intelligibility through their participation in the forms. It is through modes of unity that reasoned accounts can be given to the many and the false. Multiplicity therefore gains its reality through the forms, which are unities that stabilize aspects of what would otherwise be inconsistent multiplicity. Though the forms are systematically articulated in many of Plato's works, in the crucial dialogues that treat the nature of the one/multiple, the *Sophist* and the *Parmenides*, it is clear that Plato devises no final answer and he leaves many strands of the argument open. Badiou develops in *Being and Event* the unfinished lemmata at the end of the *Parmenides* to suggest a theory of inconsistent multiplicity, a point to which he often returns.

What Badiou ultimately draws from this Parmenidean/Platonic puzzle is a rejection of oneness as the solution. Instead of the Platonic forms as the fulcrum between absolute unity and muddy multiplicity, it is the affirmation that the "one is not" which finally stabilizes this inconsistent discursive fluctuation between what is and is not.

In the Seminars of 1985-86, the years leading up to *Being and Event*, Badiou affirms this "decision":

> If it is necessary to "expressedly think the path of nothingness at the same time as the path of being", this is because the essence of what is at stake there is the decision. It is not due to the necessity of synthesis or to think them at the same time, no! Because if what is to be decided is to decide philosophy, it is naturally necessary to conjointly think the paths of the decision.[20]

The decision Badiou offers here is a subtractive one. Against synthesis or affirming the paraconsistency of contradiction, the subtractive path remains in the tension while inscribing the mark of the void which affirms the *non-being* of the one and the *being-nothing* of pure multiplicity.[21] In this subtraction, thinking and being are identified insofar as their conjoining is constituted by the mark of the void. The consequences of this subtraction are precisely what is unfolded by mathematical ontology. He helpfully summarizes this point in recent reflections.

> To think the multiple-without-one, the count-as-one is necessary. All operations of thought is the count-as-one of any multiplicity, a taking away of being from inconsistent multiplicity which is unrepresentable, being in its most indeterminate sense. The error of Parmenides is to have worked from the position of identity and not from difference. His error is to hypostasize the count-as-one as if it were being itself. This is quite impossible. What there is is difference and this difference can be counted-as-one.[22]

We can notice here Badiou's characteristic interpretation of this subtracted "sameness" of thinking and being. Parmenides's error is to treat the hypostasis of the count-as-one as being (as such). In turn, it is difference that should be counted (as one). Difference is not here something pre-given in multiplicity. As he notes at the start, the thought of this multiplicity requires this count-as-one. Hence, without appealing to the one and the same, and without the Platonic synthesis of the one and the many, the act of the count, identified here as the operation of thought simpliciter, divides what is counted from what is uncounted, and therefore constitutes difference within indifference.

This analysis therefore shifts its focus from the one and the many to the notion of difference as such. As we examined above, there is no such thing as unity as such. This is a production of the count. Within the same logic, there is no such thing as difference as such. The reason here is that unity, whether primordial or produced through the count, is a logical necessity for difference. However, could we trace a theory of difference subtracted from this one-multiple dialectic?

In a recent discussion, Badiou highlights this possibility.[23] In his revisiting of the Parmenidean fragment in 2023, Badiou affirms the co-determination of thinking and being insofar as they cannot represent the givenness of difference/alterity.

> When Parmenides posited that being and being known are the same thing, he was right even if he did not manage to sufficiently clarify all the consequences of his position. That is why I think we need to significantly rework the notion of the subject. If we introduce the category of the subject, we must immediately place it in a singular and homogeneous relation to being. Otherwise, we will end up with an infinite chain of idealistic apparatuses in which the knowing subject is on the one side, and the known object on the other. In reality, the problem is that there is no intrinsic difference between what we know and the known subject, and that we can perfectly have the known subject as the object of knowledge, since there is reflexive thought, and so on. [...] Parmenides is at the heart of the very definition of materialism.[24]

Here Badiou has put the dialectic of the one and multiple aside in favor of the alterity of thinking and being. The condition for their identification requires that the former encounters the other as an other. Therefore, as he notes, an infinite chain of idealistic apparatuses must be employed to close the gap. It is only if thinking and being are coextensive that this difference can be treated as internal to this configuration.

It is important to highlight Badiou's identification of this identity of thinking and being as the "very definition of materialism".[25] This should be read in the lineage of a specifically Marxist and Leninist understanding

of the problem. Here, both dogmatic idealism and materialism results in the same quandary if the opposition between being and knowing is held as a given.[26] The dogmatic materialist struggles to formulate non-ideal characteristics of matter, resulting in mere haecceity that subtends properties and attributes which are ultimately ideal. For Lenin, whose explicit target was the preeminent physicist Mach, it is Berkeley that formulates this horizon in his idealist empiricism.

In other words, just as there is no unity or difference as such, there is no sameness or difference as such. If we focus on the latter pair, we are led to affirm that the identity of thinking and being cannot be given. In this sense, the co-determination of thinking and being represents the generation of alterity internal to this indifference. As such, this co-determination can only be affirmed if thinking and being are mutually differentiating. This restatement of difference within indifference offers a new perspective on an old configuration. We examine the consequences of this configuration briefly.

The main consequence an inverted interpretation of the Arch-rationalist principle: omnis determinatio est negatio.[27] For Badiou, being's self-alienation is not a negation of some particular thing, neither is it that to itself as if it were a determinate thing. Self-negation does not occur as the negation of something because this is prior to the possibility of some "self"-thing. Instead, the negation here is poised against an incomplete, indeterminate being. The thinking of being as the thinking of a non-objectival self is therefore the process of the multiplication of incomplete partial subordinate objects which attempt to map the structure of this unlimited attempt to gain actual objectivity-alterity. Therefore, the ordering structure here is the process through which to gain proper alterity. This ordering and what results are the externalization of the object from thought. A given partial alterity is synthesized into higher forms of unity. Yet no resolution is possible if alterity is perpetually, as an asymptotic limit, inactual.

This inversion of the rationalist principle can be read through all three volumes of *Being and Event*. The first volume follows most classically in the subtractive path discussed above. The dialectic of the one and many is suspended for the consequences of unfolding the mark of the void. Thought seeks its own alterity within this unfolding of multiplicity. As this infinite process unfolds, thinking and being converges at the point of the failure of the process in the undecidable. This is the incompleteness of the process which renders the subtracted space where thought intervenes qua subject/generic. The second volume is not as explicit about this process but what results in the theory of worlds is a localization of forms that measure the value of appearances in each locality. On one end is the minimal value of in-existence of multiplicities with no appearance, on the other end is the maximal value presented by the transcendental envelope of the world in question. In this algebraic context, difference and identity are constituted by

local morphisms, that is, permissible transformations. Forms generate the plurality of localized identities of the limit between thinking and being. The third and final volume is based on models of set theory with large cardinal axioms. In this expansion of set theory, the limits of the original theory are expanded to deliberately include sets that challenge the traditional properties of the theories. This all takes place in the confines of a set theoretical universe that is consistent with that of traditional ZFC. These new orders of infinity allow for the construction of models that demonstrate the failure of the axiom of choice or some version of the continuum hypothesis.[28] Badiou's overall strategy in this volume is to consider the expanded universe of large cardinals as readjusting the limits between nature, schematized by well-ordered universe of constructible sets L, and truth, schematized by those multiples that fall outside of L in the Universe V class of sets. This renders the limit between nature and truth without a fixed form or region, diffracting this difference into Universe V based on the models used to analyze the Universe. Again here, there is the suspension of dialectics qua determinate negation in a diffracted distribution of the convergent edge of nature/truth. We will come back to this point.

The support of this inversion of rationalism lies in the local unities, the subordinate entities that emerge in this process. The production of difference is the capacity to establish identity qua entities. On the other side of the suspended indifference between thinking and being inscribed by the void are these subordinate unities as the local markers of difference. These forms of thought, local unities qua difference, are the very means by which thinking receives a diffracted self-identity or incomplete self-othering. Forms are therefore the means through which this identity of thinking and being is negotiated. These forms once again play an inverted role in contrast to traditional Platonism. Instead of form standing over particulars, these forms are generated out of an indeterminate multiplicity through which particulars are distinguished.

The Eleatic puzzle is usually read by Badiou through the Platonic tradition driving the treatment of multiplicity and oneness in the *Parmenides*, through the many-through-one πολλα polla and the many-without-one πλήθος/plithos. Here, although I appreciate the terminology of a "dynamited Eleatism" in Vartabedian's work, a concept that would also have to be more fully elaborated through Democritian and Lucretian Atomism, the emphasis on alterisation would instead recommend a "Xenoplatonism".[29] That is, a theory of forms where the relations of difference, or that of same and other cannot be pre-given in such a way as to provide the grounds of negation. Instead, only the suspension of the dialectic provides subtractive forms in which this indifference generates diffracted localized difference. At its limit, an unmediated perfected knowledge where thinking and being can be completely identified would therefore require a completed distinction between them. This form of self-identity would require no mediation and therefore no forms.

4. Universe V as subtractive strategy

From this Xenoplatonist reading, Badiou's focus on the universe of V in *The Immanence of Truths* offers an extension of the configuration developed in *Being and Event*. Just as sets are never defined, the universe of sets V cannot be a set. The axioms of any particular system of axioms, ZFC, for instance, give the rules for what sets there are. The most obvious of these are those sets which can be constructible from the rules set out by the axioms. But these systems can be amended. Extensions of sets can be added to the constructible sets. With Cohen-Gödel generic sets, inner and outer models can be built using forcing that show certain properties to be true or false (or undecidable). It is only through these forms that undecidability is rendered concrete. Classically, this is applied to the axiom of choice and the generalized continuum hypothesis.

In *Being and Event*, the discussion of universe V itself was relatively minimal. There Badiou worked more directly with the relation between order, measure, and incompleteness. At the edge between nature and truth (or history/subject), we are exposed to forms of multiplicity beyond determinate structure. Here the subject engages in the concatenation of conditions for generic multiples, the truth procedure, where the tense is future-anterior, yet inexhaustible. In the embrace of large cardinals Badiou offers the perspective of the vastness of undifferentiated infinite multiplicity that situates any set. The new axioms invent forms of infinite measures (cardinals) that expand models to analyse moments within V. Through logical tools like elementary embedding and ultrafilters, maps can be made between these new expanded models M of V and the universe of V that demonstrate alternative properties. With very large infinities, different properties for these inner models can be discovered to blur the distinction of properties between, classically, models of the constructible universe L and the universe V. Hence, the constructive frameworks of the void, finitude, and infinities remain present but not as relevant as the articulation of these embeddings and their analytical consequences.

The most important of these concepts here is the set $0^{\#}$ of numbered terms (truths in the context of *The Immanence of Truths*) that identify indiscernible ordinals in the constructible universe. Since this set $0^{\#}$ cannot be proven in ZFC, their deployment follows an implicative form. If $0^{\#}$ exists, then it follows that Universe V is not reducible to L. In other words, the relative finitude of the constructible universe L fails to "cover over" the unconditional infinity of Universe V. The point here is that under the condition that $0^{\#}$ exists, the richness of Universe V, pertains not only to the higher infinities in question, but also to the constructible universe itself. This is the fundamental meaning for which Badiou claims the immanence of truths, no longer something "up there" vertically in the hierarchy, or even horizontally on the edges of constructibility, but also found in the unbinding of the finite, diagonally, towards indiscernible structures.

The other aspect of this approach, one that is a pre-condition for the discussion of $0^{\#}$ is Kunen's theorem. It is usually written as:

Suppose λ is a cardinal. Then there is no nontrivial elementary embedding: $j : V_{\lambda+2} \to V_{\lambda+2}$

In other words, either there are non-trivial embeddings of V into some model M that isn't V, or some contradictions arise.[30] This means that no additional structure can be gained from such an embedding of the absolute universe into itself except for mere identity. Now given $0^{\#}$ exists, there can be a non-trivial embedding of the constructible universe L into L. This is due to the fact that, given that $0^{\#}$ exists, L is non-absolute and limited (relatively finite). In *The Immanence of Truths*, Badiou relates this to the failure of the Parmenidean nature of the absolute.

> There is a Parmenidean grandeur to the absolute, which is the dialectic between total external closure—pure self-identity—and the infinite internal bounty: the infinite attributes that express absoluteness through real difference. Finitude, for its part, can be thought in terms of its greatest strength: the covering-over of everything by what is already there. But it comes at the price of the non-existence of practically all the infinities larger than compactness, and therefore of a drastic diminution of the absolute. What is more, even at that price, finitude cannot have any inner attribute that would express it while differing from it.
>
> For both these reasons, the universe of finitude is demonstratively incapable of the grandeur—at once dialectical and Parmenidean—that characterizes the absolute (self-identify but a multiplicity of different attributes in which truths become absolutized).[31]

The Parmenidean dialectic remains active in this work. There is the conflict between the external closure, trivial self-identity, and infinite internal inexhaustibility. The characteristic feature of the infinite is therefore the fact that its self-relation can produce no genuine self-identity. Instead, self-identity is only grasped through the diffracted forms in the models of V, indiscernible structures internal to the unstable "finite" world.

In a recent work, he draws on this Parmenidean connection even further.

> When we are at the level of the absolute itself, we can imagine that there is an elementary embedding [plongement élémentaire] on itself. That is to say that we can pivot or turn it around on itself through the establishment of this embedding. We therefore obtain a sensational demonstration which would have delighted Parmenides. The absolute cannot be put into a relation of elementary embedding

> to itself. Hence, there is no special class which would be the class of relation[s] of the absolute with itself.[32]

Concerning the same issue with Kunen's theorem, the characteristic of the absolute is that there is no distinct property (a difference) that renders actual the absolute's self-relation. This characteristic therefore shows that the relations of reflexivity through negation are reserved only for those at the interior of an ultimately unenclosable universe. The determinations of these infinities can only therefore be achieved by local models within this universe.

Hence, unlike *Being and Event*, we are far from the construction of the universe through the mark of the void and its iterated counting. The pressing problems are not that of sealing off pure multiplicity in order to begin the consistent multiplicities of constructible sets. There is also no fundamental separation introduced between finitude and infinity, these become relativized and defined instead by the gap between Universe L models and the Universe V that we aim to analyze. An ontology that functioned in *Being and Event* like steps in a ladder, demonstrating the indiscernible and undecidable as we move upwards, is instead navigated diagonally by the new transitive models in the domain of "finitude" (relatively defined) made possible by a maximalist hierarchy of infinities with different characteristics.

Yet here Badiou also emphasizes an alternative configuration of the subtractive path, and a different articulation of the relation between the void and multiplicity. He notes,

> That is why the term "zero sharp" is perfectly justified, because the existence of what it denotes is actually the very first difference from nothing, that is, the possibility of at least one initiative, one impulse, one discovery, that is free from covering-over. The sharp tells us: our creation is not nil. It may not be far from zero, just a little half-tone away, but that is enough to convince us that we are on the trail of a new infinity that nothing will be able to cover over, nothing will be able to conceal.[33]

Here Badiou provides something of a drastic interpretation of the configuration. One might usually assume that the void, the finite, and the infinite are reasonably clear distinctions. Yet Badiou polarizes this difference placing nothingness and finitude on the same side, and the excessive richness of indiscernible multiplicity on the other. The reduction to finitude, the limits imposed on multiplicity by the identification of Universe V with the constructible universe L, is resisted by the thesis that $0^{\#}$ exists such that, though indiscernible, there are new multiplicities exempted from this reduction. Interpretive difficulties aside, we must emphasize the subtractive strategy at work. Here, what is at stake is not

regions of ontological difference as they appear in the set theoretical idiom in *Being and Event* or the algebraic idiom in *Logic of Worlds*. Instead, the ontological difference is localized "a little half-tone away", within the domain of finitude itself, disturbed by the irreducibility of any multiple to the covering over of the universe V by L.

With this difference of the half-tone, the process of self-othering is distributed, the truth procedure of the conditions of forcing generic sets in the gap of the incomplete is therefore exchanged for an infinite texture of multiplicity itself. This is a kind of "serialism" in contrast to the "classicism" of *Being and Event*. The divisions of a tonal series are replaced by irreducible pluralities of micro-divisions, a microtonal field. This all operates through the development of new forms, schematized here as models, through which the universe V is analyzed. The very structure of consistent multiplicities is remapped, bringing structures in infinite sets to bear on the structure of the countable infinite. To recall Badiou's expression quoted earlier, that subtraction is something like what takes place is barely different from the place. These diffracted models of V, and the structures they reveal, are new mappings of the same "place" without the negation of consistent structure or with the synthesis of the one and the many. The identity of thinking and being therefore remains suspended as an indifference or non-distinction within which difference is operative.

5. Concluding remarks

The main outcome of the *Immanence of Truths* is the dissolution of the future-anterior subjective process. The identity through difference of thinking and being no longer relies on the notion of a procedural determination of what is in and out of the constructive universe. For the large cardinal theorists, this determination is already present in multiple forms for any given multiplicity. This offers a new crystalline shape to the self-othering of thinking and being. Hence, given the existence of $0^{\#}$, the new models M of universe V serve as mutually reflecting crystallizations producing alterity at the heart of each intersection of form and multiplicity.

If we then circle back to Badiou's recent renunciation of the thesis that mathematics is ontology, the ontological development here offers something of a subtractive approach. That is, the question of the identity between mathematics and ontology is now re-presented as unstable and diffracted across domains, with local configurations offering temporary stabilization of these identities.

The Parmenidean identity of thinking and being was suspended by their mutual indistinction. It is through the mark of the void that this indistinction becomes productive of difference. That is, difference is not given. It is generated out of this refusal of the dialectical determinate negation. The resulting configuration, explored in *Being and Event*, demonstrates the incompleteness of ordering that provides the grounds

of subjectivity as the ontological excess over nature. In the recent work, this ontological excess is diffracted or distributed across being. Truths are immanent to being. This uncovering requires no constructive procedure. Yet, though the subtractive path has been given in a different configuration, the necessity of mathematical form remains central to the possibility of this idea. The configurations offered in the *Immanence of Truths* are not available outside of the analytic concepts in large cardinal set theory. More crucially, the standard bearers of the large cardinal theories like Woodin, inter alia, affirm that the crucial theorems therein have yet to be proven. With possible changes to the status of the axiom of choice or the generalized continuum hypothesis, unattended results could indeed arise. Yet the via subtractiva remains the means through which we are to suspend the traps of Parmenidean identity. It appears then that even if Badiou might be done with mathematics, it is certainly not done with us.

