

THE TRUTH OF POLITICS IN ALAIN BADIOU: 'THERE IS ONLY ONE WORLD'

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INTRODUCTION: THE LOGIC OF TWO WORLDS

In recent years, the growing number of persons to whom basic human rights have been explicitly denied—stateless persons, refugees, undocumented workers, *sans papiers* and unlawful combatants—has evidenced the logic of contemporary nation-state politics. According to this logic, the state defines itself by virtue of what it excludes while what is excluded is given no other recourse than the state for its protection. Hannah Arendt elucidates this logic when she observes that the stateless and the refugee can only be recognized as human beings when they have already been recognized as citizens.¹ Their appeal to human rights for protection was fruitless because they needed to have citizen rights, the recognition of a government, or of other citizens who can appeal to that government, in order to invoke these rights.² In the terms Arendt uses to name political action, one needs to be seen and heard already, the privileges of those who are citizens, in order to appeal to be seen and heard. Just as political life (*bios*), in order to be free, was only possible once the necessities were accounted for in natural life (*zoē*), so citizenship is recognized to the exclusion of the non-citizen, that is, the merely human.

Arendt's analysis indicates the lacunae of political theories from Plato through Habermas that assume the rationality of political life. What remains unconsidered in those accounts is the power, even whim, of the government or of the community to determine who belongs.³ When recognition is needed before an appeal can be made, the appeal to be recognized itself can never be heard. Contemporary circumstances from Darfur to Guantanamo, whose occupants only appeal appears to be to human rights, exemplifies this impasse: the rights of the politically excluded, the uncounted and unrecognized, seem impossible to secure.

This logic of two worlds, the political and the non-political, is formed by producing or excluding what the political considers non-political or not worthy of belonging. Jacques Rancière argues that Arendt herself is subject to the critique she launches against the nation-state, since she too defines political life in terms of a division into two, the exclusion of *zoē* from *bios*. Rancière reclaims human rights when he argues, *contra* Arendt's analysis of their impotence, that the subject of the "rights of man" is the one who can put two worlds or two spheres into one in order to activate the dispute between them.⁴ It is dissensus over what is political that makes the claim of the one who is excluded challenge the given order of who belongs and who does not. This manifestation of one world out of two divided worlds—the excluded and the included, of *zoē* and *bios*, of the private and the political—draws Rancière close to Badiou in his conception of political life. Both Rancière and Badiou take politics to follow from a particular subjectivization. Both achieve this subjectivization out of the appearance of one world.

I turn to Badiou in this paper for his analysis of this two-world structure and his conceptual counterpoint to it. Badiou formalizes the way the state operates so as to always bar some part that belongs. From Badiou's account

of the event follows a politics that performs the unity of the world as a disruption to the totalizing and excluding efforts of the State. Badiou problematizes the rationalist theories of politics that assume that whoever ought to be included will be by showing that the reason of the state cannot accomplish this end. Moreover, Badiou offers an account of politics that is not rooted in a founding ban. The conception of politics that requires exclusion has been criticized by feminists and critical race theorists who worry that certain persons must be kept from political life in order for it to be possible for others.⁵ If the problem is that an uncounted is always at work within a community and the state works to close off the dispute over the count, the solution is not to institute a community that always counts all the uncounted, leaving itself open to similar critiques, but to develop a notion of politics that keeps this concern at the fore, a notion that Badiou develops in his account of the confrontation between the state and the politics of one world.

I begin with a consideration of Badiou's ontology of the multiple from *Being and Event* which explains the operation of the count. This ontology, rooted in the multiple, exposes the project of the state as a continuous operation to control and monitor the multiples in order to achieve consistency and totalization, which ultimately fails. Second, I explain the presence of the void which testifies to the failure of the totalizing effort of the state and opens a site for the universalizing of the political subject. Third, I develop the meaning of Badiou's claim, "There is one world," as it follows from his evental politics. While this claim follows from Badiou's ontology, it remains consistent with his phenomenology and is therefore consistent with his account of many worlds in *Logics of Worlds*. And fourth, I elaborate the way that subjectivization and evental politics lead to a performative notion of politics. These latter two points consider Badiou's solution to totalizing politics as it is found in "The Communist Hypothesis," and its expanded version, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*.⁶