1 *Alain Badiou "Five Points: Final Speech,"* Thinking the Infinite, Hosted by the Prague Axiomatic Circle, Prague, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWws287P1OU.
2 Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (Continuum, 2005), 282–85.
3 Badiou, *Being and Event*, 284.
4 Alain Badiou et al., "'We Need a Popular Discipline': Contemporary Politics and the Crisis of the Negative," *Critical Inquiry* 34, no. 4 (2008): 652–53.
5 Badiou et al., "'We Need a Popular Discipline': Contemporary Politics and the Crisis of the Negative," 652–53.
6 Malevich Kasimir, *The Non-Objective World*, trans. Howard Dearstyne (Paul Theobald and Company, 1959), 68.
7 Alain Badiou, *The Century*, trans. Alberto Toscano (Polity Press, 2018), 65.
8 Jacques-Alain Miller et al., *Concept and Form, Volume 1: Selections from the Cahiers Pour l'Analyse*, ed. P. Hallward and K. Peden (Verso Books, 2012), 159–86.
9 Lucca Fraser, "Introduction – The Category of Formalization: From Epistemological Break to Truth Procedure," in *The Concept of Model: An Introduction to the Materialist Epistemology of Mathematics*, by Alain Badiou, ed. and trans. Lucca Fraser and Tzuchien Tho (re.press, 2007).
10 See Lorenzo Chiesa, "Count-as-One, Forming-into-One, Unary Trait, S1," No. 1, *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 2, nos. 1–2 (2006): 68–93.
11 Hermann Diels, ed., *Lehrgedicht: Griechisch und deutsch* (De Gruyter, 2013), 33, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111546100.
12 Parmenides et al., *Fragments: A Text and Translation* (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1984).
13 Diels, *Lehrgedicht*, 33.
14 Parmenides, *Le Poème de Parménide*, trans. Jean Beaufret, with Jean Beaufret (Presses Universitaires de France, 1955).
15 See Alain Badiou, *L'Être et l'évènement*, L'Ordre philosophique (Éd. du Seuil, 1988), 49; Alain Badiou, *Court traité d'ontologie transitoire*, L'ordre philosophique (Ed. du Seuil, 1998), 96. The source here is Parmenides, *Le Poème de Parménide*, 79.
16 Badiou, *Being and Event*, 38.
17 John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Adam and Charles Black, 1906), 199.
18 E. Zeller, *Die Philosophie Der Griechen*, I (Leipzig, 1923). Quoted in A.H. Coxon, "Parmenides on Thinking and Being," *Mnemosyne* 56 (2003): 210–12.
19 Coxon, "Parmenides on Thinking and Being."
20 Alain Badiou, *Le Seminar - Parménide. L'être 1 - Figure Ontologique* (Éditions Fayard, 2014), 39; my translation.
21 Badiou, *L'Être et l'évènement*, 53–54; Ray Brassier, "Presentation as Anti-Phenomenon in Alain Badiou's Being and Event," *Continental Philosophy Review* 39, no. 1 (2006): 59–77.
22 Jana Ndiaye Berankova and Alain Badiou, *L'éclat de l'absolu: dialogues avec Alain Badiou* (Suture Press, 2025), 107; my translation.
23 Forthcoming as Alain Badiou et al., "Overlap: Interview with Alain Badiou," in *M=O?* (Suture Press, 2026).
24 Forthcoming in Badiou et al., "Overlap: Interview with Alain Badiou."
25 Badiou has also developed an earlier theme of "the non-dialectical or inseparable unity of a theory and a practice" in the 2000s. See Alain Badiou, *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, Bloomsbury revelations edition, trans. Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens (Bloomsbury, 2014), 79. Thanks to Frank Ruda for a reminder of this.
26 V.I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (Foreign Languages Press, 1972). For a classic treatment of this problem see Lucio Colletti, *Marxism and Hegel*, trans. Lawrence Garner (Verso Editions, 1979).
27 Benedict de Spinoza, *Opera*, ed. Carl Gebhart, 4 with Supplementa (Carl Winters, 1925), vol. IV, 240, 6-15. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and George Di Giovanni, *The Science of Logic*, Cambridge Hegel Translations (Cambridge university press, 2010), 87.
28 See W. Hugh Woodin, *The Axiom of Determinacy, Forcing Axioms, and the Nonstationary Ideal*, vol. 1, De Gruyter Series in Logic and Its Applications (De Gruyter, 1999).
29 See forthcoming Becky Vartabedian, "Three Stories About Decision: Badiou, Parmenides, And The Persistence Of Thinking Being," in *M=O?* (Suture Press, 2026). As an alternative, Roden's Xenophilia is also pertinent. See David Roden, "Subtractive-Catastrophic Xenophilia," *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture* 16, nos. 1–2 (2019): 40–46, https://doi.org/10.51151/identities.v16i1-2.371.
30 W. Hugh Woodin, "IN SEARCH OF ULTIMATE-*L* THE 19TH MIDRASHA MATHEMATICAE LECTURES," *The Bulletin of Symbolic Logic* 23, no. 1 (2017): 13, https://doi.org/10.1017/bsl.2016.34. Akihiro Kanamori, *The Higher Infinite: Large Cardinals in Set Theory from Their Beginnings* (Springer, 2003), 320–21. See also W. Hugh Woodin, "The Realm of the Infinite," in *Infinity*, 1st ed., ed. Michael Heller (Cambridge University Press, 2011), https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511976889.006.
31 Alain Badiou, *The Immanence of Truths: Being and Event III*, with Kenneth Reinhard and Susan Spitzer (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2022), 396.
32 Berankova and Badiou, *L'éclat de l'absolu*, 385.
33 Berankova and Badiou, *L'éclat de l'absolu*, 391.

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Excrescence, Errancy, and Dis-Ease in Badiou's Being and Event Trilogy

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Abstract: Excrescence carries with it a sense of abnormality, describing a diseased outgrowth of tissue. In Badiou's *Being and Event* I, excrescence is not pathological or anomalous; rather, its excess is ontologically authorized by the axiom of the power set, the theorem of the point of excess, and Cantor's Theorem. This account of excrescence is one of the dialectical transformations Badiou's thought invokes in the passage away from classical Marxism and to a more contemporary conception of its theoretical and practical commitments.

This ontological authorization does not protect against pathological or dis-eased formations, however. The errancy of meta-structural formations affirmed in Easton's Theorem brings ontology to its limit and thus invites what Badiou calls a "conceptless choice" concerning the naming – and thus, the management – of excess from excrescence. I discuss two examples of pathological excess, what I call here "dis-ease," in the *Being and Event* project: the practices of covering-over in *The Immanence of Truths: Being and Event III*; and the operations of an obscure subject in *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II*. Unlike the parasite or the gangrenous appendage, these pathological instances require sensitivity – the practice of "keeping watch" – to their operations capable to interrupt or redirect the effects of dis-ease.

Keywords: Badiou, dialectic, excrescence, errancy, Easton's Theorem, Marxism

Excrescence carries with it a sense of abnormality, describing a diseased outgrowth of tissue sufficient to "disrupt the normal functioning of the (animal) organism."[1] Marx refers to the Second Empire as "a parasitic excrescence" on the nation of France, despite the government's claims to be the best representative of and most capable of forging national unity in the face of Prussian threats.[2] Engels suggests that amputation is the best course of action in response to state excrescence.[3] Michael Marder's novel proposal is to argue that excrescence is no abnormality but is in fact *the* logic of growth with "two distinct dimensions: both the actual going-outside-itself of a living being and what virtually overflows the strict confines of the concept."[4] Marder acknowledges, however, the prospect for *anomalous* growth (inward) that may become pathological: "just think," he says, of the pain caused by ingrown nails."[5]

Excrescence in Badiou's *Being and Event* project is – as in the classical Marxist analysis – intertwined with notions of the *State*. Where the latter is an excess marked by errancy, the former effectively defines excess in both set-theoretic ontology and in the so-called "historico-social situation" developed especially in Meditation 9 of *Being and Event I.* Here, excrescence is not itself pathological or anomalous; in fact, its excess is ontologically authorized by the axiom of the power set and the theorem of the point of excess.

Pathological or anomalous characteristics are effects of what Badiou calls "a conceptless choice" concerning how this excess should be named or managed, a choice invoked at the limit of ontology prescribed in Cantor's and Easton's theorems and assessed in Meditation 26 of *Being and Event*.[6] Two examples of pathological excess, what I call here "disease," appear in the *Being and Event* project: the practices of covering-over in *The Immanence of Truths: Being and Event III*; and the operations of an obscure subject in *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II*. Unlike the parasite or the gangrenous appendage, these pathological instances require sensitivity – what Badiou calls in *Being and Event I* the practice of "keeping watch" – to their operations, sensitivity that is capable to interrupt or redirect the effects of this pathology.

1

Excrescence is introduced in Meditations 8 and 9 of *Being and Event I* (2005) to establish a conceptual symmetry with the singular situation that produces an event. Where a singular situation has elements in it that are presented but not represented - and these presented elements are candidates for the disruption of that situation – the excrescent situation has represented elements that are not presented in the original situation. The excrescent situation maintains representation in excess of presentation, inclusion in excess of belonging.

Getting at excrescence invites a refresher on Badiou's use of *terms* and *parts* in his set-theoretic ontology. Terms are the elements counted in any set; parts describe the sub-multiples or subsets formed from these elements. In Meditation 8, Badiou explains that individual *terms* may be excrescent when they are "represented in a situation but not presented."[7] Excrescent terms are ontologically authorized, first by the axiom of the power set, which affirms the subsets of any set to be counted as a set, and second by theorem of the point of excess. This theorem holds "that given a presented multiple, the one-multiple composed from its subsets, whose existence is guaranteed by the Axiom of the Power Set, is essentially 'larger' than the initial multiple."[8] Relative to situations – the most primitive ontological formations possible – the theorem of the point of excess makes space for sub-multiples or parts always in excess of what is presented therein; while the terms presented in the situation exist, the excess parts formed from these do not. That is, the parts are re-aggregations of existing terms.

Consider this rudimentary example, in which the subsets {(*Ø*), (*B*), (*N*), (*T*), (*B, N, T*), (*N, T*), (*B, N*), (*B, T*)} are each normal representations of the set with elements (*B, N, T*). Each of the subsets can be counted as sets, and the subsets themselves can be counted together as a set (per the axiom of the power set). This combination of subsets is, per the theorem of the point of excess, quantitatively larger than the original set.

In this case, there is nothing excrescent about the subsets (the parts of the original situation), nor are there excrescent elements in the set (the terms of the original situation).

Excrescence can apply to individual elements or terms, but it also describes the structure applied to a situation. "An excrescence," Badiou explains, "is a one of the state that is not a one of the native structure, an existent of the state which in-exists in the situation of which the state is the state."[9] When I describe the original set (*B, N, T*) as "*Becky's nephew and nieces*," the description is accurate, but the descriptor is neither presented in, nor is it represented in the original structure. There may have been, at one time, excrescent terms – where each term was represented but not yet presented (that is, where one of my nieces or nephews was expected or planned hadn't arrived) – but as each term 'presented,' the situation tended toward normalization.

The further – still accurate! – descriptors, "*K's Kids*" or "*E's Kids*," or organizing principles like "*male-presenting,*" "*female-presenting*," "*twenty-somethings*" or "*teenagers*" are each ones of "the state," or resulting from the imposition of *metastructure.* This metastructure deploys a shorthand for each of the subsets. Badiou describes this metastructure as the State of the situation, and it "solely exercises its domination according to a law destined to form-one out of the *parts* of a situation."[10] It is more expedient, I suppose, to refer to my nephews and nieces by parentage in familiar conversation, using *K's Kids*, for example. Even though the included subset (*B, N, T*) organizes these elements according to parentage, that excess descriptor *K's Kids* may apply. The excess descriptor guarantees "a uniformity of effect," and the State is "the law that guarantees that there is Oneness, not in the immediacy of society – that is always provided for by a non-state structure – but amongst the set of its subsets."[11] *K's Kids* encompasses all the relevant parts and their possible modes of organization, or the various modes of having been counted-as-one: {(Ø), (*B*), (*N*), (*T*), (*B, N, T*), (*N, T*), (*B, N*), (*B, T*)}; but it does not (and cannot) apply to the original set (*B, N, T*).

These secondary structures are applied by the State of the situation. Its "role ... is to qualify, one by one, each of the *compositions of compositions of multiples* whose general consistency, in respect of *terms*, is secured by the situation."[12] In other words, the State re-counts that which has been counted. Alberto Toscano explains that the theorem of the point of excess "means that there is always something in the representative operation of the State that stands in a 'relation' of *excrescence* to the situation."[13] It adds an additional layer to an already-consistent, already-stable organization of situations according to principles of terms (elements) and parts (sets, subsets). The quantitative expansion is also clear – and also theorematically authorized – the application of metastructure adds to the available combinations of represented elements, and both are in excess of the original presentation.

This accounting establishes the position of an excrescence relative to both situations and the terms these organize. A secondary structure does not come from "the immediacy of society" in the historico-social situation; it is not immanent to the subsets or parts of the situation in the ontological situation. Instead, it functions at a remove, establishing a gap between the State and its operations on one hand, and the individuals or elements presented in a set, a situation, a world on the other.

2

In Meditation 8 of *Being and* Event, the discussion of excrescence and State meta-structure develop an ontological map.[14] Badiou's historical and social analysis of excrescence in Meditation 9 allows him to distinguish his dialectical vector from that of classical Marxism. Because, for the classical Marxist, the "state is always the state of the ruling class," the eclipse of the bourgeoisie is also the eclipse of the state; this orientation keeps dialectical tensions between the bourgeois and proletariat classes. For Badiou, however, both the excess the State counts *and* the State itself are ontologically prescribed since these are consistent with the axiom of the power set and the theorem of the point of excess; as such, the State maintains a *permanence* relative to both the ontological situation and the historico-social situation.

This analysis begins with Badiou acknowledging what Marx and Engels got right about the state, particularly their "having understood that the State, in essence, does not entertain any relationship with individuals."[15] Marx's (1871) and Engels's (1891) respective reflections on the Paris Commune bring forward these elements of State "distance" operation and structure that Badiou affirms in his own reading.

Marx presents the Commune as the antithesis to the excesses of the Second Empire, including its total corruption and "shameless display of gorgeous, meretricious and debased luxury."[16] At the same time, the Empire presented itself as a "Party of Order" situated at the head of a political coalition that included Thiers' bourgeois republicans. It posited itself as the solution to all the populace's problems, at the same time it was riven by scandal, corruption, and its own internal rot; as Marx notes, the Empire "professed to unite all classes by reviving for all the chimera of national glory."[17] The unity the Second Empire claimed is the ground over which Marx describes this government as excrescent. With its material excesses and disregard for the conditions of the working class, the government still somehow "claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to the nation itself from which it was but a parasitic excrescence."[18] The wish to inspire national glory as a substitute for governing and pointing to itself as the true embodiment of France, while at the same time accumulating to itself corruption, scandal, and riches at the expense of those who would be governed express

the pathological valence of excrescence. The Second Empire is an opportunistic parasite drawing from a captive host.

While Marx's insights recognize the capacities of the State to exploit the gap between itself and the individuals it would govern, Engels's 1891 remarks on the Commune's 20th anniversary identify the *durability* of the State. Indeed, Engels notes says that in the two decades since the Commune – and with the benefit of time and information to learn more about the innerworkings of the Second Empire, Thiers' government, and the Commune itself – it doesn't matter whether the State in question is a monarchy or a republic. Neither mode will transform society in service of the proletariat, since "the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another."[19] In assessing this claim and others like it, in which Engels notes the true aim of the State as an aid to class-based oppression, Badiou elaborates two functions that contribute to the State's durability: bureaucracy and coercion.

The administrative and managerial functions of the state – its bureaucratic function – are, according to Badiou, "far more structural and permanent than the coercive function."[20] The State's concern with what becomes "the gigantic, infinite network" of subsets in its purview means that its operations never reach the individual as such and, as a result are more difficult to disrupt or challenge. In 'The Factory as Event Site,' Badiou's essay concerning the status of the worker in contemporary Marxist politics, he gives the *company* as an example of an excrescence at work. The company "is a special name" used "to designate this singleton of the worker-multiple that is the factory."[21] The factory is presented as the worker-multiple and then represented as the workers' place – the workers are never presented in this context, and the *company* is applied to the factory as "a pure re-presentation, a terms of the state."[22] *Company* is an additional layer against recognizing workers, a generalization 'twice removed' from those on the factory floor. By establishing the *company* referent, the workers are never counted or acknowledged as workers and can be shifted inside and outside the structure (promoted, fired, reassigned, etc.) without any effect on the company as a managing structure.

Coercion can be traced to "the immediate structuring of terms according to a law which 'comes from elsewhere'" and "forms the very mode in which one can be reinforced in the count of parts."[23] *Company* or *unionism* (a second example of excrescence Badiou identifies in 'The Factory as Event Site') each offer ways of referring to the group of laborers doing work on the factory floor; these names are relevant to that group, but they also have the outcome of assigning a principle of unicity to something removed from the workers. Indeed, *company* and *union* fail to recognize any of the workers themselves and as workers. This is a failure of accounting – an indifference to presentation that has as its counterweight a constant and intensive concern for representation. This

indifference breaks the integral relations between situation, structure, and metastructure that might otherwise secure stability.

Engels's recognition of bureaucracy and coercion as evidence of State excrescence allow Badiou to identify an "ambivalence" in the classical position, "concentrated in one point: thinking - since it is solely from the standpoint of the State that there are excrescences - that the State itself is an excrescence."[24] Inquiring after the origins of this ambivalence, Badiou notes that the State's emergence is appended to the antagonism holding between classes, and not immanent to the classes themselves. As such, the State is separate, invested with arms and the means to carry out "structured violence" and to intervene in the antagonisms between bourgeois and proletariat classes to avoid "a permanent state of civil war" on account of their competing interests.[25] Put another way, Badiou explains that the classical Marxist position holds that the State is required because "singular and normal terms maintain a sort of antagonistic non-liaison between themselves, or a state of unbinding."[26] The State "solves" this non-liaison, which Badiou attributes to (using language of his account, again) differences in presentation; for the bourgeoisie, everything that is presented is represented, while for the proletariat, there is a gap between presentation and representation that favors presentation and makes space for transformation of the existing order. Classical Marxism holds that the modification of these differences - that is, the overthrow of the bourgeoisie - also relieves the need for the State to manage the antagonism. Engels's reflections on the Commune and state power suggest an amputation is required, something that an eventually victorious proletariat "cannot avoid having to lop off at once as much as possible."[27] If "the State is always the State of the ruling class," as the slogan goes, then the collapse of the ruling class will carry the State apparatus with it.

Badiou acknowledges that these early insights on excrescence carry "a profound idea: the State is not founded upon the social bond, which it would express, but rather upon unbinding, which it prohibits."[28] This insight gives the *reason* for the State - its ensuring stability underwrites any defensive and dominating activity that would preserve the order it underwrites. However, the classical Marxist relation between State, parts, and terms, is incompatible with "the unpresentable errancy of the void, and the irredeemable excess of belonging over inclusion - which necessitates the re-securing of the one and the securing of structure."[29] Classical Marxism keeps void and excess together as features of presentation, posits the proletariat as non-representable, which is different than the unpresented assessment of the void in Badiou's account, and the count as the "non-universal of bourgeois interests."[30] The State can function as an excrescence - a surmountable excess - because, according to Badiou, Engels "did not understand that the excess which it (the State) treats is ineluctable, for it is a theorem of being."[31]

For Badiou, and the Leninist-Maoist trajectory he sees himself as having inherited, "the State as such - which is to say the re-securing of the one over the multiple of parts (or parties) - cannot be so easily attacked or destroyed."[32] He cites Lenin's "despair over the 'obscene permanence' of the State," and Mao's observation following the Cultural Revolution "that not much had changed after all."[33] Indeed, and for Badiou, the State's persistence is an axiomatic matter, authorized first by the axiom of the power set and second by the theorem of the point of excess. As such, the State and its functions cannot be suppressed or eliminated. The State is an excrescence insofar as it exceeds that which is presented in the original situation. It is *indifferent* to the ways the gap the metastructure creates is exploited; put another way, the way in which the State comes to generate dis-ease is appended to *errancy* and not to its *excess*.

3

In the historical and social analysis Badiou develops in Meditation 9, it is clear that State excess can become a problem. Its *errancy* is such that the State's bureaucratic or coercive operations can far exceed that which it organizes. The State can operate in a predatory fashion; it treats the subset as an object for its management (at best) and/or its domination (at worst). Badiou puts a finer point on this transformation by the State, saying,

> ... despite the protestations and declarations to the contrary, it is always evident that in the end, when it is a matter of people's *lives* – which is to say, of the multiple whose one they have received – the State is not concerned. Such is the ultimate and ineluctable depth of its separation.[34]

Badiou's assessment here produces a trajectory that confirms the State's work of coercion or domination. The gap and possible errancy established by the State do are untroubled by the true matters of people's lives and may – by all accounts – operate *in spite of these lives*.