THE ONTOLOGICALLY BASIC MULTIPLE

Badiou argues that it is a decision, rather than a logical conclusion, to determine that the one is ontologically basic instead of the multiple. The one, for Badiou, exists as an operation.⁷ The multiple is the regime of presentation, that is, of making things appear, and the one is the result of that operation. In this way, Badiou distinguishes between what can be counted as one (what is multiple and presented in a situation as one) and what is ontologically one (nothing). Crucial to the understanding of this operation is that we discern the multiple without having to make it a one, which means without having to define the multiple.⁸

As I have just said, ontologically speaking, the one results from the presentation of the multiple in a situation, but the one *is* not.⁹ A situation is any presented multiplicity. The one, then, is the result of the presentation of the multiple such that it can be counted; it is an operation whereby it appears as the count-as-one.¹⁰ The not-one, the multiple, cannot be taken as an adding up of ones, but rather the multiple of a multiple.¹¹ Unity is an operation performed upon multiples. This unity is what is presented in a situation. Being, which is the multiple, does not present itself; it is only being *qua* being, the one, that presents itself.¹²

Badiou considers multiplicity in the context of set theory because the process by which things belong to sets in set theory denies the ontological unity of being and hence, avoids the metaphysics of categories and forms that have presented obstacles for thinking multiplicity since the ancient Greeks. A set is emphatically not that grouping together of everything that shares a property. Multiplicities render incoherent the axioms of any account that determine its elements in terms of the properties and formulas that define the set.¹³ So, the multiple and the set cannot be defined, though the set can be shown to work and function in certain ways (through axiomatization which indicates the relations of belonging, but importantly, does not define the set).¹⁴ Attempts at defining either the multiple or the set are attempts at reducing the multiple to the one and both result in inconsistencies and paradoxes. Every attempt at definition suggests that what is counted is one and not multiple which stands in contradiction to the ground upon which set theory bases itself—that what is counted is multiple.¹⁵ The set cannot be an intensive set, a set formed on the basis of some property that is held in common. This property would be the more primary unity which would then make the one primary. If the multiple is primary, it cannot be said to result from some more basic unity but from nothing. This nothing that comprises each multiple is that

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which is not presented in the situation's presentation of its count.¹⁶ Badiou names this nothing the void, which he argues is necessary for the multiple to be presentable in the set.¹⁷

By insisting on the primary ontological status of the multiple, Badiou opposes the ontology of presence, based on the fundamental and substantial being of the one, to the ontology of presentation, a thinking of the multiple.¹⁸ It is not the case that an individual must display a certain kind of being (having been born here, having parents of a certain citizenship status, having a certain rational capacity, any criteria the state establishes to determine who belongs and who does not) in order to be counted. This requirement supposes that the one is ontologically prior to the multiple and can be displayed prior to the political operation whereby it is represented. Belonging to the set is based on being present in the set rather than having an essential attribute by which the multiple belongs. By making the multiple ontologically basic, Badiou shows that within the set, there is fundamental equality between each multiplicity. Things don't belong by virtue of some property they do or do not have; they are equally different and their position in the set is one of fundamental equality.

Moreover, belonging to the set does not require an operator. Here, Badiou appears to overcome a century of debates over how to ensure that every proper member of a community is counted by dismissing the power of the counter in accomplishing the count. Representative politics and its many mutations including deliberative democratic politics inevitably lead to the question, "Who does the counting?" And so representative and deliberative democrats alike are inclined to ask of Badiou, if the multiple of multiple of multiples becomes counted as one, who is counting? If differences are rendered insignificant in this logic, who attests to that? But Badiou's resort to mathematics as a way to think ontology sidelines this question by de-subjectivizing ontology and hence, the state structure. Without agency, "Mathematics... pronounces what is expressible of being qua being,"¹⁹ just as some argue that the poetry of Hölderlin or Celan testifies to being. Yet unlike poetry, mathematics requires no interpreter; the count is accessible and true for all according to the logic presented; the count is im-personal.²⁰ Where ontology is a matter of what can be thought about being, we do not need a thinker to testify or legitimate that it can be thought. For Badiou, ontology is spoken of in terms of the count as organized by the situation and the state of the situation in order to show consistency in being qua being. So while we speak of presentation in the situation and the representation in the state of the situation, there is no presenter or representer; there is the operation of mathematics that works on its mathematical objects.²¹ In this de-subjectivizing ontology, the count is based on the functioning of mathematics not on a capable counter. Furthermore, the subjectivization that occurs in a politics that challenges the count is itself impersonal and universal.