Being and Event posits an ontological account of how this gap and errancy emerge. The axiom of the power set and theorem of the point of excess manage a *local* "relation between a situation and its state," which establishes the consequence that "the state is *different* from the situation whose state it is."[35] Put directly, the state is different because it is larger than the original situation. This is obvious in the case of finite sets: for a set with three elements (*B, N, T*), its powerset has eight sets {(Ø), (*B*), (*N*), (*T*), (*B, N, T*), (*N, T*), (*B, N*), (*B, T*)}. Tzuchien Tho explains that this reflects a basic mathematical rule about succession. He says, "The basic reckoning here is that the powerset will have a cardinality of 2^n, where *n* is the cardinality of the original set," or the number of elements that original set contains.[36]

Cantor's Theorem, which holds that *for any set A the set of all subsets of A (known as the power set of A) has a strictly greater cardinality than A itself*, installs this difference between state and situation globally, at the scale of alephs, or transfinite cardinals.[37] As Tho notes, the same procedure for succession and cardinality applies here: the powerset of a transfinite cardinal ω_0 is $2^{\omega 0}$.[38] This is a rule-governed activity that – uncontroversially, perhaps – applies to numbers both finite and infinite. However, a problem emerges in the consequences of this application. For finite sets, 2^n yields a quantity that is recognizable larger and by a degree that can be evaluated: *eight* is larger than *three* by *five* units, etc. Greater-than and less-than have a sense in this context, and this is a procedure (in Badiou's words) of *localization*. However, while the powerset of ω_0 is legible according to this same rule, we cannot know how much larger $2^{\omega 0}$ is in relation to ω_0. We do not have the same resources to localize this result.[39]

Easton's theorem is proffered to address this as a way of moving forward mathematically. Badiou explains:

> given a cardinal λ, which is either ω_0 or a successor cardinal, it is coherent with the Ideas of the multiple to choose, as the value of $p(\lambda)$ (the powerset of that cardinal) ... any cardinal π, provided that it is superior to λ and that it is a successor cardinal.[40]

When we cannot pin down the value of an infinite number, Easton's theorem suggests that it is acceptable to *decide* any value that meets the requirements of superiority or succession. Perhaps it is ω_1 or "ω_{347} or $\omega_{(\omega 0 +18)}$, or whatever other cardinal as immense as you like, provided it is a successor."[41] In this choosing, the state of the situation becomes subject to "un-measure."[42] In fact, it is an *impasse of ontology* that produces this un-measure; that which we would use to measure is, at the level of cardinality, no measure at all. The procedural gap between the State and the situation whose parts it manages – what Badiou calls a "chasm" opening "between the structure in which the immediacy of belonging is delivered, and the metastructure which counts as one the parts and regulates the inclusions" – cannot be managed *except arbitrarily.*[43] Arbitrariness requires a decision to break the deadlock, and a decision is the source of possible errancy.

4

The consequence of Easton's theorem for Badiou's project is this introduction of "un-measure" at the level of structure tasked with measure, the "introduction of errancy in quantity on the part of the very instance from which we expected – precisely – the guarantee and fixity of the situation."[44] This insight marks the ontological moment at which the *anomalous* operations of structure emerge, some of which generate pathological

phenomenological or onto-logical effects – what I call *dis-ease*. I briefly address two examples in the broader *Being and Event* project: the procedure of *covering-over*, described in *The Immanence of Truths*; and the operations of an *obscure subject*, articulated in *Logics of Worlds*.

Errant Procedure: Covering-Over

Badiou defines covering-over as "...superimposing a kind of mosaic of finitude over the potential infinity of a situation."[45] Using the occasion of remarks at the Théâtre de la Commune in early 2016 intended to consider "the gradual reconstitution of the Idea of communism and its consequences," Badiou presented a parodic New Year's address and one fitted to "the world in question," which is the world following the terrorist attacks of November 2015 that included the Stade de France and Bataclan among its targets.[46] Badiou presents himself as doing the work of covering-over, installing instances of finitude as slogans like "security is the essence of freedom" and "the police are the essence of freedom," statements which themselves indicate a basic contradiction in prioritizing mechanisms of domination as the "essence" of freedom.[47]

In Badiou's parodic characterization, he uses the state mobilization of police as the mechanism for "covering-over," for mitigating "risks," or perceived threats to state security, through tactics like "preventive detention, the restriction of the right of freedom of movement, house arrest, the deprivation of nationality, the expansion of the right of the police to shoot anything that moves," and increased and unchecked search and surveillance practices.[48] To protect the state (and those under its watch), the police "cast an extremely finite prison-like shadow over anyone who can be suspected of infinite tendencies and thus to re-educate them by the most republican methods."[49] Speaking, again, in his parodic mode Badiou describes these as "the finite methods of the police infinity," and insists that these methods will root out the root of infinity, "deradicalize anything that moves and to tear out all the roots of radical thought" through the exercise of violence masked as "security," or "the essence of freedom."[50]

The tactics named in this parody includes actions taken against people classified as "Roma," nativist attitudes masquerading as 'true' republican values, the expulsion of foreigners to "Elsewhere, in any case," and the orientation toward alternative facts confers relations of suspicion on perceived homophones (e.g., Commune, whose members "were almost real communists" and thus worthy of the finitization and de-radicalization in the form of assassination and death visited on 23,000 French citizens).[51] The speaker evades accountability related to the strategic litany and its outcome: "I have no idea contrary to the ideas they have," this leader (speaking through Badiou as their cipher) says, "except the idea of not having any ideas, which is not an idea but an opinion that

I don't want to impose on anyone, even if I'm imposing it on myself."[52] That *domination* and its tactics could come to stand in some way for *freedom* is an instance of precisely the errancy Easton's Theorem makes possible. The official in Badiou's parody recognizes this, of course, and is themselves reduced to speaking in a toothless, nonsensical relativism.[53]

Badiou explains that the aim of these covering-over operations, presenting a finite set of actions as positive and necessary to curb the prospect of disruption, "is to stifle possibilities inasmuch as they are risks and to assume identities without justifying them other than by their established existence."[54] That is, from the perspective of the body capitalizing on errancy, all threats are the same and are treated as such. These are tactics of propaganda designed to re-casts infinite potential as a risk to the status quo, and as a threat to the dominant social and political order. This effort, Badiou explains, is "unfortunately" successful "in convincing many militants of the emerging, fledgling truth that what they thought was new was very old, and what they thought was right was criminal."[55] For those militants, the *dis-ease* that covering-over produces is a form of temporal dislocation relative to their political efforts, a sense of being out-of-step, or out-of-time with what 'freedom' seems to mean.

Errant Operator: Obscure Subject

A second example of errancy at work is the *obscure subject* described in *Logics of Worlds*. In a post-evental world, in which the present is assembling itself anew in the event's wake, the obscure subject emerges as an operator capable of occulting the creative power capable of this new organization.

This operator is discussed in the character of the Roman patrician, alarmed by the slave revolt unfolding under the sign "Spartacus." The obscure subject is not the reactionary subject - not the New Philosopher who has recanted their revolutionary activities as the woeful missteps of youth, the "renegade rallying to consensus" described in Badiou's meditation on the Thermidorean reaction.[56] Rather, the obscure subject demands, as Badiou explains, "an abolition" of the post-evental present, "as the effect of a sovereign action, invoked by the subject in his prayers, lamentations, or curses," accomplished by engineering "the descent of this present into the night of non-exposition."[57] This is not simply a reinstallation of the previous order, but it is the return to this order by its occultation, its "enclosure" of the unbinding produced in the evental occurrence. In other words, it reinstalls the previous order in full view of those testifying to an evental occurrence and in spite of its unfolding. It is not an ostrich ducking its head; rather, the obscure subject is the bulldozing of the new, done in the open.

Badiou insists that the obscure subject "crucially calls on an atemporal fetish: the incorruptible and indivisible over-body, be it City,

God, or Race."[58] This fetish disarticulates or dislocates emancipatory statements from the militant subjects that identify these. Where the reactive subject "conserves the form of the faithful subject as its articulated unconscious," the New Philosopher is always over-writing their former activist self, the obscure subject understands the transforming present as "its unconscious, its *lethal disturbance.*"[59] The obscure subject carries with it that which is "directly linked to the past, even if the becoming of the obscure subject crushes this past in the name of the sacrifice of the present."[60] The procedure by which the obscure subject does its work is something like the following: first, identify the vision of the present that is making headway after the event; second, identify an instrument; third, posit an abstraction to which that instrument is in service; fourth, use the abstraction and instrument together to subordinate the vision the transforming present wishes to realize.

Consider the abstraction "woke" that came to describe portions of the American social and political consciousness following the highly public police murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in 2020. The vision of transformation these events catalyzed was one of accountability for police actions, on the way to some semblance of reckoning with the racist and colonialist structures at work in the United States even prior to its founding. The resonances of these events and the present they inspired became cluttered by nationalist and nativist talking points that characterized "woke" as a weakness and betrayal expressed in diversity, equity, and inclusion practices adopted in relation to the consciousness-raising protests and refusals following the Floyd murder (in particular). The phrase "DEI" or "DEI Hire" became a racist dog whistle - an instrument - with staying power: with the re-election of Trump in 2024, the combination of this instrument and its abstraction drove calls for accountability and structural justice out of the conversation.

The obscure subject's appeal to a transcendent anchor (in this case, something like a pure Race or pure Nation) is intended to fully deny the trace of any evental transformation and silence those who would testify to its unfolding.[61] As a consequence, this anchor produces a double annihilation: both the evental trace at work organizing the present and the faithful subject carrying the trace forward are denied. Together, these efforts serve to obscure or occult the present that – without its intervention – might otherwise re-organize according to the intervention of faithful subjects and the pursuit of post-evental truths. Badiou identifies the efforts of annihilation with propaganda or with police action, both designed to accomplish the "occultation of [the event's trace] as truth."[62]

What has emerged in the wake of this so-called "war on woke" is a militarized police force roaming the streets of major American cities, hunting, arresting, and detaining those this police force deems to be "alien," without concerns for due process and under the sign of immigration enforcement. The over-written and over-ridden present

the obscure subject – what Badiou describes as a de-articulation "in appearing the formal data of fidelity" – accomplishes is that which enables all manner of racist, sexist, homophobic, and ableist oversteps that clog our media feeds. More perniciously, the operations of the obscure subject are behind those who drive unmarked SUVs through the streets targeting perceived "illegal aliens" on another.[63]

> *"Just think,"* we might say, *"of the pain inflicted by family separation."*
>
> *"Just think,"* we might say, *"of the pain inflicted by warrantless arrest and deportation."*

5

Alain Badiou explains to the reader of *The Immanence of Truths* that his attention to the *infinite-finite* relation is, in fact attention to the relation between *non-domination* and *domination* – what he calls the "logic of the problem of emancipation.[64]" This positive logic concerns the articulation of conditions in which a creative and emancipatory infinity can escape its being trapped by finite structures. Resistant, non-dominating logics require a departure from the classical Marxist framing of oppression an outcome of the oppositions between classes. Badiou says, "we are no longer treating (classical Marxism's) concrete sequences directly as an explicit contradiction between disjoint and separate terms."[65] That is, conflict is not assigned to the old divisions of *proletariat* and *bourgeoisie,* which an analysis of excrescence and the State of the situation in *Being and Event* revealed. Instead, the terms of *domination* and *non-domination* come to the fore. Badiou is clear that understanding domination requires understanding the use of oppression as its primary tool. Oppression "is driven by the fear, the risk, the possibility that something might emerge that has the potential to be radically in excess over the society of which the current rulers ... are the guardians."[66] In authoritarian and neo-fascist contexts, especially those emergent in the tenuously democratic west, the logic of emancipation takes on a new urgency; the task, for those of us living in these contexts, is to develop a sensitivity to these instances in which the conditions productive of emancipation are quelled by State interventions. Our task, then, is minimally the recognition of errancy and the dis-ease it purposefully (and effectively) manufactures.

Badiou challenges the sturdiness of the maxim, "wherever there is oppression, there is resistance," saying that this maxim is "unfortunately not entirely true, not automatically true."[67] He insists that oppression is *not* the default social setting, because if this were true, then "resistance, which is an intermittent subjective figure, would not make any sense."[68] The existing order, the system dominating social life, will take additional

– and ever-enlarging – steps to ensure its mechanisms remain hidden. The general order, that which would not be disrupted, is a closed order with the following characteristics. First, its aim is to perpetuate itself and to preserve its closed status; second, it requires the prevention of and foreclosure against "at all costs something qualitatively foreign to this closure from appearing"; and, third, this order is appropriately characterized as "the preservation of a certain type of finitude."[69] Resistance is the tactic that reveals oppression as the structure overwriting the conditions of social life.

Badiou's phenomenological account of covering-over concludes by identifying "the imperative of our time," which is "to assert everywhere that truths only exist to the extent that we are indifferent to their constant concealment by the ruses of covering-over."[70] He insists that "somewhere in the world, there must still remain evidence of the fact that covering-over occurred, and support for inspiring, in oneself and others, a necessary uncovering operation."[71] Despite the saturation of propagandistic covering-over, strategies that layer the appearance of State power over the real common social and political bonds that unite communities, or the operations of the obscure subject that work to crush opposition to its dominance, Badiou reminds his reader that the task is one Samuel Beckett would recognize: "I must go on," he notes, preparing the reader for a discussion of Beckett as the exemplar for the resistance he prescribes.

Such a task informs the orientation of a figure Badiou introduces at the end of *Being and Event*'s Meditation 9 - the political activist, who is "a patient watchman of the void instructed by the event," and is not "a warrior beneath the walls of the State."[72] The activist knows their task is not and can never be the ruin of the State, since the 20th and 21st Centuries have demonstrated its durability, but rather to go on, to inspire an uncovering operation, to assert the existence of truths, and to do so patiently, attentively, and with the sturdiest of commitments to non-domination.

1 Marder 2019, pp. 63-64.
2 Marx and Engels 1977, p. 633.
3 Marx and Engels 1977, p. 629.
4 Marder 2019, p. 63.
5 Marder 2019, p. 63.
6 Badiou 2005, p. 280.
7 Badiou 2005, p. 99.
8 Badiou 2005, p. 84.
9 Badiou 2005, p. 100.
10 Badiou 2005, p. 105.
11 Badiou 2005, p. 105.
12 Badiou 2005, p. 105.
13 Toscano 2004, p. 209.
14 I have argued elsewhere that this is the appropriate register in which to understand Badiou's ontological framework, his use of mathematics, in the *Being and Event* project (see, e.g., Vartabedian 2018a: 140-147, 152-154; Vartabedian 2018b: 221-222). Briefly, I suggest a "subtractive" reading of Badiou's work, recognizing that the ontology, "though presented first in the system, offers a retrospective mapping" of any world and its ontological framework (Vartabedian 2018a: 161). As subtractive, this reading follows the suggestion of A.J. Bartlett and Alex Ling, who describe subtraction as a "divestment procedure," or a reading 'down' such that any world-as-situation is ultimately linked to the void set, Ø (Vartabedian 2018a: 137; quoting Bartlett and Ling 2014: 3).This reading is intended to address critiques of Badiou's work concerning the origin of the State, especially as these have been proffered by Adrian Johnston and Geoff Pfeifer, including questions like who counts? and where from? (See, e.g., Vartabedian 2018a: 152).
15 Badiou 2005, p. 104.
16 Marx and Engels 1977, p. 631.
17 Marx and Engels 1977, p. 630.
18 Marx and Engels 1977, p. 633.
19 Marx and Engels 1977, p. 627.
20 Badiou 2005, p. 106.
21 Badiou 2006a, p. 173.
22 Badiou 2006a, p. 173
23 Badiou 2005, p. 107.
24 Badiou 2005, p. 108.
25 Badiou 2005, p. 108.
26 Badiou 2005, p. 109.
27 Marx and Engels 1977, p. 629.
28 Badiou 2005, p. 109.
29 Badiou 2005, p. 110.
30 Badiou 2005, p. 110.
31 Badiou 2005, p. 110.
32 Badiou 2005, p. 110.
33 Badiou 2005, p. 110.
34 Badiou 2005, pp. 107-108.
35 Badiou 2005, p. 275.
36 Tho 2020, p. 160.
37 Badiou 2005, p. 275.
38 Tho 2020, p. 160.
39 Badiou 2005, p. 278.
40 Badiou 2005, p. 279.
41 Badiou 2005, p. 280.
42 Badiou 2005, p. 278.
43 Badiou 2005, p. 280.
44 Badiou 2005, p. 280.
45 Badiou 2022, p. 193.
46 Badiou 2022, p. 193.
47 Badiou 2022, pp. 193, 194.
48 Badiou 2022, pp. 194.
49 Badiou 2022, p. 194.
50 Badiou 2022, p. 194.
51 Badiou 2022, pp. 194-196.
52 Badiou 2022, p. 197.
53 Badiou imagines this relativism by modeling Christian Duteil's satirical greetings. Badiou follows the strong security-and-policing language with claims like "I even think it's only right that everyone, given the principle of security and finitude, should think that their own customs are right just because they're their own" (IT 197).
54 Badiou 2022, p. 198.
55 Badiou 2022, p. 200.
56 Badiou 2006b, p. 123.
57 Badiou 2009, p. 59
58 Badiou 2009: 60.
59 Badiou 2009: 61.
60 Badiou 2009: 61.
61 Badiou 2009, pp. 59-60.
62 Badiou 2009, p. 60.
63 Badiou 2009, p. 61.
64 Badiou 2022, p. 199.
65 Badiou 2022, p. 199.
66 Badiou 2022, p. 199.
67 Badiou 2022, p. 199.
68 Badiou 2022, p. 199.
69 Badiou 2022, p. 199.
70 Badiou 2022, p. 203.
71 Badiou 2022, p. 203.
72 Badiou 2005, p. 111.

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Philosophy and Maoism in France: Inteview with Alain Badiou

Valerio Romitelli and Alessandro Russo

Recorded in Paris on June 9, 1978

Q. In *Théorie de la contradiction*, you say that it is necessary to take stock of the philosophical and political debate of recent years in France. The editorial introduction to the "Collection Yenan" series, in which your book was published, emphasizes the existence of deep divisions between very distinct fronts after 1968. Furthermore, in *De l'idéologie*, you and François Balmès undertake a very rigorous critique of Althusser's theoretical positions in recent years. In Italy, however, French intellectual and political debates, although often translated and well known, are rarely read as the result of deep divisions, perhaps because in Italy, only exceptionally, truly opposing intellectual and political fronts are formed. For example, it is currently challenging to form an opinion on Althusser's position, which remains unclear amid the controversies surrounding the PCF. Some in Italy consider him a reference point for radical criticism of revisionism. In contrast, others cite him as an example of the breadth of the PCF's intellectual and political horizon and, for 'transitivity', of the PCI.

A. In France, debates are always clearly differentiated, with groups and camps clashing over strongly controversial positions. At every political, social, philosophical, and intellectual conjuncture, camps are formed, structured by significant controversies and precise lines of demarcation. Some of these occupy the scene only for a short time, while others are more long-lasting, but all of them present clear distinctions within themselves. In addition to this first characteristic, it is worth noting that in France, all of this is closely linked to political positions and involves the most prominent intellectuals, who are often connected to the current debate and political situation in some way.

Speaking of Althusser, I think that to understand him clearly, we need to go back to the 1960s, specifically before 1968. Already in the early 1960s, a significant break occurred in the history of French intellectuality, marking a departure from the existentialist and phenomenological currents that had dominated since the end of the war. The central figure of these currents was Sartre, but the general issues addressed by other professional philosophers also revolved around an existential reading of Hegel. It was also true of those who called themselves Marxists, except a small group of intellectuals directly linked to the PCF—but it should be borne in mind that in France, the official intellectuals of the PCF have practically no influence in the cultural debate. It was therefore a Hegelianized Marxism, drawn entirely from Marx's early writings, from *Hegel's*

Critique of the Philosophy of Right and the *1844 Manuscripts*, read decidedly in the sense of humanism and the philosophy of consciousness.

Around 1963-64, a significant break occurred, which I believe was crucial, as it forcefully reintroduced a French tradition that had been somewhat repressed and fought against during the previous period. It was, in general, the positivist tradition of the philosophy of science, with a particular reference to Kantianism seen from this angle, which, as you know, took the form of structuralism. It was a moment of great success for structuralist thought, which had as its central axis the human sciences, including linguistics, a bit of psychoanalysis, and ethnology, among others. In reality, what was gaining ground in the midst of all this was the positivist academic tradition, characteristic of a specific legacy in French philosophy dating back to Comte, via Brunschvicg. In other words, it was a certain idealism built on the philosophy of science—quite different from Anglo-Saxon or American positivism—which ultimately posited that philosophy is epistemology, that philosophy is fundamentally the theory of science.

Now, Althusser's great stroke of genius was to place the reference to Marxism precisely in this field. What made Althusser successful and brought him to the forefront was that he said, precisely in this period, that Marxism too can ultimately be studied from an epistemological point of view, putting in place the idea that it is a science, an "epistemological break" with previous philosophies, with the English economists, etc. In this way, Althusser was able to place the debate on Marxism within this positivist atmosphere, tearing Marxism itself away from the way it had previously functioned, when it was tied entirely to a specific type of existential humanism.

All this is linked to the split in the international communist movement, that is, to the Sino-Soviet controversy of 1963-64. It should be borne in mind that at that time, this controversy was essentially a controversy of principle. If we read the texts of that period, we see that the Chinese communists attacked Khrushchev's revisionism primarily from the perspective of reaffirming Marxist and Leninist principles, their rigor, consistency, and universal validity. Thus, Althusser's battle on issues such as "Marxism is a science," "let us consider it as a science," "let us study the specificity of this science," etc., that is, the whole epistemological side of Althusser, found itself linked to this split in the international communist movement and to the first controversies connected with it.

All this made Althusser and Althusserianism the headquarters of those, particularly among intellectuals, who were breaking with the PCF because it was perceived as thoroughly opportunist, having

betrayed the colonial war in Algeria and increasingly abandoned any theoretical and practical reference to class politics. It is precisely from this point of view that Althusser's philosophical enterprise, especially that of *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*, between 1963-64 and 1968, organized a small nucleus of young philosophers who, on the one hand, were part of the movement to "epistemologize" philosophy and, on the other, took a stand against revisionism and the PCF. Althusser's importance, therefore, lies precisely in the fact that he found himself, in essence, at the convergence of several phenomena, as is the case with everything important. As I mentioned, there were primarily three phenomena: the revolt of intellectuals against the PCF, the split within the international communist movement, and the shift in the intellectual climate from existentialism and phenomenology to epistemology and the philosophy of science.

At this point, a peculiar phenomenon emerged among intellectuals, namely the emergence of something that could be called "Maoist epistemologists." It was they who founded the first truly Maoist organization, the Union de la Jeunesse Communiste (M-L), which was formed after the split in the PCF student movement. At this point, around 1967, what Althusser had produced was beginning to surpass him. While he never left the PCF and always conceived his logic within this party as a logic of opposition and not of rupture, this group of philosophers, of which I was also a part, began to try to invest all their points of reference in politics and to practice a logic of rupture also on the organizational level.

It was the period when this organization launched the movement to integrate into the reality of the factories (*mouvement d'établissement dans les usines*), and the question of the direct link between revolutionary intellectuals and the working class was raised in a new way. It was also the moment when the struggle to support the Vietnamese people took on entirely new forms, such as the Vietnam Grassroots Committees. On the other hand, the structuralist current continued to flourish independently, in the form of Lacanianism and linguistic studies, among others; it was also a time when everyone was flirting with structuralism.

Thus, we arrive at the threshold of 1968 in a very curious philosophical climate. 1968 was supposed to be a great revolutionary storm, a significant ideological revolt among youth, while the dominant ideological references were of a scientistic epistemological nature—even those who, at that time, referred to Maoism were still somewhat influenced by this atmosphere. The pamphlets and documents they published in the period leading up to 1968 were still marked by Althusserianism, albeit in a radical and ultra-left version.

In 1968, the cards were reshuffled entirely. On the one hand, there was a great revolt against all forms of academic knowledge,

against all forms of bourgeois organization of knowledge, and in particular against everything that referred more or less to scientism, positivism, and the mentality of the lords of science. On the other hand, 1968 was also a vast anti-revisionist revolt, directed head-on against the PCF, in which most intellectuals also participated, condemning the strategy of entryism and internal opposition from within the PCF.

The result of all this was that Althusserianism was violently attacked and practically disappeared from the scene throughout this period. What emerges instead in Maoism, in continuity and rupture with the previous period, is a fully developed reference to the Chinese Cultural Revolution. From this moment onwards, a relatively short period began, lasting from around 1968 to 1971, in which Maoism achieved ideological hegemony not only over militants and those within the movement but also over the intellectual class as a whole. At this time, even Foucault was linked to Maoist organizations and referred to them not so much in what he wrote, but in the way he took a stand on events. Sartre himself was also linked to Maoism during this period. It was a time when even those at *Tel Quel* became Maoists; in short, everyone declared themselves Maoists.

Q. What were the political organizations to which these intellectuals referred?

A. The organization most closely linked to intellectuals at that time was the Gauche Prolétarienne, which, despite everything, was the one most in continuity with the group of Althusserians who had founded the UJC (ML). The others who referred to China were, as in Italy, the small pro-Chinese parties, which never had any influence among intellectuals. At that time, the Gauche Prolétarienne was also a point of reference for those who were not organized within it and was particularly strong in the intellectual left, as exemplified by figures such as Foucault and Sartre. However, the relationship between the Gauche Prolétarienne and these intellectuals was based on an ideological Maoism that was more akin to Lin Biaoism. The Gauche Prolétarienne had adopted several ideological themes from Maoism, which resonated with both the prevailing climate of the time and the intellectual left's ideas. These were, essentially, all the democratic themes of Maoism: the connection with the masses, the justice of revolt, hostility to revisionism, and a particular kind of justification for violence, among others.

Q. In what sense was Lin Biaoism?

A. In the precise sense that one can distinguish in Lin Biao a tendency to completely isolate Mao's thought from the legacy of Marxism-Leninism and the general history of Marxism, making Maoism a kind of ethics, a morality of revolt, rather than the Marxism of our time, that is, the politics of the proletariat in its actuality. Just look at the texts by Mao that Lin Biao placed in the foreground: the 'three most widely read texts' (*Serving the People*, *In Memory of Norman Bethune*, *How Yu Gong Removed the Mountains*). These are indeed beautiful texts, but they are also texts that belong to the ideological-moral side of organized revolutionary practice, rather than political texts. This aspect was unquestionably present in the Maoism of French intellectuals of that period.

Why, for example, could Sartre have been a Maoist? I, too, was a Sartrean in my youth and therefore still have great respect and admiration for Sartre; however, it is a real problem to consider how Sartre could have been a Maoist. If he could be, it was for two reasons: first, because he understood, towards the end of the 1960s, that this was where the movement was, that this was where the revolt was. Sartre was someone who had always been on the side of revolt rather than on the side of the bourgeoisie. The second reason is that this Maoism was not entirely incompatible with the philosophy of freedom that had always been his own. Sartre could remain faithful to the "cogito," to "self-consciousness," to "freedom," to the themes of commitment and responsibility, and still be a Maoist. He could never have been an Althusserian, due to the latter's philosophy of science, but he could have been a Maoist after 1968 and a Lin Biaoist. He could adopt the kind of morality of revolt that had spread at that time, as exemplified by Maoism.

In France, therefore, this was a period when everyone was a Maoist, but mainly Maoists in the sense I have described. It was inevitable, however, that at a certain point this would split. On the one hand, there were those who continued along this path of moral Maoism, understood as the systematization of revolt at an immediate level and as the morality of revolt. As the mass effects of the 1968 movement faded, they no longer had any material to work with. So, they gradually dissolved, turning in the opposite direction, precisely because they were not Marxist at all; they were not linked to actual political processes of the proletariat, but were simply sensitive to revolt; and, since Maoism was the coloring of all this, these Maoists lasted as long as the post-1968 enthusiasm lasted.

On the other hand, some sought to deepen the question of Maoism from another perspective, aiming to comprehend what the reference to the Cultural Revolution truly meant, what was politically new in Maoism, not only in ideological and moral terms. Our organization, the U.C.F.M.L. (Groupe pour la fondation de l'Union des

Communistes de France Marxistes-Léninistes), was born practically out of this movement, stemming from the split in French Maoism that occurred in the post-1968 era.

Q. Were there specific, organized forms of Maoist political engagement among intellectuals at that time?

A. There are many examples. To provide a platform for all these intellectuals who identified with Maoism, the Gauche Prolétarienne established a democratic sector known as the "Red Aid". In one way or another, almost all the leading intellectuals – among those who were politicized, not Lacan, for example – found themselves in this organization. They thus participated in anti-repressive initiatives. Sartre, Foucault, Godard, Mauriac, and many other intellectuals, very different from one another, went out to sell *La Cause du Peuple* on the streets when its publication was banned. Then there were those from *Tel Quel* who dedicated their entire journal to China, Mao, contradiction, etc. Similarly, during this period, Foucault was involved in the Prison Action Committee. Even people like Glucksmann, who is now one of the new philosophers, were members of the Gauche Prolétarienne at the time. Many other examples could be given; one need only pick up the journals of those years to realize this hegemony. In any case, it should be noted that this period of hegemony was brief, lasting only three or four years, between 1969 and 1973.

On the other hand, this moral Maoism, contemporary with the revolt and drawing on the effects of the May storm, served as a kind of ideological reference point so broad that it allowed for considerable theoretical eclecticism. At the very moment when they were invoking Maoism and were more or less involved in organizations that declared themselves Maoist, Foucault was writing *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, and Sartre his *Flaubert*. These books show that for their authors, there was no profound or radical contradiction between the continuation of their inner quest—albeit somewhat modulated and reformulated—and their ideological affiliation with Maoism. This proves the extent to which this ideological Maoism lived only on the breath of the popular youth revolt, without touching at all the theoretical and ultimately political positions of the intellectuals who adhered to it.

These were, therefore, extremely fragile conditions, which did not withstand the profound changes in the situation. Starting in 1972-73, this ideological Maoism began to crack, disperse, and gradually disappear. The forces that accelerated this process were of different kinds but converged. First, there was the reconstitution of the political counteroffensive of the bourgeoisie, mainly in the

form of a revisionist political counteroffensive. 1972 was the year in which the "Common Program" was signed between the PCF and the PS, in which the revisionists proposed to everyone a deadline, a new political alternative, and a so-called counter-project. In 1968-72, on the other hand, they had been in difficulty and had parried the attacks as best they could, because they were under attack from all sides. That of 1972 was a first bourgeois counteroffensive, in the face of which French intellectuals proved extremely weak. While a few years earlier they had been able to denounce the revisionists as enemies of the mass movement, now, faced with the "Common Program," they did not know how to respond and even showed a certain willingness, albeit without explicitly adhering to it.

A second factor that undoubtedly accelerated this process was the evolution of the class struggle in China. There, too, the acute phase of the Cultural Revolution had ended, and the political problems that arose were now extremely complex problems of rebuilding the struggle between the two lines within the party. This also had significant repercussions for us, as taking a position on these issues was not as easy as taking a position at the time of the great mass clashes of the Cultural Revolution.

In addition, a third important factor that played a role in this situation was the fact that in France, the mass revolt had slowed down, and there was no longer the formidable deployment of all kinds of mass movements that had been seen in previous years.

Under the pressure of these three factors, purely ideological Maoism revealed its fragility on the political level. Either one was able to push the critique of modern revisionism to its ultimate consequences and give political substance to these critiques, or one decomposed politically. We cannot rely indefinitely on revolt alone. This is therefore the moment when this ideological Maoism disperses and liquidates itself. It takes the exact form of the dissolution of the Gauche Prolétarienne, or rather its self-dissolution, since it decides to disband based on the idea that political organization is now useless, that the movement is sufficient unto itself, that we are now in an era of widespread battles: the trade union struggles at LIP on the one hand, the soldiers on the other, the struggles in prisons, women, etc. At this moment, the prevailing theory is that the movement is a result of multiple social forces, from which follows the idea that concerning this same movement, political organization is necessarily bureaucratic, dogmatic, and so on. However, this was only a pretext, because the Gauche Prolétarienne was internally decomposing, and its political leaders did nothing but take note of this, deciding to dissolve the organization.

From this moment on, the only Maoists who truly exist are those who seek to equip themselves with the means to reconstruct

the question of Maoism on another basis, that is, by setting these three main objectives. First, to clarify what it means that Maoism is properly the form of Marxism of our time. Second, what the Cultural Revolution really is, beyond the simple fact that it was a mass revolt as such; that is, in what sense the Cultural Revolution is a real stage in world history. Third, what are the objectives and organizational forms appropriate to the political struggle on two fronts, that is, both against the classical bourgeoisie and against the new revisionist bourgeoisie, under the conditions of France? Only those who set themselves the goal of linking these three questions continued to call themselves Maoists. This is our case. The others dispersed and quickly transformed into their opposite. Between 1973 and 1975-76, we have an intermediate period, which I refer to as the politics of dispersed social forces.

Q. In Italy, too, roughly during these years, the beginning of a crisis in the organizations formed by the mass movement of '68 was accompanied by the idea of the spread of the struggle for dispersed social forces. All this was one of the key themes of the 1977 movement, in which Deleuze and Guattari were among the most critical points of reference. What was the most favorable ideological context for these philosophies in France? What role did they play, and how did they develop?

A. In France, just as the hegemonic Maoism I mentioned was beginning to disappear, there was a great success of ideas such as those of Deleuze and Guattari, etc. This can be explained very well: in fact, from the moment you find yourself in a politics of multiplicity and dispersed forces, that is, in short, in an explicitly anti-party and savagely anti-Leninist politics, this type of discourse has a strong hold on movement phenomena. Of course, they derive no benefit from it, but this ideology serves as a kind of veneer, an intellectual façade that allows them to justify what is ultimately their political weakness. In reality, this type of philosophy serves as a mechanism that allows real weakness to be presented as ideological strength. In other words, where there is a powerful but extremely confused and fragmented impulse to revolt, where it is clear that there is no political consistency, where, for any Marxist, it is clearly a temporary situation of weakness that must be overcome, in Deleuzian language it becomes something formidable: it is precisely the political weaknesses of the movement that are transformed into ideological triumph. During this period, a kind of magma formed between Deleuzian and old, purely ideological Maoists. Since they had no central reference point within the working class and the proletariat, they all felt completely at home in this type of language and discourse.

However, this is a transitional phase. Starting in 1975-76, in addition to all this, a countercurrent of "nouveaux philosophes" emerged in France, generally originating from former Maoists of the early period. This countercurrent was clearly reactionary. For the first time, at least since the end of World War II, anti-Marxist intellectuals in the strict sense appeared in France: not false Marxism, not idealistic Marxism, not eclectic Marxism, nor neutrality towards Marxism, but explicitly and fiercely anti-Marxism, which designates Marxism as the main enemy, based on the assessment that ideological Maoists make of their defeat. They realize, from their point of view, that they were wrong and begin to think that their previous political positions were an aberration, etc. The problem for them then becomes to liquidate Marxism and treat it as the main barbarism of our century.

This is a current which, as is well known, draws on dissent in the Eastern European countries. At the same time, they take it as their main concrete reference point and become its ideological organizers in France. They thus give the impression of closing a circle, the circle of an evolution. They started in 1968 with the theme of revolt, on the positions of ideological Maoism. From the moment when mass revolts could no longer serve as a backdrop for all this, they moved on to Deleuzian theory, to the theory of the dispersion of the informal movement, and ultimately to the apotheosis of the individual. Continuing along this path, they now find themselves in counter-revolutionary positions that have been developed and deployed in a way not seen in France for a long time.

It must be borne in mind that they are not only anti-Marxist and anti-Maoist philosophers, but also counter-revolutionary philosophers, i.e., they attack the very idea of revolution as the supreme form of state oppression. They transform the old Leninist dialectic between state and revolution into a unity, as if revolution were the worst form of state. They are people who side with the liberal parliamentarism of classical imperialism.

All this is truly spectacular. To illustrate Lenin's thesis on the oscillations of the intellectual petty bourgeoisie, contemporary France presents a truly formidable field of experience. Until six years ago, these people were rabid Maoists, Maoists whom we criticized at the time for their ultra-left tendencies. This is also a real lesson in how the ultra-left can turn into its opposite! I knew Glucksmann at the University of Vincennes when he joined the Gauche Prolétarienne, and I remember that he did so with incredible sectarianism and verbal violence. It can thus be seen that at that time, for some, there was also an element of fanaticism in this Maoist hegemony, which has been completely reversed: reversed, I mean, into anti-communist fanaticism and anti-Maoist fanaticism.

I mentioned earlier that these individuals close a circle because, in a certain sense, they return, but have entirely shifted to the right, embracing the existentialist humanism that was typical of the previous period. Now, in fact, their theme is that of defending individual freedom, a philosophy that emphasizes the individual, where everything is traced back to the contradiction between the individual and the state. The only statement acceptable to them is the defense of the individual against the state. On the other hand, as I mentioned earlier, there is a current—certainly a minority and countercurrent one—that has sought to utilize Maoism and Maoist politics as a platform for advancing theory and philosophy. We are its representatives, even if we do not have many close neighbors today. These are, in a way, the two extremes of the situation: on the one hand, those who seek to show that there is something like a new Marxist philosophy contained in Maoism and, on the other hand, the "renegades," the renegades of Maoism, that is, those who have turned into their opposites and become staunch defenders of Western parliamentarianism.

Q. How do you think this situation will evolve?

A. Between these two extremes, there is currently a confused situation in France from a philosophical point of view. In this situation, many are searching for what could be called a kind of intermediate rationalism, something that can ultimately reconstitute a stable and somewhat peaceful terrain for bourgeois philosophy. Many people dislike the new philosophers because they are extremists in their political commitment. Many people dislike Maoist philosophy because it implies exact positions and requires a certain level of loyalty to the history since 1968. Most of these people try to cling to a sphere of rationalism that would allow them to avoid taking a definite position in the ideological and political conflicts of the moment.

Thus, for example, we are witnessing a revival of Lacanianism and references to psychoanalysis in a climate of political neutrality, despite everything, or a resurgence of references to epistemologists of the old tradition, such as Desanti, among others. These are generally anti-political but not aggressive positions. My impression is that this tendency is prevalent among young people who did not experience either 1968 or the years that followed, and are seeking a path of waiting, an intermediate path. On the other hand, this is not crystallized; it lacks its own figure, its own philosopher. This is the picture of the situation.

If I had to make a prediction, I would say that the "nouveaux philosophes" movement will weaken because it has no real political

outlet and will not withstand the emergence of mass revolt, which will sweep it away. It was important for a while, before the March elections, when the two bourgeois cliques clashed and the debate was framed in terms of whether to go with the PCF or not. The bourgeois rivalry was a structuring element of the new philosophers; it was within this context that they defined their role, as they were orchestrating a comprehensive philosophical argument against the PCF. We predict that very significant class tensions will soon reappear in France, given the collapse of parliamentary illusions. Even the small workers' movements that are reappearing right now, such as at Renault in Flins and in other factories, are a sign of a changing situation. It should be remembered that there have been no strikes in large factories for three years. I think that the development of all this will make the position of the new philosophers untenable, because once again intellectuals will have to take a stand on all this, on the working class, on the mass movement, etc. This is certain.

There will therefore be a new form of expression of political extremism among intellectuals. I do not know what form it will take; perhaps it will be sought out from you in Italy. After all, even people like Deleuze and Guattari, or even our autonomists—who, incidentally, are not that brilliant—are looking to you a little. I am not sure what they will come up with, but they are leaning in that direction. They have read and translated some Negri and Tronti, among others. I'm not sure, but perhaps a trend will emerge around these themes.