UNIVERSALITY AND THE VOID: THE MYTH OF TOTALITY

Through the logic of the void, Badiou shows how equality becomes universal. The void is that upon which each situation founds its presentation yet it remains uncounted, unpresented. The procedure whereby the void comes to the fore and appears as the generic shows everything presented to belong by virtue of being in the situation. The void is included in all terms because all terms are multiples of multiples and the multiples of multiples are multiples of the multiple of nothing, since there is no basic one that is gathered to form the multiple. But in a situation, everything that is presented must fall under the law that organizes or structures the situation. The law of the situation is that everything within the situation must be counted and nothing can be known or can be said to count that is not the multiple formed to count as one. In this sense, the law of the situation aims to totalize, while the nothing that underlies the multiple shows that the count is always incomplete. The void is there, but it cannot be counted in the logic of the situation. The void then instantiates uncountability itself; the unrepresentable.²² The void in every situation testifies to the failure of the operation to totalize.

Totality in-consists; it is logically impossible, which is another way of saying that the one is not. As Badiou writes, "Insofar as the one is a result, by necessity 'something' of the multiple does not absolutely coincide with the result."²³ The set of all sets that do not belong to themselves is an example that demonstrates the impossibility of a totality that can include all sets. In *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou calls this set the "Chimera."²⁴ If

this set includes itself, then it does not belong to itself and therefore, should not be included. If this set does not include itself, then it does belong to itself and therefore, should be included. In this sense, the Chimera inconsistencies and shows totality itself to be impossible since it cannot situate this set.

In order to address the threat of the void, that uncounted element, a double count is introduced. The state of the situation (which in the historico-political situation is the state²⁵) is the count of the subsets formed from the elements of the situation and the subsets that are counted are said to be included in the state of the situation. This meta-structure that organizes the count of the count attempts to totalize what the void made impossible to totalize by over-counting, over-powering, over-organizing the situation. Because the meta-structure is concerned to count what appears to be missed and hence what can be disruptive in the situation, what is included (the count of the count) in the state of the situation is always in excess of what belongs to the situation. What is over-counted in the state of the situation is not something necessarily pre-existing the meta-structure; the over-structure of the count of the count is meant to control what cannot be defined in the situation, and which thereby threatens to disrupt the count and the state's claim to totality through its count. Yet this over-count cannot prevent the void from being universally included since the subsets still maintain a relation to the nothingness that rests at the ground of the multiples of the multiples.

Badiou argues that the void is the danger of the presentation of ontology that "haunts" presentation. The situation hides the "anxiety of the void" in its structuring of the count of the count.²⁶ In the state, the void is not eliminated by the excess of the count. Merely increasing the count will not change the operation of the state of the situation which continues to maintain and control the parts of the situation. To change the count, fidelity to the event that manifests one political world is needed.

Expanding the count appears to be Rancière's strategy, but Badiou's concern is that this does not change the operation or structure of the state and its count. Jeff Love and Todd May defend Rancière by arguing that Rancière is concerned for equality whereas Badiou's philosophy of the event appears to split the situation between those who become related to the event and those who do not, thereby introducing an implicit inequality. They argue that Badiou's attempt at universalizing does not achieve equality.²⁷ But this view supposes that the situation remains the same in light of the event. The event manifests the state's count; it puts the lie to the state's claim to totality and thereby alters the situation by challenging the count of the count.