Q. By the way, today in Italy, part of the workerist current seems to be finding a new lease of life through new historical research on the so-called "other workers' movement," that is, the workers' movement that never formed an organized political force, even though it was always the driving force of the class struggle. This is a historiographical trend also present in other countries, such as the US and Germany. In France, there is a journal called *Les révoltes logiques* that is moving in this direction. How does the work of this journal fit into the French situation you have just described?

A. *Les révoltes logiques* is a journal that was formed around a former Althusserian, Jacques Rancière, who later became a fellow traveler of the Gauche Prolétarienne, while maintaining various reservations about it. During the 1972-73 crisis, he adopted an intermediate stance, being part of the anti-Leninist current while maintaining a steadfast position on one key point: the reference to the working class. It should be noted that in the early days of ideological Maoism, there was also workerism, i.e., the fetishization

of the working class. Ranciére remained faithful to this reference to the working class and the people, preserving this element of early ideological Maoism. He therefore dissociated himself from those who pushed the matter to the point of complete liquidation and to completely reactionary bourgeois positions. In the intellectual climate I was talking about, he represents a centrist current. Rancière does not take a strong position on the phenomenon of movement, on what needs to be done today, but ultimately takes refuge in rewriting the history of the working class since the 19th century. He intends to show that the authentic working class never actually appeared; that the political apparatuses representing the class were alien to it; that the class had a kind of internal historical and ideological existence that was immanent, which never really appeared on the political scene.

This is ultimately a weak position compared to the new philosophers, despite its vehement attack on them. The fact is that between the idea that they have of the working class and the idea that Glucksmann has of the "plebs," i.e., the totality of those who are contradictory to the state, there is no fundamental difference. The idea, in fact, of this class that is almost eternally silent, whose depths must be explored to bring it back to the surface, is very close to the way Glucksmann presents the "plebs." It is essentially the idea that the state sphere has always monopolized speech, leaving others speechless.

It is practically the same thing, except that Rancière maintains the idea of class despite everything; in short, he maintains elementary Marxism. It is a form of anarchist workerism grounded in rigorous historical research. This current also has a slight echo here, because it is less reactionary than the other, insofar as it retains explicit references to the working class and revolts. However, it is a current that is also influenced by the general ideological climate, which is anti-party, anti-Leninist, and ultimately anti-political.

Q. Returning to Althusser and seeing his position in the climate you are talking about, we would like to ask you another question. Recently, a major weekly magazine in Italy translated Althusser's summary of his comments in *Le Monde* on the current situation of the PCF. On the same subject, *Il Manifesto* published an interview with Althusser. The controversy arose in such harsh and decisive tones that it raised the old question, which has always remained unresolved in Italy, of the peculiar relationship between Althusser and the PCF. There are even those who saw this relationship as so contradictory that they spoke of the possibility of Althusser's expulsion. In any case, a series of expressions of sympathy for him have been renewed, especially among those who criticize Western

communist parties, focusing above all on their concessions and inconsistencies. What do you think?

A. As I said before, Althusser always had a logic of opposition rather than rupture with the PCF. Today, he believes the situation is favorable because the logic of opposition can be both aggressive and appealing to a specific audience. He thinks that the moment is favorable because of the defeat of the Union de la gauche. The PCF's political strategy has suffered a setback because of this defeat.

Starting from these assumptions, the idea that Althusser could be expelled from the PCF is entirely false. In fact, the balance of power is not such that the party leadership could immediately repress this dissident without any restraint. On the other hand, Althusser's position only serves to maintain illusions about the true nature of the PCF. Without certainly realizing it, Althusser is doing the PCF an excellent service for two reasons. First, through this story of protest, the PCF continues to occupy center stage in politics and ultimately to appear as the central issue in the political debate. In fact, there is a whole faction of intellectuals who are passionate about the Althusser-Marchais match. There is a side to this story that presents itself as the formidable struggle of the critical intellectual against the bureaucratic monster, which greatly excites a section of intellectuals. In any case, this benefits the PCF, because what matters to it is that a certain number of intellectuals continue to think that it is the key to the situation. Even if they consider it needs to be wholly transformed and its direction changed, etc., the important thing is that they think it. Moreover, this is the fundamental reason why the PCF has made it known that it will not expel Althusser. You want to talk about us? says the PCF. Fine, talk about us. Thus, the newspapers are full of pages, and all they talk about is the PCF; it is fantastic. That is the first reason.

The second reason is obviously that there is no fundamental political criticism. Althusser says: our leadership is a bunch of idiots who only do stupid things, that there is no democracy, etc. However, on decisive questions such as: what proposals should be supported today? What should be done? What should the strategy and tactics be? Althusser does not take a position on any of these questions. What is most important, the fundamental question of whether the PCF is a proletarian party or a bourgeois party, is absent from his entire argument, or, instead, has already been implicitly resolved. Suppose one thinks, as Althusser does, that all energies must be mobilized to transform the PCF. In that case, this implies that one implicitly believes, in essence, that the PCF is the party of the class, indeed a party of old opportunists, but still the party of the class. All

this, curiously enough, makes Althusser's position, in my opinion, a Trotskyist position. Such has been the position of the Trotskyists for forty years: the party is no good, it is bureaucratic, it is not democratic, give us the right to form a faction, etc., but it is still the big party.

Q. You spoke about the French situation regarding international events such as the Sino-Soviet controversy, the Cultural Revolution, Lin Biaoism, etc. How do you think the latest events in China will influence the situation in France?

A. These events dealt the final blow to anything that might have remained linked to pure ideological Maoism. They also served as support to those who were formerly Maoists to move to anti-Marxism. What they say today is that we believed the Cultural Revolution was new, that it was not a repeat of Russia, and so on. No, in reality, it is precisely like Russia; look at what happened after Mao's death, the Gang of Four, etc. In short, nothing new under the sun. On the one hand, this put an end to everything related to the Cultural Revolution: a reference that was essentially anarchist rather than Marxist, focusing exclusively on mass movement rather than class. On the other hand, the new situation in China led to the overthrow of a certain number of former Maoists.

Q. Regarding the current situation in China, Bettelheim's essay ("The End of the Cultural Revolution," in *Monthly Review*, Italian edition, May-June 1978) has also recently been published in Italian. While, on the one hand, it appears, like all of Bettelheim's works, to be thoroughly documented and rigorously argued, on the other hand, it demonstrates the persistence of some elements of Althusserianism, never criticized by Bettelheim himself, which leads his analysis towards a particular formalism. A clear sign of this can be found in the thesis of bourgeois restoration that allegedly took place immediately after the fall of the so-called "Gang of Four."

A. Bettelheim is, in my opinion, somewhere between fully embracing Maoism in its active and revolutionary political dimension and considering it simply as a method of investigation, without really breaking with several themes, concepts, and approaches drawn from Althusser. In a way, Bettelheim tends towards a specific type of Maoist academicism. This seems very clear to me if we look at the book *Class Struggles in the USSR*. It is certainly interesting from the perspective of the material collected, but from a methodological standpoint, it is not a complete break with Althusser's legacy. He continues to consider that Marxism is the method of investigating

social formations. Bettelheim has a rigid stance on the achievements and transformations of the Cultural Revolution, considering its results in terms of social organization and program rather than as an exceptional period in the class struggle. Moreover, I think that the thesis he currently holds, according to which there is indeed a bourgeois restoration, was formulated prematurely.

It is a thesis linked to the fact that he sets a certain number of criteria relating to the transformations of society that emerged from the Cultural Revolution, including the organization of factories and education. He says, since this is being called into question, there is a bourgeois restoration. This is a structural conception of the Cultural Revolution itself, which is not grasped in the actual dynamics of the class struggle. Our position is that there are currently countercurrents of the right in China; this is indisputable. We have no problem in saying so. Even before Mao's death, extremely powerful right-wing countercurrents existed in China; however, we are not convinced that one can speak of a bourgeois restoration. I believe that Bettelheim's assessments are also somewhat the result of a certain lack of confidence in the historical dynamics of the working class, the proletariat, and the Chinese masses. Furthermore, I find that there is an underestimation of the fact that the Cultural Revolution achieved a series of fundamental objectives, even if not all of those that had been set. After all, Mao himself argued that there would have to be other Cultural Revolutions, that it was impossible to deal decisive blows or achieve final victories against bourgeois tendencies in the party and the state.

On the other hand, the Cultural Revolution created entirely new and unyielding political rear guards, such that one cannot hastily speak of the restoration of capitalism in China at the first alarm and the first bourgeois counteroffensive, without even having time to observe the stabilization and persistence of the relations of force. All this while keeping as a fundamental point of reference the question that it is the imperialist nature that ultimately decides, irreversibly, on internal social processes. In our opinion, even on the question of the Soviet Union, it is from the invasion of Czechoslovakia and its imperialist deployment throughout the world that the Soviet Union can be decisively and definitively defined as a bourgeois state.

Bettelheim's problem is that, lacking a concrete political commitment in France, he is not at the forefront of applying Maoism creatively in the conditions of the revolution; he tends to take somewhat static positions, including those regarding the very categories of Maoism to which he refers.

Q. Recently, in a debate with Robert Linhart on Marxism and Leninism that appeared in the journal *Communisme* (no. 27-28, 1976), Bettelheim made a distinction between "essential Marxism" and "historically determined Marxism." In the second volume of *Class Struggles in the USSR*, he contrasts "revolutionary Marxism" with "Bolshevik ideological formation," which he claims is contaminated by non-Marxist concepts.

> **A.** Our position does not even coincide with the position expressed by Linhart, since he advocates a relativization of a very radical empiricism. Our position differs significantly from both. We do not believe that there is an essential body of Marxism alongside historical Marxism, but that Marxism, like all historical phenomena, is subject to a periodized development in stages. As for Maoism, for us it is not simply a matter of addressing the problems of the revolution in China—which would be Linhart's version—nor of purely developing the historical forms of primitive Marxist statements in a given conjuncture. Our problem is entirely different: namely, that on the foundations laid above by the Cultural Revolution, we are currently at the beginning of a new stage in the development of Marxism, the previous stage of which was Leninism. Of course, we historicize Marxism and believe that it has a history. As always in the Marxist method, the important thing is to identify the key points of this history, that is, to understand the principle of periodization that operates within it. For us, this is a fundamental question: The question of the reference to Mao will not be resolved, the experience of the Cultural Revolution, etc., without placing it in a historical context. For us, it is Marxism itself that develops in a periodized movement, rather than Marxism developing purely and simply in successive ideological formations. We believe that one should be neither empiricist nor relativist in this regard, but rather that one must find the law of historical movement in the stages of Marxism itself. This is a point on which we have worked extensively and will continue to work, on which we are determined to wage a crucial ideological struggle to understand what it means to be Marxists, since Marxism is ultimately what is at stake—the center of a political battle.

Q. In *Théorie de la Contradiction*, you argue that there is an uneven development of the materialist thesis and the dialectical thesis in the history of Marxism, that is, that at each stage one or the other prevails, as a consequence of the main opposition within the workers' movement.

A. Of course, within each stage, there are unequal developments linked to the dominant forms of class struggle and therefore of ideological struggle. In short, this means considering that Marxism itself is subject to the general principles of historical materialism, that Marxism has a historicity, but that the laws of historical development govern this historicity. Therefore, in the development by stages, it is necessary to identify the inequalities of development, their assignment in the conjuncture, etc. This is consequently a very vast task, from which an essential regeneration can come.

Q. In this perspective, how do you see the question raised by many parts of the so-called crisis of Marxism?

A. The question of the eternal debate on the crisis of Marxism concerns two things. First, the question of whether it is strong or weak in a given conjuncture, whether it exists or does not exist. For us, Marxism ultimately has as its core the actuality of the revolutionary politics of the proletariat. Marxism does not exist outside this relevance. It is an effect of it; it is consubstantial with it. Only in an academic conception of Marxism can one think that it exists in the air, as a doctrinal body of statements to which everyone can freely refer, saying they are for or against it, declaring it in crisis, saying whether they like it or not. Marxism exists in its movement, in its internal transformation, in proportion to the very existence of the revolutionary proletariat.

Therefore, the real question to which the problem of the existence of Marxism must always be referred is that of the state of existence of the proletariat as a political class at the national and international level. That is, not as a social class, as a group of exploited workers, but as a class understood from the point of view of its strategic and political project, of the struggle for communism. Marxism is either strong or weak, presenting new or academic characteristics that are exclusively concerned with this process. If Marxism is ultimately the ideology and theory of the fighting proletariat, its power in terms of relevance and existence is dialectically linked to the power of this fighting proletariat itself.

We have no difficulty in saying that in specific conjunctures, Marxism has the kind of existence that is ultimately permitted to it by the relations of class forces. Marxism is not above these relations: the idea that Marxism can develop majestically in conditions where the proletariat is politically weak is an utterly idealistic idea that ultimately harks back to the "theory of genius." It is an idea of linear development of Marxism, detached from its original basis. This is not the case. Marxism develops through periods of strength and weakness, as well as through crises. We have no problem

saying this. Indeed, today, the question of how the proletariat in an imperialist country constitutes itself as a political class autonomous from all bourgeoisies remains an important question that has yet to be resolved. Marxism exists concerning this question. Therefore, it is clear that there are many problems today for which there are no established answers, leaving us open to attacks from our opponents. Additionally, it is clear that several issues need to be transformed, but the specifics of how to do so are unclear.

If this is the first set of issues related to the crisis of Marxism, the second, in our opinion, depends on the fact that we are in a time when Marxism is effectively transitioning from one stage to another. This is what we ultimately refer to as Maoism: Maoism is certainly not uniquely Chinese. The crux of the matter is the question of the new stage of Marxism. From this perspective, there is a crisis of Leninism. We are deeply committed to Leninism, but we recognize that there is a crisis of Leninism from this perspective. In other words, while accumulating the universal achievements of Leninism, it is clear that we must produce and think of new things to bring Marxism, despite everything, to a different stage of development, linked to the fundamental transformations of the world situation after Lenin, and linked to the phenomenon of the restoration of capitalism in the USSR and therefore to the defeat of the first attempt at a proletarian dictatorship. Considering all this, we have no difficulty in saying that Marxism is in crisis, because Marxism proceeds through crises.

On the other hand, regarding what anti-Marxist currents call the "crisis of Marxism," these are old arguments that have never been renewed since the end of the last century: Marxism is said to be totalitarian, economistic, and not to take individuals into account, etc.

Q. Among these criticisms levelled at Marxism, one that has had a great resonance in the mass movement in Italy is based on the contradiction between the personal and the political, which has found support both in some themes of Foucault and others drawn from psychoanalysis, mixing everything up a bit.

A. Here, this issue arose in almost the same terms and took the form of criticism of militancy, based on the assumption that militancy crushes the individual and, in particular, does not take into account desire, etc. All this took place in the context of the debate on the question of power, namely that all institutions, including political and revolutionary parties, are places of power and that these places of power exclude and discard, for their own benefit, the fundamental sources of desire and personal liberation.

As you mentioned, here too, the main cultural reference point is psychoanalysis, since it is the place where issues of desire, the unconscious, personality, and so on are addressed and discussed. All this in the belief that somewhere we need to find the link between what is found in psychoanalysis and what is found in revolutionary politics, in the belief that we should psychoanalyze the organizational phenomenon itself. Another essential reference, as you mentioned, was Foucault, insofar as the focus of his work is the question of power: reflecting on the mechanisms of power as such, present in ideological configurations and social practices.

I do not find this debate particularly interesting, for several reasons. The first is, if you like, a little trivial. In fact, it seems to me that these stories all end up rediscovering that there is somewhere an effective contradiction in the face of which we cannot find any remedy, any adjustment; that is, that there is no possible accommodation between individualism and revolutionary politics. This is the crux of the problem. In other words, there is an effective contradiction between the values that dominate among intellectuals in a normal period and the requirements of revolutionary politics. The Maoist themes—albeit treated in a predominantly ideological manner during the Cultural Revolution—of the struggle against egoism and the revolutionization of the world's conception are truths. We certainly cannot go and tell people that the general system of their social life, their self-image, their ideas about art, culture, sexuality, personal life, vacations and travel, can be completely homogeneous with organized politics.

In short, we have no problem saying that there is a contradiction between the representation that intellectuals have of their subjectivity, their desire, the reasons why they ultimately want to live, discuss, take an interest in things, etc., and the internal law of a revolutionary political organization, even if it is of a new type, even if it is something different from the bureaucracy of the PCF and the trade unions. This is a contradiction that exists in fact, a contradiction that will be reduced only to the extent that society itself is transformed. The first aspect of the question is therefore this.

Secondly, there is a real problem surrounding these issues. It is that of the capacity of the revolutionary organization, whatever it may be, to mobilize in the best and most correct way the actual subjective resources of each individual. This is the only real problem, in the sense that the process of mutilation of personal life by political life exists only to the extent that it means that the political organization, in its very nature, represses what could actually be helpful to it, namely, the energies of each individual, the variety of their abilities, their knowledge, etc. Of course, this problem exists, and it must be said that it has, to some extent, an anti-revisionist

dimension. It is also in this sense that we speak of the need for a new type of party. But to do this, the battle must be fought within the political project and not in the obtuse opposition between personal life and political life, because when put in these terms, the problem is metaphysical.

Thirdly, it must be said that this problem, as it is posed, is so metaphysical that it is politically completely sterile, that is, it is incapable of producing anything other than a parasitic contestation of what exists politically. This problem exists solely to create noise, not to make anything effective, because to produce something, it must itself agree to be part of a positive, organized political process. Otherwise, in fact, we remain in a mythological debate between organized politics on the one hand, and politics conceived, so to speak, as the art of living of this or that individual on the other. This, if you like, has its charm, but it serves no purpose. It is for these reasons, as I said at the beginning, that these issues do not interest me very much.

Q. And returning to the two cultural references of this debate – psychoanalysis and Foucault?

A. Yes, of course, even here psychoanalysis has been, as I said, at the center of this question. Psychoanalysis, as well as its criticism, which was a Deleuzian critique, reproached it for being itself a political apparatus that repressed desire within the family institution. On the other hand, we must bear in mind that a considerable number of former Maoists ended up on the psychoanalysts' couches, thus helping to bring them back to the surface. These former Maoists told psychoanalysts about their suffering as militants. This suffering was partly meaningful in retrospect and was also linked to real problems.

Their conception of politics was closely tied to the dynamics of the mass movement. As the movement declined, real suffering arose from questions such as: why must we be organized, and why does activism become unbearable? Not only did the old Maoists talk about all this with psychoanalysts, but in many cases, they became psychoanalysts themselves—because in our country, when you do psychoanalysis, you become a psychoanalyst; psychoanalysis in our country is an organizational apparatus that recruits and reproduces itself from within. This led to a series of speculations that attempted to think about politics in terms of desire, but I believe that, in any case, nothing truly interesting emerged from it, only speculation.

The case of Foucault is different. He is a highly astute and active character who consistently maintained a position that allowed him to avoid taking irreversible stances in the most significant

philosophical and political divisions. He always limited himself to purely circumstantial positions. For a specific period, he found himself alongside the Maoists of the Gauche Prolétarienne, and for a brief time, he flirted with Deleuze and the philosophers of desire, while maintaining a certain distance despite everything.

At present, he is comfortable with the new philosophers, although he is careful not to sing their song in such explicitly anti-Marxist terms. Although he is respected by everyone, without being compromised by any ideologically committed group involved in conflicts, he is somewhat in the middle of things. However, I would say that at the moment, he is leaning slightly to the right, in the sense that he runs the risk of tipping the balance in favor of the traditional bourgeoisie, given all the talk about human rights. All his work consistently navigates the concept of the fetish of power, attempting to provide a historical logic for this notion. Ultimately, the only clear thing that can be said about his idea is that the totality of the social fabric is organized by the effects of power, without it being representable in a center.

In this regard, there is a difference between the new philosophers and the philosophers of desire, in that Foucault does not assign the same importance to the state as they do. The question of power in Foucault is at once more abstract and more empirical; it is not centered on the concept of the state. I'm not sure if Foucault holds the same importance for you as he does for us.

Q. Yes, Foucault is even more important to us than the "nouveaux philosophes," who have had only limited success. In fact, in our country, if you declare yourself explicitly anti-Marxist, you risk falling straight into the arms of the Church, which has a monopoly on anti-Marxism.

A. Well, of course, I understand, in Italy there is a firmly established monopoly of anti-Marxism. Foucault, on the other hand, maintains an element of caution that allows him, in some way, to have the same content without, however, taking a frontal position on the question of Marxism.

Q. Returning to psychoanalysis, we would like to ask you one last question. Your argument about its use today within the so-called distinction between personal life and political life is clear. But do you think that, in general, psychoanalysis as a theory can actually be reduced to all the different uses to which it has been put and that it has no other content?

A. No, no. I don't feel comfortable taking an exact position on psychoanalysis, because it would require a lot of work. What is clear is that psychoanalysis is today the dominant, almost exclusive ideological form among intellectuals, that is, the only theory of the individual that one still has the right to cite. In the 19th century, a romantic psychology emerged, characterized by introspection and a tradition that bridged philosophy and literature, centered on the question of the individual's secrets and the organization of their constitutive unity. Today, this place is occupied by psychoanalysis; there is no doubt about that. If one really wants to be accused of dogmatism and simplism, one could say that, on a social level, psychoanalysis plays a role as a substitute ideology for bourgeois individualism in the age of imperialism. However, when put in these terms, it may sound striking, but there is no doubt that this social aspect exists.

On the other hand, does psychoanalysis offer something worthy of attention, something that constitutes a kernel of truth wrapped in gangue, like a precious metal? Is Freud the Hegel of something? Is there a rational core to psychoanalysis? All this constitutes a real problem.

I don't have a definitive stance on this issue. It's a question that hasn't been fully explored. However, the theme of the unconscious has the advantage of breaking with the idea that the subject is self-conscious. If only for this reason, it is more materialistic than the old psychology of consciousness, than the old idealisms of the "cogito." This introduces an element of decentralization concerning the idea that the subject is traversed by forces of which he is the center. This is undoubtedly a step forward in the theory of the subject. In any case, the rational core should be freed from all this, from the simplistic and ultimately anti-political way in which it functions today at the level of mass ideology.

This does not exclude the possibility that psychoanalysis contains a rational core in its own movement, which raises several questions. All this refers back to the question of whether there is a place in Marxism for the general problem of the subject. What is the subject, what is the subjective? The subject does not mean the individual. Marxism has always acknowledged the subjective element. There is a well-known one: in politics, the subjective element is the organized element.

This category of subjectivity and the dialectic of the subjective and the objective are completely exhausted in the simple recognition of the organized phenomenon, that is, in politics? Or is it instead a broader dialectic, which would eventually allow us to know, to have an approach, to have methods of investigation into the question

of the effects of the subject in general, including the effect of the subject at an infra-level concerning class subjects, the major actors in historical development? Is there not somewhere in Freudianism and its developments a rational core that has not yet been grasped? All these are questions that we have the right to ask ourselves.

Translated by A. Russo

The Beginning of a Long Friendship: The 1978 Interview with Alain Badiou

Alessandro Russo

The 1978 interview with Alain Badiou on 'Philosophy and Maoism in France', published here for the first time in almost fifty years, releases such *esprit de clarté* that there is little to add, except for some contextual information.

Claudia Pozzana recounts, in her text published in this same issue of *Crisis & Critique*, the circumstances in which we encountered Badiou's philosophy together, and with what enthusiasm, when we were students at Peking University (Beida) in 1975. Two years later, Valerio Romitelli and I translated *Théorie de la contradiction* into Italian and went to Paris to meet the author for an interview to be published in the volume. The Italian translation was not published at the time[1], for reasons that reflected a moment of transition that is no exaggeration to call epochal.

We were supposed to publish *Théorie de la contradiction*, along with other texts from the 'Collection Yenan', with Bertani, a counter-current publisher of the 1970s. But in those very months, Bertani was overwhelmed by the general crisis of the Italian political movements that emerged from 1968, compounded by a commercial crisis that blocked all initiatives. At the time, Badiou was known in Italy only for translations of his writings on logic[2]. Very little was known about the Maoist Badiou. After all, 1978 in China was the twilight of Maoism and the dawn of the 'integral negation' of the Cultural Revolution, with global consequences inversely proportional to its previous fortune. 'Everything turns into its opposite,' Mao said. In short, we were unable to find another publisher for a text by a French Maoist philosopher.

Valerio and I came from an Italy where, exactly one month earlier, the first act of a coup d'état had taken place, closing the accounts with 1968: the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro. The second act would take place a year later, on 7 April 1979, with the completely arbitrary arrest of Antonio Negri and the entire Institute of State Doctrine at the University of Padua, on the absurd charge of having organised the Moro murder.

I noticed with some surprise, rereading the interview, that there is no mention of the Moro kidnapping and murder, which had crucial political consequences in Italy. In fact, at that time we both dismissed the episode as the result of internal vendettas among the powerful, even though Moro was, as Pasolini had said, 'the least involved of all'. Personally, I considered the Red Brigades not so much militarists as small-time conspirators caught up in a criminal vision of politics, utterly devoid of theory, except for empty formulas on class antagonism. They were, however, the result of the crisis of the political organisations that emerged from 1968, which had already become apparent in 1972. The fact that the Red Brigades were involved in what we considered a bloody internal settling of scores within the Italian state made that affair even more distant from our horizon.

We did not even mention the Moro murder in passing – and we certainly underestimated its long-term consequences at the time – because we almost spontaneously kept our distance from all the highly

ambiguous government propaganda that this criminal affair had produced, and above all because we were focused on seeking a political and philosophical path that looked beyond the impasse of the entire Long Sixties season that was taking shape confusingly before our eyes.

I had just completed a period of study at the Department of Philosophy at Beida during the last two years of the Cultural Revolution, which, among the many things it had taught me, had also somehow 'vaccinated' me against the likelihood of a large-scale defeat, not only of the Chinese revolutionary decade, but more generally of the entire experience of state communism in the 20th century. Mao's latest theoretical theses, published between 1974 and 1976, argued for a fundamental clarification of the nature of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', as it was no longer clear what it was. Failure to clarify this, Mao said, would make restoration possible. Given the structural conditions of Chinese socialism, it would be 'very easy to establish capitalism in China'.

At the time I took those theses as an essential warning to rethink the history of revolutionary politics, but a somewhat excessive prediction. How could anyone think that capitalism could really be established in China? As we shall see in this *interview* with Badiou, the question was still unresolved in mid-1978. At that time, I had recently joined the editorial staff of *Vento dell'Est*, a magazine run by a small collective of experts in Chinese language and politics, which, from the outset, had meticulously documented developments in the Cultural Revolution through translations and field research. In 1978, the magazine was also experiencing significant disorientation, unable to take a clear position on the situation. I proposed publishing the interview with Badiou, but they failed to appreciate its importance and, in any case, the magazine ceased publication at the end of that year.

The feeling that a large-scale counter-revolution was looming on the horizon, one that ultimately affected the entire modern political history, was still vague but very present throughout the interview. However, the issues we discussed looked beyond that probable imminent restoration. Or rather, Badiou examined it from the perspective of developments in the rich philosophical and political situation in France, whose dense fabric he illustrated with the clarity and systematicity that anyone who has attended one of his seminars has always admired.

We had the privilege of a private seminar on the philosophy and politics of the last two decades in France, which can still be read today as a primary source for understanding that intellectual season in France and worldwide. The significant issues are examined through the concrete analysis of that concrete situation by one of its leading protagonists.

What were, in the affirmation of the Althusserian school, both the role of a long French epistemological tradition dating back to Comte and the specific circumstances of the crisis of Soviet communism and the

controversy with the Chinese Communist Party? How did May 1968 undermine Althusserian influence? How was it possible that Sartre had been a 'Maoist', and that other great French thinkers had also been so for a short period? How did that singular and temporary Maoist hegemony turn into its opposite, and even into an openly counter-revolutionary attitude? What roles did Deleuze and Foucault play during that revolutionary decade? How was it possible that the leaders of the Gauche Prolétarienne, the leading and most extremist Maoist organisation to emerge from 1968, had become 'nouveaux philosophes' who propagated the virtues of capitalism and launched anathemas against the 'barbarism of communism'?

Badiou examined these and other crucial issues of that conjuncture in the context of a review of two decades of intellectual history, accurately and subtly identifying the novelties, weaknesses, and paradoxes. The result is an incredibly multifaceted picture, but one from which Badiou draws a political and philosophical assessment that allows him, in a sense, to put that situation behind him and look to new political and philosophical tasks.

As for political tasks, the continuation of the UCF(ML) experiment was fundamental at that time, as it was in fact the only organisation that had resisted the drift towards self-dissolution of the political organisations that emerged from 1968, Gauche Prolétarienne in particular. This was a challenging and decidedly counter-current task in the climate of the imminent end of the 1960s. 'We don't have many close neighbours,' Badiou admitted.

As for philosophical tasks, the passage in which the 1978 interview is set is encapsulated in that intense laboratory that was his teaching in those years, the seminar that began in 1975 and culminated in *Théorie du sujet*. The interview, therefore, takes place in the transition from the political trespassing in the philosophy of the 'Collection Yenan' to a return to a philosophical project tout court. In the Interview, Badiou speaks little and cautiously about this. He hints at new questions that need to be asked about the problem of the subject, beyond what had been the organised political subject in the Marxist vision. Still, he leaves open the question of whether psychoanalysis is a resource to be explored. Many former leaders of the Gauche Prolétarienne in crisis had gone to the psychoanalyst's couch as a ritual of renouncing their previous political commitment. However, Badiou concludes, is there not perhaps in Freud (and Lacan) a Hegel in whom it is necessary to separate the rational core from the mystical gangue? This will be the question from which *Théorie du sujet* will start.

Enjoy reading the interview.

1. Another Italian translation was published only recently, ed. Mimesis, 2022, edited by G. Clemente and S. Pippa.

2. Two of his essays published in *Cahiers pour l'analyse* were included in a collection of texts from the journal published by Boringhieri, while his lectures on *Le concept de modèle* at Althusser's *Cours de philosophie pour scientifiques* were published by Jaca Book.

On the Young Badiou – Questions of Theory

Jan Weise

Abstract: The article reconstructs Alain Badiou's early engagement with Louis Althusser through a close reading of his 1967 review "The (Re)Commencement of Dialectical Materialism." The analysis seeks to delineate how the (re-) can be conceived as a specific form of repetition. By tracing how Badiou diagnoses the erasure of the epistemological cut in the Marxist tradition, the article argues that his early intervention simultaneously reconstructs and exceeds the Althusserian framework.

Keywords: Louis Althusser; Post-Hegelianism; (Re)commencement; Epistemological cut; Dialectical materialism;

...la philosophie n'est que la repetition pulsionelle de ce ›rien‹...
– Louis Althusser[1]

To begin: The crisis of *Critique*

Relatively recently, Alain Badiou encapsulated his intellectual endeavor in the slogan: "Re-commence, somewhere else, in another way, but re-commence."[2] If we wish to return to the point where everything (re) began for Badiou,[3] we must start with his extraordinary article "The (Re) Commencement of Dialectical Materialism," published in 1967 in the prestigious journal *Critique*, founded by Georges Bataille.[4]

This text is extraordinary for several reasons — let us name just a few. On a first, anecdotal level, what stands out is that it immediately provoked controversy. Yet this controversy did not — contrary to what one might expect — come from the author under review, Louis Althusser, whose work is assessed in a far from uniformly positive manner. Quite the opposite: Althusser embraced Badiou's text with enthusiasm.[5]

Instead, polemics arose from the editorial board of *Critique* and was not motivated by a primary dispute over the content, but rather over the form of the text: Badiou's review tested the implicit norms upon which *Critique* itself was founded — and did so to such an extent that it placed the journal *Critique* itself in a critical condition.[6] Put briefly: Badiou's review raised fundamental questions about the very form of the review and of critique itself, as well as about the stance of *Critique* as a revue. This was due primarily to its "unappealing" (Roland Barthes) polemical tone toward his contemporaries – mainly towards Foucault, who invited Badiou to write the review in the first place and although ferociously attacked insisted on the rapid publication of the text.[7] As Jacques Derrida, another editor, noted, what is so "irritating" are the "grades" that Badiou distributes, "as on the day of the general inspection or the Last Judgment."[8] And the list of those graded is indeed long and almost a complete enumeration of the intellectual landscape of France back then: Lucien Goldmann, Jean-Pierre Vernant, Sartre, Derrida himself, Michel Serres, Lévi-Strauss and Michel

Foucault. Yet both Barthes and Derrida insisted that Badiou's article be published because of its "exceptional quality of thinking" (again Barthes)[9] and its philosophical significance — thus separating tone from content, which is remarkable given how central questions of style and tone were for both these thinkers. So, because the article far exceeded the usual scope and expectations of a review, Badiou's text not only problematized the genre of the review itself, but also compelled the editors to acknowledge the necessity of its publication: its quality was simply so high that they could not not publish it, despite their disregard for it.

The exceptional quality of the essay lies, in Althusser's own words, "both in its rigour and in its richness."[10] In barely thirty pages, Badiou not only reconstructs with insight and precision the complex line of argumentation in two of Althusser's major texts, but does so by reframing them within his own conceptual terms. The article thus constitutes a powerfully original intervention in its own right, advancing several independent conceptual proposals — or, as Althusser again puts it: "There are at least twenty other 'ideas' of importance, and even more important ones, in your text—infinitely more important ones."[11]

What is lastly astonishing about the text and what will form the departure point for the following reflections is another feature of the text, which may have escaped the attention of careful readers precisely because it is so impossible to overlook: the title. What immediately stands out: Although Badiou claims in a different context that he "never concealed anything [he has] done or written [...], but [that he] believe[s] that everything that was public should remain so",[12] it is precisely in this text – and to the best of my knowledge this is the only case –, in which he not only left out two of the conceptually most innovative pages, but of which he also altered the title for the republication from "The (re-) commencement of *dialectical*" to "The (re-)commencement of *historical* materialism"[13] – which is, as we will see no minor difference but rather a difference that makes all the difference.

But is this observation not pedantic and obsessively precise? After all, is not "the title [...] really a trifling thing [?] What is easier to change than the title?"[14] – as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing already had it.

Apart from the fact that it has been changed, the title itself raises many questions: When discussing why Badiou speaks of "(re) commencement" – a term which is only mentioned two times in the text itself, without any further comment[15] – two explanations are usually given: On the one hand, this is clearly a re-formulation of Althusser's slogan of a return to Marx. On the other hand, reference is usually made to Bachelard and to the fact that Badiou committed himself to a rationalist position from the outset. Although both explanations are indeed correct, the perhaps all too obvious question of why Badiou changes the expression almost imperceptibly – by a minimal difference – from Bachelard on the supposedly superficial level of graphics is never

asked: Why the brackets?[16] Is this difference from Bachelard, indicated by the interpunctuation marks, a supplement, an extension or simply an accentuation? Is it just a question of emphasis, of style and rhetoric? Are we dealing here, to use Badiou's vocabulary, with a category, a notion or a concept?[17] Simply put: What do the prefix "re-" mean? What does the marks "()" "indicate"? Posed in more fundamentally: Are these brackets *really* marks? Do they really *indicate* anything at all?

Without venturing too far into the realm of the paratextual research of titology, we can categorise the title, which is part and not-part of the text, as thematic:[18] The title functions like a metacommentary that, to speak in Althusserian parlance, is a question in the form of an answer. So asked again: What does it mean for dialectical materialism to (re) commence with Althusser? What renders this modification of Bachelard all the more questionable is that Badiou highlights the "re" with a hyphen – e.g. "re-inscription",[19] "re-presentation" – to identify operators of ideology functioning through its main mechanism, that is repetition. What is then the difference between "re-" and "(re)"?

There are, as far as I know, only three other cases,[20] in which Badiou uses this (re), amongst others at another decisive re-commencement of his thinking, that is in the conference "Le (re)tour" – yet another figure of a different mode of repetition – "de la philosophie elle-même."[21] Althusser was and to a certain extent still is crucial for Badiou's thinking, because '"he was" – as Badiou should writer on a later point – "unlike Lacan, Foucault or Derrida, who were all antiphilosophers, a philosopher" and thus maintained the statement: "There is philosophy"[22] and to side with him in the 1960s[23] – despite all the disagreements and harsh criticism – already meant in this time on the most fundamental level to declare "the end of the end [of philosophy]"[24]

If one not only keeps in mind that Dialectical Materialism is the name of the philosophy after Marx for Althusser, that Badiou was above all around that time part of the infamous, clandestine "Spinoza Groupe",[25] whose objective was literally re-doing Spinoza's *Ethics*[26] – with whom (at least for Hegel) modern Philosophy begins[27] or one could say Philosophy as such (re) begins – we are justified in presuming that it is this specific (paradoxical) structure of (Re)beginning that shall account for the question of the beginning within and thus the history of philosophy.[28] And in this sense every (re)commencement is an "infinite (re)commencement."[29] To state the obvious: The brackets introduce a fundamental linguistic ambiguity that only works at the level of writing. Is the part in brackets situated on the same level as the rest of the word, or does it form a metatextual element? Can the word be read just as well with brackets as without? The brackets introduce a double reading, a certain indistinguishability that causes the reader to stumble – one first reads "(re)commencement", then one recommences reading and reads "commencement", then one commences again and reads "recommencement" and so it goes on and on – whereby the word

mimics that what it names. The (*re*)commencement is – or rather can only be – a (re)*commencement*, or a beginning *tout court*, if and only if it goes together with a different kind of *repetition* than (ideological) repetition, namely a repetition of *difference* instead of a repetition of (difference as) the given.[30] (Re)commencement is the name for the couple repetition *and* difference:[31] it is a repetition that is altering that what undergoes repetition. (Re)commencement thus designates both at the same time: A beginning is only a beginning if it is repeated (differently), i. e. if there is a rebeginning, and at the same time, the rebeginning retroactively establishes the beginning as that which is repeated, i. e. the return is the production of that to which it returns to. To repeat Marx and return to the sources of Marxism means to change it – so that it can finally begin.

This article aims to outline what it might mean to interpret Althusser's return to Marx as a recommencement, even though Badiou ultimately judges it a failure by his own standards – and thus only a commencement. But exactly as such a commencement Badiou could have said the same thing about Althusser that Althusser once said about Machiavelli: "And if [...] I overstep his field of thought, let us say that he opened up this space [...] to us."[32]

What will thereby be shown is that from the (re-)beginning on, albeit differently, Badiou's thinking revolved around "a repetition of another order," [33] a "creative repetition," which precisely is not a "circular repetition."[34] Or, as he already has it in 1967: "*Far from being circular*, Dialectical Materialism is the first philosophy that is *intrinsically incompletable*."[35]

This undertaking is obviously way too big for an essay, and I ask the reader to understand it strictly as tentative "questions of theory", i. e. theoretical questions posed by theory. So, I have to excuse in advance the shortcomings that are almost inevitable in such a project – however, modesty is as little a philosophical virtue for Badiou as it was for Althusser; quite the contrary.