The state of the situation cannot endure the challenge to its totalizing claim which buttresses its operation of the count of the count. For Badiou, the task of politics is to manifest the count of the count and to show the disparity between the count of the count and the count and so to disrupt the state by showing that it, against its own best efforts, is inconsistent (precisely because it is totalizing). The state has within it elements that it does not count and parts that it excessively counts beyond what is included in the situation. As Hallward explains, from inside the situation, it is impossible to apprehend an inconsistency inaccessible to the count. The event disrupts the situation and thereby projects us outside of it such that the inconsistency becomes accessible.²⁸ As Badiou defines politics and the thought that follows along with it:

Finally to count as one that which is not even counted is what is at stake in every genuinely political thought, every prescription that summons the collective as such.²⁹

Politics exists (in the sense of an occurrence of equality) because the whole of the community does not count a given collective as one of its parts. The whole counts this collective as nothing. No sooner does this nothing express itself, which it can do only by declaring itself to be whole, than politics exists. In this sense the 'we are nothing, let us be everything' of *The Internationale* sums up every politics (of emancipation, or equality).³⁰

The presentation of the nothing, impossible in the situation, is the collective action of politics. Precisely because the state is bent on maintaining itself by maintaining its claim to totality, the disruption of the count that shows

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the totality to fall short is a disruption of the state.

Empirically, this means that whenever there is a genuinely political event, the State reveals itself. It reveals its excess of power, its repressive dimension.³¹

So for Badiou, politics, wherein the uncounted comes to the fore, puts the state at a distance and only by so doing can offer a measure for the state.³²

“THERE IS ONLY ONE WORLD”

The important claim that underlies Badiou’s ontology is the priority of the multiple that prevents exclusion on the basis of qualities or lack thereof. The priority of the multiple enables us to think of all elements or sets that are in the set as belonging to it. The one of politics, however, is not ontological; it is evental.³³ Badiou’s ontology of the multiple allows us to think both the logic of the state and the world of the event. The logic of the state and its pretension to totality appear to secure universality, but instead produce a division between the counted and the uncounted. This is a divided world, the insistence on two worlds.

The evental disruption of this operation testifies to the universality of the truth of politics and thereby produces one world. The political world can be said to be one, for though the one is not, unity can be performed. The two worlds formed by the totalizing state define two ways of being within the same overarching ontology: counted and uncounted. The one world made true by the political subject is performed and activated.

In “The Communist Hypothesis,” the essay Badiou wrote after Sarkozy’s post-election charge to “do away with May ’68 once and for all,” Badiou argues for a performative unity of the world.³⁴ As performative, this unity is not ontological and it is not fixed. The oneness of the world must be attested to continually. Badiou elaborates this view of the one world of politics in his expanded version of this essay, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, where he dedicates a chapter to the axiom, “there is only one world”.³⁵ Against the “artificial and murderous division of the world into two,” Badiou encourages a notion of the political world that takes all others to belong to the same world as myself. Such a world is an “unlimited set of differences” but these differences make the world the same because the beings in it are equally different.³⁶ Badiou observes that “unleashed capitalism imposes” two worlds: the world in the service of wealth and one that is excluded because unable to serve wealth.³⁷ The first he calls the world of things, the second, the world of persons. The rule of the world of things is that there is nothing better than personal gain. Following this rule means dividing people “by and for the defense of privileges of wealth and power.”³⁸ In a real sense, the world in the service of wealth proclaims, “If you’re not with us, you are against us,” and divides the world accordingly. The world of persons, on the other hand, is “one of living and acting beings existing in the same world with others – we can agree and disagree – but on the absolute precondition that they exist exactly as I do.”³⁹

Rejecting the world of things and asserting the world of persons requires rejecting all things in the service of wealth and positioning oneself from a point outside of the rule of that world. Set theoretically, this positioning follows from the evental disruption that recognizes that there is a “nothing” that grounds the whole. Subjectivization is the process of working out the implications of the evental disruption and forming oneself in light of them, or of transforming “consuming individuals” into “subjects of a real process.”⁴⁰ Yet the effort to make the rejection of the world of wealth impossible is precisely Sarkozy’s task when he claims to “do away with May ’68 once and for all”. He aims precisely to annihilate any idea that asserts that a position can be maintained outside the wealth-protecting and -serving state.⁴¹

This is the continuum hypothesis of which Badiou speaks in *Theory of the Subject* whereby “those multiplicities that are too ambitious” are properly controlled and expelled.⁴² Contrast the continuum hypothesis with the communist hypothesis whereby we can deny that there are class relations precisely because there is only one world. The dividing of the world into classes is the effect of a totalizing state operation that cannot universalize,

that is, that cannot include all it purports to include.⁴³ Badiou writes of revolution of an act of a people for whom, “The proletariat only names the One, as the One of politics.”⁴⁴ When the proletariat becomes the One, there is no longer class struggle, there is now the universalizing of politics to everyone. What had formerly been denied the proletariat is now set to work in the world as the unity of that world. So to say that there is only one political subject is not to indicate one over another, but to stay more emphatically that the political subject is universal.