To rebegin: From Post-*Hegelianism* to *Post*-Hegelianism[36] or the Critique of critique

Before we begin once more, let me briefly foreshadow the end: As we shall see in greater detail what structures Badiou's text is the repeated differentiation of different kinds of differences, whereby it does what it states: it *produces* "the system of pertinent differences that both and at the same time disjoins and joins science and ideology"[37] and is thus in line with the concept of philosophy that Althusser and Badiou attempted to develop together around that time, namely: "Philosophy has as its object a conjuncture of which it is both the effect and an element, and of which it can only provide 'cognition in the form of an intervention."[38]

Badiou begins with a diagnosis of the *political* conjuncture, which he renders as the "theoretical silence" of the communist parties, which –

a condensed rephrasing of what Althussers calls a symptom – completely structures that of what they speak of. What remains unthought in and thus forgotten by all the seemingly opposed, "deviant" – yet another difference – forms of Marxism are silent and thus speak about, is a "erasure", "annulment" or "abolishment"[39] of a specific kind of difference. It is this very difference – going by the name of the "epistemological cut" – which is constitutive of and thus marks the *commencement* of the science founded by Marx that is erased by being "*presented in the form*" of another difference, the difference between Hegel and Marx.[40] To put it differently: The difference which the "epistemological cut" *is* – the difference between the real object and the object of knowledge and thus the construction or production of the object of knowledge on its own grounds – is omitted by being identified with another difference that between Hegel and Marx.

What can be said so far is that there is difference and there is difference. There are (three) different ways of avoiding the difference, that science *is*, by displacing one difference for another. Now these differences are characterized as differences that make no difference and are thus indifferent differences exactly insofar as they repeat this avoidance of difference. These forms of difference are what Badiou designates as "variants" of (Vulgar)Marxism. He defines "variants" elsewhere as differences that "are different, but by virtue of a difference that relates them to one another as variations of the *same* theme"[41] – "theoretical silence" in this case. What is already said thereby is that the "theoretical silence" is not to be understood as a silence of a specific theorem, but of (the constitutive difference of) science and that is of theory all together.

Secondly – and this brings us closer to our overall question – we have to note the particularity that there are only "variants"; "deviations" is all there is. We are thus confronted here with the paradox configuration of a "deviations without a norm". Badiou thus reads the history of Marxism as a history of deviation— of a difference erased through substitution (for another difference). This reading becomes possible only because he confronts that history from a perspective grounded in a re-examination of its (re)beginning, a standpoint that is itself absent from the tradition it interrogates. By omitting this very difference, we could say, (Vulgar-) Marxism is post-*hegelian*, instead of being *post*-hegelian. To be truly *post*-hegelian, that is Marxist in the full sense of the term, is to posit a difference between Marx and Hegel in the sense of their non-relation:[42] The dialectics of Marx and Hegel have nothing in common, between both exists a non-relation. Thus, they are situated in a fundamentally different theoretical fields – and are based on completely different problematics to speak with Althusser. In framing the constellation this way, Badiou underlines a subtle, but crucial point, regularly overlooked: For Althusser, the problem does not lie in Hegelianism as such, but in the various misguided ways in which thinkers sought to overcome it. By elaborating

on the specificity of Marx's dialectic – that is thinking of contradiction as overdetermined – Althusser is less concerned with differentiating Marx from Hegel than with differentiating him from Feuerbach. The problem is not primary Hegel, but Feuerbach – because Feuerbach is the name for the assumption that there is a relation (*qua* inversion) between Marx and Hegel.[43] This is the reason why in Althusser's view, Feuerbach represents the "horizon" of contemporary French philosophy[44] – "phenomenological idealism" as well as its seeming opposite "structuralism" are direct heirs of Feuerbach. Feuerbach's Post-*Hegelianism* is only a *Post*-Hegelianism insofar it regresses back to a *Pre*-Hegelianism, whereby it precisely and paradoxically becomes contemporaneous.[45] Put differently: the problem is that Feuerbach puts an End to classical German philosophy, but the wrong way. To end it properly, one must first end this false ending. The second, opposing strategy of Lévi-Strauss as the prominent proponent of structuralism consists in refusing to engage with Hegel altogether in a direct way, which only ensures his return in a still more powerful form.[46] Hence the necessity of returning to Marx: not because Marx was misidentified with Hegel, but because he was conflated with Feuerbach. What is thus needed is a critique of this wrong critique of Hegel.

But what is the problem with Feuerbach? Why exactly does Feuerbachianism lead to misunderstanding the epistemological cut, Marx's science and, beyond that, science in general? To put it briefly: because Feuerbach is the pioneer of what Althusser calls "empiricist ideology,"[47] which consists in reducing the difference between the real and the object of knowledge precisely by thinking of the real, and thus of the difference itself, as a given – or one could say by dehistoricising, i. e. naturalising the given,[48] whereby its cognition turns into the ideology of its legitimacy. As ideology number 1 the empiricist ideology poses mainly the "myth of the given": For empiricist ideology the real object and the object of knowledge are identical – the real object virtually *is* the object of knowledge –, thus there simply is no difference, all that science does is extracting and purifying that which is already *given* within the real object. This has two tremendous implications: If empiricist ideology denies the difference between real object and the object of knowledge because it is mainly an ideology of givenness this difference itself cannot be (a) given, but has to be produced and reproduced – by what? By philosophy. Philosophy, to jump ahead, is the production of the difference between difference and indifference.

Thinking of the epistemological cut as such means, to anticipate again here, understanding knowledge as production. And to do so, to think of thinking as production, and thus to (re)turn to the theoretical event that goes by the Name "Karl Marx" means to return to the difference that the epistemological cut is and this is only possible, so the second crucial thesis, if one conceives the "exceptional situation of Marx within the *history of knowledge*" [49] in founding at the same time a new science, historical materialism, the science of history – "the epistemological

cut" –, as well as a new philosophy, "dialectical materialism" – "the epistemological rupture."[50] In other words: The difference which is erased by Marxism refers back to another difference that is consequently also annulled, because it is logical prior and thus without it the former would be inconceivable, namely the difference between philosophy and science. While the different varieties of Marxism either reduce philosophy to science, science to philosophy or pose a relation of correspondence, Althusser claims that the whole task is to think both theoretical disciplines "in the unity of their distinction" *[dans leur unité de disjunction]*[51] – and as should become clear in a bit, both terms (unity, distinction) as well as their relation will be problematic. What Badiou now stresses in this context is of central importance: The difference between science and philosophy is an intra-philosophical difference, a(n) (impure) difference that is only conceivable from the perspective of philosophy – thus the astonishment about the aforementioned title change should get be clearer by now.

To understand why this difference between science and philosophy is so important we have to consider two further differences which are crucial here: the difference between ideology and science as well as between theory and practice. Here we have to posit two central assumptions: Philosophy is nothing but the difference between science and ideology, that is to say it has to constantly and repeatedly differentiate itself from science as well as from ideology in order to be what it is. By constituting the difference between ideology and science, philosophy is that without which science runs the risk of collapsing into ideology. So, at that point of our reconstruction a textual strategy of Badiou's review becomes evident. The article is right from the start implicated in the conjuncture it makes intelligible, precisely by (actively) being implicated in it.

To understand philosophy as distinct from science and ideology—and to grasp science and ideology in their own right—we must conceive all three as different modes of practice. And this means to consider yet another difference, that is a classical topos of Marxist tradition, *but now* – dialectical twist – *not* to remember it, *but* this time *to omit it*, namely the difference between practice and theory. To simplify things a bit: only if we understand that practice is already a mode of the appropriation of the real object, which contains theoretical elements, i. e. a kind of cognition and if we understand theory as a kind of practice, only then we are capable of truly understanding what differentiates science and ideology as well as philosophy from both. What then is *a* practice? And what kind of practice is theory or more precisely science and philosophy and ideology? Practice, so we learn, is a production, which operates on a certain material, uses certain means of production, has its own kind of process and a certain kind of product as a result So in line with these criteria we are now able to differentiate the different types of practices.

To speed up things a bit, let's be even more schematic as we already are: Science is a mode of production producing the "knowledge effect",

by *transforming* its material, i. e. ideology, while ideology produces an "effect of recognition" – or we could say "re-cognition" – by *repeating* its material. To reformulate this slightly: By being a process of transformation – literally a change of form – science is determined as a production of difference in the strong sense that it brings about something new. In light of the "epistemological cut," and given that truth is defined immanently by scientific practice, the *production* of science—its transformative process as well as its product, the object of knowledge — cannot amount to a *reproduction* of the real object.[52] That mistaken identity is precisely the hallmark of empiricist ideology, which assumes that the object of knowledge simply mirrors the real object. While, from the perspective of philosophy, science produces through transformation the product as produced, i. e. as historical, ideology produces through repetition the product as unproduced, that is as given, i. e. as natural.

In this context Badiou raises the crucial question: What is the status of philosophy in this context, if it is, as we said, nothing else then the production of this very difference – between science and ideology? The answer Althusser gives midst the 1960s is: As THEORY, as the theory of theoretical practice, as the practice that produces *the knowledge effect of the knowledge effect* and thus the cognition of theory as practice and thereby of practice as production, philosophy is itself a science, namely the science of the scientificity of science or also the science of science. This leads to the paradoxical effect: If philosophy is nothing other but the theoretical discipline which examines the forms of apodicticity, it loses its relative autonomy. To put it bluntly: as Althusser should have been the first to realise, it is not enough to reverse a problematic in order to escape it – which is precisely his criticism of Feuerbach – but only by putting forward a completely different problematic or as Althusser loved to say by changing the terrain. In other words, it is not enough to write "Historical Materialism and Dialectical Materialism" instead of "Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism', that is to exit Stalinism through *inverting* it. If philosophy is understood as a "science of science" it becomes an ideology – exactly insofar as it does, what ideology does: it functions as the *mirroring* guarantee of the science of which it is the science of, i. e. "Historical Materialism". In this way, philosophy tends to do the exact opposite of what it is supposed to do: by completing the science it closes off the theoretical field, whose openness it is meant to sustain.

This is precisely why it is not enough only to declare that one has moved beyond Hegel,[53] since this very concept of philosophy as a "Wissenschaftwissenschaft", how Kant once mocked Fichte,[54] i. e. a theory of theoretical practice, known by the famous name of theoreticism, introduces a new version of absolute knowledge[55] insofar as it totalizes[56] the field of knowledge and thereby closes it off once again.

To end: The critique of crisis

What ended this configuration of (re)commencement of philosophy and forced it to begin – again – is, as is well known, the "subjective *cataclysm*" of "May 1968 that will break [Badiou's] [...] existence tout court in two",[57] What follows this event is the inter-ruption of philosophy and the "*political* essays" of *Theorie de la contradiction* (1975) and *De l'Idéologie* (1976),[58] until philosophy is to begin again with *Théorie du sujet* (1982) – with yet another theory of repetition at its core.[59] It is in the interval between this and the new (re)commencement *of Être et Événement* (1988), in *Peut-on penser la politique?* (1985), that the (re)commencement is mentioned anew and again in the context of a discussion of Marxism. This time, however, Badiou (re)commences the (re)commencement differently, since this term now refers solely to politics[60] – after 1968 the locus of the cut shifted from the field of science to politics. The rupture between the two interpretations of Marxism is evident: While Marx was conceived in the 1960s in line with the Althusserian project of an epistemological reading of Marxism as an "theoretical event", he is now primary understood as the name of a politics.[61]

Guy Lardreau undoubtedly spoke for a whole generation of French intellectuals when he wrote, "We all became at once Althusserians." [62] The parallels are obvious: Did Althusser never do anything other but write "*Philosophical* Manifestos"[63] (how he himself coined Feuerbach' s texts) instead of writing a "Manifesto" or suggesting to rewrite it. Did Althusser himself then turn into Feuerbach against his own will?

The parallels are obvious: Just as Feuerbach failed to respond to the uprisings of 1848 and therefore remained confined to a critique of religion, Althusser likewise proved unable to engage politically with the events of May 1968. His reluctance to articulate an open critique of the French Communist Party, or to develop a substantive concept of politics, left him similarly restricted to a critique of ideology.[64] As Feuerbach could not have a clear concept of religion, so Althusser could not have a clear understanding of ideology without any understanding of politics and that is without an adequate notion of class struggle – as a struggle of class struggles.[65] At the same time, Marx needed Feuerbach to overcome the Hegelianism of his youth, as the young French intellectuals needed Althusser to overcome their orthodox Marxism and put forward their fundamental critique of the French communist party. As Jean-Claude Milner has it, "Althusser authorises both adhesion and rupture with the PCF".[66] To put it very bluntly, the accusation goes like this: both thinkers remained on a fundamental level defenders of the order they claimed to critique and that not only because they used a wrong approach or premise, but because of their political (non-)practice.

In both cases, the interruption of a political event marked the rupture with the former students — an event that, to a certain extent, both figures prepared to conceived as such while simultaneously rejecting it. Calling

Althusser “our Feuerbach” is not marking his deficiency alone as not going far enough, but is also honoring his importance as someone who paved the way for the new to happen, which he helped to prepare but was unable to conceive. Identifying Althusser and Feuerbach also means that Althusser laid the conceptual foundations from which his students and followers were only able to criticize him. Just as, for Marx, everything had to pass through the “Feuer-Bach” so that the dialectics could finally become “critically and revolutionary”, the leading French intellectuals first had to be “Althussériens” to then claim “Al, tu sers rien!” To speak of Althusser as “Feuerbach” lastly also means that he was just a precarious, yet necessary beginning, so that one could finally return to Hegel. But I don’t even want to get started on that.

1 Althusser 1997b, p. 339.
2 Badiou 2023, p. 370.
3 As Badiou recently emphasised (once again), for him, philosophy *began* with Sartre: "Philosophy suddenly appeared to me in February 1954, as religious conviction might appear with the arrival of an angel. In this particular case, the angel's message was a small book by Sartre, *Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions*." (Badiou/ Fautrier 2025, p. 8) To my knowledge, Pascale Frautrier has conducted the most comprehensive study of Sartre's role in Badiou's philosophy: Ibid, pp. 71-309. What is particularly interesting in this context is that it was Althusser, of all people, who, contrary to Badiou's own account, had already emphasised in 1976 that Badiou "never disavowed Sartre's philosophy of revolt." (Althusser 1992, p. 399)
4 Badiou 1966, p. 438-467.
5 Letter from Louis Althusser to Alain Badiou, 19.5.67: Althusser 1957-1986.
6 Jessica Marian, Elliot Pastoura and Joe Hughes, who examine this controversy in greater detail and on whom I rely here, speak of a „Badiou Crisis". See: Marian / Pastoura/ Hughes 2024, p. 111.
7 Ibid., pp. 116-117
8 Ibid., pp. 114-115.
9 Ibid., p. 114.
10 Letter from Louis Althusser to Alain Badiou, 19.5.67: Althusser 1957-1986.
11 Ibid.
12 Badiou 2012a, p. 8.
13 Precisely at the point where Badiou addresses the "second blanc" (Badiou 1966, p. 461) of Althusser's project, namely structural causality, which he tentatively attempts to reformulate through a "théorie des ensembles historiques" (ibid.), there is a blanc of three missing pages in (Badiou 2012). For the English translation of "L'aventure de la philosophie française depuis les années 1960", Bruno Bosteels restored the text to its original version. What makes the whole affair even more astonishing is that Badiou by omitting these central pages and changing the title without any comment or explanation is doing the very same thing as Althusser did as he among other things omitted the most controversial note revolving around the absent cause of structural causality, which is precisely the theorem that earned him the reputation of structuralism – whereby he "renders absent [...] the theory of the effectivity of absence" as Warren Montag aptly puts it (Montag 2017, p. 170) – and which is exactly the stumbling block of Badiou's critique as well. Although I cannot go into detail, I would like to briefly point out that Badiou had objections to structural causality from the outset – which, as we recall, Althusser considered to be the core of what distinguishes Marx's philosophy from the entire tradition. Thus, in *The autonomy of the aesthetic process* Badiou already states: "The theory of structural causality is still very obscure. My impression is that such a theory is impossible, if one pretends to provide it with formal models. It is to be
feared that only *regional* theories are possible." (Badiou 1965, p. 39) Put simply, this is precisely the point of contention in the notorious debate between Alain Badiou and Jacques Alain Miller: Jacques-Alain Miller's 'structural causality' or 'metonymic causality' from 'L'action de la structure' served as a conceptual template for 'Lire le Capital' – a text about Althusser admiringly said: "A 21-year-old lad... It makes you dream: a young man who, at 21, is stronger than almost any philosopher in France..." (Althusser 1998, p. 505)
In accordance with Althusser (cf. Althusser 1996a, 1996b), Miller argued that the "logic of the signifier" offers a theoretical foundation for structural causality. On this basis, the two discourses of overdetermination, psychoanalysis and Marxism (cf. Miller 1966, 1968), could be exactly formulated within one formal model. In other words, I understand the dispute between Badiou and Althusser as an *intra*-Althusserian dispute. In this context, one should give full weight to Badiou's brief remark that the discourses of Derrida, Althusser, and Lacan—*the* three different discourses of difference—should be kept "as far apart from each other" as possible (Badiou 1966, 445). Since I cannot go into further detail on the dispute between Badiou and Miller, especially on the theoretical status of formalisation, I refer here to the work of Daniel Barry: Barry 2025.
14 Lessing 1767.
15 Badiou 1966, pp. 447, 464.
16 Obviously, I would not ask this kind of question and would not pursue the following reflections if it would not be for Comay/Ruda 2018.
17 Cf. Badiou 2007b.
18 See the fourth chapter of "Titles" of Genette 1997, pp. 55-103.
19 Badiou 1966, pp. 439, 449, 451, 459, 465 or Badiou 1969, pp. 160, 162, 165, 172.
20 Badiou 1985, p. 58-63; Badiou 2008 and Badiou 1990, p. 108.
21 Badiou 2008, pp. 3-22.

22 Badiou 2009b, p. 89. And perhaps Althusser was all the more relevant to Badiou not despite, but because of his proximity to anti-philosophy (which is most clearly evident in: Althusser 2015, pp. 327-336): "And it is very well possible that Althusser's project, under the name of 'materialist philosophy,' *came close* to twentieth-century antiphilosophy" (Badiou 2011, p. 81). Of course, I cannot go into the highly convoluted concept of Anti-Philosophy in Badiou and would therefore like to refer to: Ruda 2024 as well as: Chiesa 2024. Towards the end of Althusser's life, the relationship between master and student was ultimately reversed. On the occasion of Badiou's review of Lyotard's *Le différend* – once again a review – in a letter from 27.1.1985 he writes: "*Once again, I admire the 'sovereign' rigour* (the word is apt) *of your thinking*, its insight, its clarity and the fruitfulness that this analysis promises. Recently, a friend and *I noted with concern the near-emptiness of contemporary philosophy, with two exceptions: Derrida and you*, if you finally find the time to write. We have high hopes in you." (Althusser 1957-1986, my emphasis)
23 This becomes most evident in "Philosophie et sciences humaines" from 1963. A text that is programmatic for the entire 1960s insofar as it maintains the assertion against the claims of the human sciences: Philosophy exists – with the all-important addition, as the other texts of that period are to show, that philosophy can only exist as a philosophy after Marx: Althusser 1998a, pp. 43-58. In this sense "For Marx" has to be read as a "For Philosophy" and since philosophy after Marx is like no other, namely insofar as it is philosophy as partisanship, that it was already in the 1960s I would claim, but I cannot go into this, "For Marx" has also to be read as "For the For".
24 Such was the original name for "The (re)turn of philosophy itself": Badiou 1999, p. 152.
25 From 1966 to 1968, the group consisted of Badiou and Althusser, as well as Pierre Macherey, Étienne Balibar, Yves Duroux and Michel Tort among others, and dissolved with Badiou's departure after the upheaval surrounding May 1968. Published manuscripts related to this work include: "Trois notes sur la théorie des discours, 1966 "(in: Althusser 1993, pp. 111-170) and "Notes sur la philosophie (1967-1968)" (pp 299-348) The unpublished contributions in the archive are inter alia: Macherey 1967; Tort 1967; Badiou 1967a; Badiou 1967b; Badiou 1967c. As a necessary prerequisite in the course of the disputes between the various political groups, the members were given pseudonyms: Louis Althusser became "Pierre"; Alain Badiou, "Gérard"; Étienne Balibar, "René"; Pierre Macherey, "Jean"; etc. pp. In addition of re-doing Spinoza's *Ethic*, there were also political-theoretical interventions on all "decisive philosophical fronts", as it was called back then, which included Lacan's seminar as well as the *Cahiers pour l'analyse* (Front 2). A sketch of the 'Groupe Spinoza' strategy by Michel Tort can be found in: Knox 2014, p. 176.
After their falling out in 1969, Badiou and Althusser resumed contact in 1976 on the occasion of the publication of *Cahiers Yenan*, edited by Badiou together with Sylvain Lazarus at Maspero (see: Althusser 1992, p. 541), in which Althusser was not only to be portrayed as an "octopus drowning in its own ink," (Badiou 1975, p. 48) but also his "Self-Criticism" (1975) was criticized as arrogant, idealistic, irresponsible, hypocritical and metaphysical (Badiou/ Balmès 1976, p. 106-113). An important objection that Badiou raised against Althusser's theory of ideology in the 1970s, and which has also been described elsewhere as "an alliance between Althusser's "advanced" revisionism and Lacanian structuralism" (see the chapter: Cahiers Yenan, 1975, pp. 80-110) concerned a point that Badiou still shared in the 1960s, namely that there is a connection between ideology and the unconscious (Badiou 1966, p. 449). As many interpreters have speculated with regard to Badiou's own interpretation of the 'clinamen' in *Théorie du sujet* (1982), Althusser's debate with his "friend" Badiou (Althusser 2016, p. 48) is of crucial importance for what was to become Althusser's late philosophy of 'aleatory materialism': Althusser 2015, pp. 106-107.
26 Althusser 1998b, p. 750. Of course, this is reminiscent of Badious's plan to re-write the Communist Manifesto (Badiou 1985, p. 60) which is of course reminiscent of Adorno's and Horkheimer's discussion of re-actualising the Manifesto: Adorno / Horkheimer 2010, pp. 33-61.
27 Hegel 2003, pp. 163-164.
28 It is hardly a coincidence that one of the discussions within the 'Groupe Spinoza' revolved around the "commencement of philosophy". See Macherey 1967; Badiou 1967b.
29 Badiou 1990, p. 108.
30 This question is the direct result of long and intensive discussions and debates with my dear friend Daniel Barry, without whom this text would not have been possible in this form for many other reasons.
31 With this concise formulation, we refer to Slavoj Žižek's reflections on 'and' as a category in Althusser:
"In Althusser, 'and' functions as a precise theoretical category: when an 'and' appears in the title of some of his essays, this little word unmistakably signals the confrontation of some general ideological notion [...] with its specification, which tells us how we are to concretise this notion so that it begins to function as non-ideological, as a strict theoretical concept. 'And' thus splits up the ambitious starting unity. It introduces into it the difference between ideology and science." (Žižek 1996, p. 103) Simply put: Difference is that which

disambiguates repetition and splits it into ideological repetition of giveness and the non-ideological repetition of difference.
32 Althusser 1999, p. 4.
33 Badiou 2018, p. 149.
34 Badiou 2014-2015.
35 Badiou 1967c, my emphasis.
36 I owe this stylistic device, although he uses it differently obviously to Ruda 2015, pp. 56-68
37 Badiou 1966, p.146.
38 Althusser 1967a.
39 Badiou 1966, p. 442, 444, 446.
40 Ibid., p. 442.
41 Badiou 2007b, p. 7, my emphasis.
42 Badiou 1966, p. 442.
43 What Althusser primarily demonstrates by showing that Marx's dialectic conceives contradiction as overdetermined is that Marx's dialectic cannot be conceived as a reversal of Hegel's dialectic, which is precisely what Feuerbach attempts to do: Althusser 1962.
44 Althusser 1997b.
45 Ibid., pp. 173-174.
46 That is in a nutshell Althusser's critique of Lévi-Strauss in his Seminar *Lévi-Strauss à la recherche de ses ancêtres putative*: Althusser 1962-1963.
47 Althusser 1965b, p. 336.
48
49 Althusser 1966, my emphasis.
50 This distinction is due to François Regnault's contribution to the 'Cours de Philosophie pour scientifiques' 'Qu'est-ce qu'une coupure épistémologique?' dated 26 February 1968. Introducing this conceptual distinction here is premature, as Regnault made it in order to correct the 'theoretical deviation' criticised by him and Badiou, and later admitted by Althusser, according to which philosophy itself is science and can therefore be reduced to the "epistemological break". Regnault 1968; Althusser 1976, p. 68.
51 Althusser 1965a, p. 73.
52 As Pierre Macherey succinctly puts it: "The most simplified and comprehensive expression of empiricist ideology is therefore: to know is to reproduce a given real." (Macherey 1968, p. 10)
53 Badiou 1966, p. 465.
54 Kant Immanuel 1795-1803.
55 This is why Badiou states: "We will admit [...] that all *theoreticism implies the existence of absolute knowledge*, that is, a theory of theoretical practice, a science of the scientificity of sciences, etc." *Materialist dialectics*, on the other hand, *does not imply theoreticism, because it is not a "science of sciences"*: "any discourse that constructs a concept of science is philosophical. However, the philosophical process is 'relatively' autonomous and has its own non-scientific laws. *There is no philosophy of philosophy* (in particular: no "correct" philosophy of 'incorrect' philosophies. [...]). *There is a science of philosophy* (in MH).
- *The existence of a science of philosophy, since it is not itself a philosophy, in no way puts an end to philosophical practice* (there is no contradiction in the existence of a practice for which there is a science). *Philosophical practice, as it continues in the recognition of the scientific nature of MH, is MD.*" (Badiou 1967c, my emphasis)
56 In the introduction to his *Cours de philosophie pour scientifiques* of 20th of November 1967, Althusser responds to this criticism by rigorously stating: "Philosophy is not the science of science, nor the science of the crisis of science, nor the science of the All—the science of totality" (Althusser 1967b, p. 6).
57 Badiou 2023, p. 226, my emphasis.
58 Badiou 2007a, p. 7, my emphasis.
59 Badiou 2009a, pp. 121-124. I owe this reference to Daniel Barry.
60 Badiou 1985, p. 58-63.
61 As a sidenote, we have to mention that Althusser made the same shift from epistemology to politics, or rather, strictly speaking, never really adopted it in the first place. As he should say at the end of the 1970s: 'There are two essential paths for philosophy, when one is not immediately drawn to it for different reasons: either the path of epistemology (that of Yves [Duroux], Étienne [Balibar], Macherey), or the path of politics. My path has been and remains that of politics" (Althusser 1992, pp. 454-455).
62 Lardreau 1973, p. 20.
63 See: Feuerbach 1973.
64 There are compelling reasons to argue that Althusser's difficulty in formulating what he himself called a "political politics" (Althusser 1998b, p. 693)—a line of inquiry already emerging in 1966, in which Badiou was likely not without influence—and, above all, the rupture of 1968, forced him to radically reconsider his theoretical foundations – to such an extent that they will never again take on a stable form. These developments compelled Althusser to reconceive the state and politics from the standpoint of a theory of reproduction, and to distinguish political practice from state institutions in a far more rigorous way. See Althusser 2014 and, above all, Althusser 2006. My dear friend Julien Veh and I have attempted to trace this theoretical development and outline how a politics and political organisation outside the state might be conceived. See: Veh/Weise 2023.
65 See: Althusser 2018.
66 Milner 2009, p. 45.

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Interview with Alain Badiou: A Renewed Universality

Crisis and Critique: First of all, we would like to briefly ask you about the current situation of your work. The "Being and Event" trilogy - with its precursor "Theory of the Subject" -, which forms one of the very few contemporary systems of and in philosophy is complete. This year, 2025, you ended your public seminar of, overall, over forty years (you had ended it once in 2017 and began it again in 2021). You ended the seminar with a quote from Pindar, from the *Nemean Odes*, which you took as formulating a maxim that allows to account for how to maintain the difficult unity of any philosophy (a unity that is established on the basis of the effects that its conditions - art, politics, love and science - have on it and its relation to the history of philosophy itself). You proposed that there is a maxim for how to uphold the unity of philosophy despite its unavoidable inner multiplicity. This maxim reads in English - we here translate from the French version you use: "What we saw in front of us / is exactly what we hoped to say / at its highest level." Could you say a sentence or two about why this is the maxim of (the unity of) philosophy? What does it mean for you that Pindar - a poet - has the last word (in your seminar)?[1]

Alain Badiou: I do not take philosophy to be a unity of transcendental consciousness, but always as conditioned by a singular multiplicity, of which the primitive form can be traced back to the contemporary figures of the constituting givens that are science, love, politics and art.

The unity of a philosophical proposition is always discernible in this multiplicity that, in my language, is called, the multiplicity of truth procedures. One can therefore say also that, rather than speaking of a truth of philosophy, one must speak of its active existence in a multiplicity of the truths resulting from these procedures. Philosophy is therefore an activity of thought, so that the traversal of the multiple of truths produces singular concepts. This is also, as I want to say in passing, the reason as to why philosophy merges with its history and works within its history – from ancient Greek thought to the contemporary constructions. Philosophy is thus engaged in each moment in the operations that consists in traversing the multiple in favour of a singularity: "What we saw in front of us / is exactly what we hoped to say / at its highest level."

This is what explains why philosophy is, in a certain sense, contemporary with its entire history – which is expressed in the formulas: "philosophy *is* the history of philosophy" or equally "philosophy is timeless / untimely."

To practice philosophy therefore always involves, with regard to a question addressed to it, the construction of a

dialectical operation, unitary in the multiplicity, and contemporary in history – so that philosophy is the discipline of through which is simultaneously untimely and immediately present to / in the world.

You construct philosophy with the help of philosophy, bringing its ancient forms back to this presence.

Leaving the last word to the poet springs from a dialectical determination of philosophy which concerns, more fundamentally, the relation of its creative identity to the set of human thought, in its history. Everyone has experienced a philosophy resorting to something that is not itself, often, it is inscribed in between the poem and the matheme. One is tempted to call philosophy that which is capable of treating the poem like a theorem (which also means a truth) or, encore, a theorem as a poem (which also means a creation).

CC: It seems to us that what you have repeatedly described as the non-world of capital is linked to specific forms of obscurantism. Frank Ruda recently tried, following your work, to analyze "the automatic subject", which for Marx is famously another designation of capital, as what you call an "obscure subject" (insofar as capital seeks to bring history to a halt by seemingly suspending all possibilities for change and brings with it all the regressive effects that are linked to what you call "generic fascism" that we witness almost everywhere today). You once suggested to escape the dominance of obscurantism, we must "create a symbol of... humanity that exists beyond itself", "a heroic figure"; because heroism, for you, describes the appearance of what takes humanity "beyond the natural limits of the human animal", something inhuman within the human. It is a new symbolic form of and for collective action. Do you see elements or traces of such a novel symbolic heroic figure emerging anywhere today?

Badiou: It is difficult to answer this question because philosophy, from the point of view of its actual history, has always had to deal with a threatening figure of human history. This is only saying that, in one form or another, perhaps particularly clear in Plato, Descartes, or Hegel, philosophy is also the grasping and critique of the misfortune that takes hold of the dominant thinking of its epoch. This is the case today, where we are threatened with a complete disorientation, a symptom of which is the desire to reduce thought to a mechanical construct. As was the case in the Middle Ages with the transformation of philosophy into religious belief, a threat that also shaped its critical task.

Today, the negative figure that stands in the way of the creative development of a new symbolic that would take humanity beyond its animal limits is undoubtedly the force of identitarianism. So, if there is anything new and heroic, it lies in the resolute criticism of this figure and the proposal of a renewed universality.

CC: If philosophy, since Socrates, has been an - always risky - attempt to corrupt the youth, i.e. to alienate them from the dominant opinions and somehow give them back to themselves, what are for you, today, the best ways of doing so? What are the best modes of, maybe we could risk saying in line with you once describing philosophy as creative repetition, creatively corrupting the youth today?

Badiou: Any contemporary example of philosophical corruption of youth conforms to what has just been said.

CC: You announced with the end of the seminar, you will devote yourself rather to writing than to public exchanges. What are you writing right now (there are rumours that a book on communism might be in the making - probably taking up your account of capitalism as belonging to the Neolithic age - but we are not sure if these rumours are true)? There is also a book on the concept of nature coming out soon. What can we be looking forward to in the more or less nearby future?

Badiou: It would be absurd to commit to projects that I don't know at this point whether they will exist.

Thank you, dear friend.

Translated by Frank Ruda

1 Part of this question was inspired by a question Daniel Barry and Jan Weise once raised in an interview with Alain Badiou that has never taken place.

Notes on Contributors

Alain Badiou, born 1927 in Morocco, is a world renown French philosopher, political activist, mathematician, novelist and playwright. Among many things he is known as author of the Beingand-Event trilogy: Being and Event (2005), Logics of Worlds: Being and Event, 2 (2009), Immanence of Truths: Being and Event, 3 (2022).

Judith Balso is a professor of poetry at the European Graduate School. Each year during a summer seminar she invites internationally renowned poets such as Jacques Roubaud, Alessandro De Francesco, and Philippe Beck to discuss the relation between poetry, philosophy, and politics. She has published numerous works on the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa, including Pessoa, le passeur métaphysique (Seuil, 2006) translated as Pessoa, The Metaphysical Courier (Atropos, 2011). Recently, Balso published book-long re-reading of Hölderlin: Ouvrir Hölderlin (Nous 2022).

Jason Barker is Professor of Global Communication at Kyung Hee University. He is author of the novel Marx Returns (2018), the Karl Marx bicentennial essay for the New York Times, and writer-director of the German documentary Marx Reloaded (2011). His next book, written in the style of Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and based on Lacan's Seminar XVII, is a graphic novel entitled "Justine and Jacquie and their adventures on the other side".

Bruno Bosteels is Dean of Humanities and Jesse and George Siegel Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University. He is the author of, among other books, *Badiou and Politics* (Duke University Press, 2011) and *The Actuality of Communism* (Verso, 2011). Three new books of his are forthcoming: *Philosophies of Defeat: The Jargon of Finitude* (Verso), *The State and Insurrection: New Interventions in Latin American Marxist Theory* (Pittsburgh), and *The Mexican Commune* (Duke University Press). He is also the translator of half a dozen books by Badiou, including most recently *Nietzsche: Anti-philosophy, 1* (Columbia University Press, 2026).

Arka Chattopadhyay is Associate Professor in the department of Humanities and Social Sciences at IIT Gandhinagar, India. He has published academic work in several edited volumes including *Frontiers of South Asian Culture*, *Routledge Companion to Absurdist Literature* and in journals like *Textual Practice, Interventions, Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui, Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society, Journal of World Literature, Filozofski Vestnik* etc. Arka is the founding co-editor of *Sanglap* and Anthem Book Series Co-editor for *Freudian-Lacanian Psychoanalysis and Philosophy*. He is the author of *Beckett, Lacan and the Mathematical Writing of the Real* (Bloomsbury UK, 2019). He has co-edited *Samuel Beckett and the Encounter of Philosophy and Literature* (2013, Roman), *Samuel Beckett and the Extensions of the Mind*. (2017, Brill), *Nabarun Bhattacharya: Aesthetics and Politics in a World after Ethics* (Bloomsbury India, 2020) *Ecological Entanglements* (Orient BlackSwan 2023) and *Understanding Badiou, Understanding Modernism* (Bloomsbury US, 2024). He has been awarded the Charles Wallace India Trust Fellowship 2022-2023 at the University of Edinburgh and Harry Ransom Centre Fellowship 2023-2024 at the University of Texas at Austin. He has guest-edited an issue of *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* (2025) on plastic turn and published the monograph *Posthumanism: Politics of Subjectivity* from Orient BlackSwan (2025).

Lorenzo Chiesa is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at Newcastle University, where he convenes the Faculty Research Group in Critical Theory and Practice. His works include *Subjectivity and Otherness* (MIT Press, 2007), *The Not-Two* (MIT Press, 2016), and *God Is Undead* (Bloomsbury, 2025) (co-authored with Adrian Johnston). Currently, he is completing a new book, tentatively titled *Letter and Event. Badiou, Lacan, and the Future of Psychoanalysis*.

Justin Clemens is an Associate Professor at the University of Melbourne, Australia. His books include Psychoanalysis is an Antiphilosophy (Edinburgh UP 2013) and, with A.J. Bartlett and Jon Roffe, Lacan Deleuze Badiou (Edinburgh UP 2014). His most recent publication is Limericks, Philosophical and Literary (Surpllus 2019).

Peter Hallward teaches at the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy in London. He has written books on the philosophies of Alain Badiou and of Gilles Deleuze, on postcolonial literature, and on contemporary Haitian politics. He is currently finishing a book on Lenin and the Russian Revolution (forthcoming from Communis Press) and a long-standing project entitled *The Will of the People: The Struggle for Mass Sovereignty*, forthcoming from Verso.

Isiah Medina currently lives in Toronto, where he directs and produces films with his company Quantity Cinema. His feature films include *88:88* (2015), *Inventing the Future* (2020), *Night is Limpid* (2022), *He Thought He Died* (2023), and *Gangsterism* (2025). His work has played at Locarno Film Festival, TIFF, New York Film Festival, Jeonju International Film Festival, and YouTube. He is most recently the subject of the retrospective "Beginning from Beginning Again: The Cinema of Isiah Medina" at ICA London.

Quentin Meillassoux is a French philosopher. He teaches at the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. His publications include *After Finitude* (2006), *The Number and the Siren: A Decipherment of Mallarme's Coup De Des* (2012), *Time Without Becoming* (edited by Anna Longo, 2014), *Science Fiction and Extro-Science Fiction* (2015).

Nick Nesbitt is a Professor of French at Princeton University and Senior Researcher at the Czech Academy of Sciences Philosophical Institute. His most recent books are *Reading Capital's Materialist Dialectic: Marx, Spinoza, and the Althusserians* (Brill 2024) and *The Price of Slavery: Capitalism and Revolution in the Caribbean* (UVP 2022).

François Nicolas (1947) conceives of his existence as a form of heterophony in which four voices (those of music, mathematics, politics, and love) are coordinated according to an intellectuality deployed in the shadow of philosophy. As such, he co-organizes the mamuphi seminar (mamuphi.fr) and the communist activities Longues marches (longues-marches.fr). His work is documented on his website fnico-las1947.fr

Claudia Pozzana has taught Chinese Literature and History at the University of Bologna. She has researched on the origins of Chinese Marxism. She has translated and presented the most important Chinese contemporary poets. La poesia pensante. Inchieste sulla poesia cinese contemporanea, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2021.

Frank Ruda is Professor of Modern and Contemporary Philosophy at the University of Dundee, Professor and Senior Academic Consultant at the European Graduate School and co-editor in chief of „Crisis and Critique". He is the author of several books, including *For Badiou: Idealism without Idealism*. Wit a Preface by Slavoj Zizek (Northwestern University Press 2015) and *Indifference and Repetition, or Modern Freedom and its Discontent.* With a Preface by Alain Badiou (Fordham University Press 2023). He is currently completing *Courage and Event* (forthcoming), *Reading Freud* (with Agon Hamza and Slavoj Zizek, Polity Pres, forthcoming) and *Comrades of the Absolute. Hegel-Badiou-Badiou-Hegel* (Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming).

Alessandro Russo has taught Sociology at the University of Bologna. He has published recently Cultural Revolution and Revolutionary Culture, Duke University Press.

Armin Schneider is a PhD student at Brown University. Before, he studied at Humboldt-University Berlin.

Thomas Rudhof-Seibert, philosopher and author, Frankfurt am Main. Recent publications: *Herrschaft, Knechtschaft, Bewusstsein der Freiheit* (Hamburg 2023). *Ökologie der Existenz* (Hamburg 2017). *Krise und Ereignis. Siebenundzwanzig Thesen zum Kommunismus* (Hamburg 2009). His latest commentary on the situation: *Dialektik der Zeitenwende. Versuch über das kommende Unheil*. (https://nonkongress.noblogs.org, News)

Jan Weise is a PhD student at Goethe University Frankfurt am Main. He is also co-founder of the German publishing house Neue Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher (www.ndfj.de)