To claim this point beyond the service of wealth, beyond this totalizing world, is to engage in the practice and collective action of challenging the world riven in two and to perform the unity of the world. In the axiom, “the world is One,” we enact the truth that all those who live in this world exist as much as any other person who exists in this world.⁴⁵ For Badiou, there is little difference between the truth of a principle and the performance of a principle. Any true principle affects our living and “separates itself from domination and opens the field of the possible.”⁴⁶ Since the oneness of the world is true, it is an axiom that must be performed. Badiou’s view is that politics is “collective action” to “develop in reality the consequences of a new possibility repressed by the dominant state of affairs.”⁴⁷ This is subjectivization.⁴⁸ Politics puts into motion the action that shows those excluded do belong; the axiom makes possible what was supposed to be unthinkable.

For this reason, as Badiou writes, the mantra “there is only one world” unifies the multiples whose invariant being is human under the “same existential situation,” that is to say, in the same world.⁴⁹ As a mantra, it is not a description of what is as much as a collective action to bring about the unity of the world. Badiou argues that excluding those who do not, for example, “love France,” as Sarkozy demanded after his election, is to have placed conditions on belonging, and hence to judge belonging in terms of qualities presented rather than existence in one world.⁵⁰ Such a practice denies that there is one world. The axiom that there is one world precludes any preconditions for existing in the world because to assert one world is to affirm that the world in which we all belong is the place of unlimited differences, that is, to assert the being of the multiple.⁵¹

Badiou should be taken to be speaking in terms of the political truth procedure of the ontological situation when he speaks of one world. This affirmation of one world is not at odds with Badiou’s position in *Logics of Worlds* that human beings appear in many worlds.⁵² Badiou explains that what is the same ontologically can belong to different worlds, and human beings in particular appear in a great number of worlds. Badiou draws the difference between the logical construction of appearance (his phenomenology) which occurs in a plurality of worlds, and the universal of the pure multiple (his ontology) which exists in one world (his politics).⁵³ The problem of that ontology is that it totalizes, so politics is the eventual truth procedure that must perform the one world. In this way, there are three senses in which Badiou speaks of world: phenomenologically there are plural worlds, ontologically there is a totalized world, and politically there is a universal and performed world.

The understanding of the world as one is the precondition for egalitarian politics, yet the egalitarianism that Badiou introduces here vigorously opposes universalizing from any one particular identity in order to achieve equality. Such a universalizing involves a recognition of something held in common that ensures equality. The one world that must be performed is one of both identity and differences where the differences do not challenge the unity of the world and the identities do not establish it. Because Badiou bases his ontology on the multiple, he can base belonging on differences, which become the principle of existence of this world in which everyone belongs.⁵⁴ “The single world is precisely the place where an unlimited set of differences exists.”⁵⁵

Of course, the significance of identity is not nothing. Identity is the gathering of multiples that comprise a self. The political consequence of “there is only one world” is that what is common in each identity is joined together. But the common that follows from the ontological priority of the multiple is nothing but their mutual presence in the world.⁵⁶ (Elsewhere, Badiou calls this process subtraction.⁵⁷) An example of this mutual presence is the demonstrations in Paris and on the streets of Los Angeles (and throughout the United States) that undocumented workers belong because they are here. It is their presence that makes their identity universal and a part of the one world that is.

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Badiou distinguishes between several kinds of identity. Static identity is the identity that makes us different than others. Dynamic identity is what does not become different in ourselves. In the performance of one world, Badiou maintains that we assert each person's effort to develop her identity, which means, to develop the ways in which she is different from others. We must protect these efforts because in performing one world, we perform a universality in which no single "identity," especially the majority's, is better than any other.⁵⁸

Badiou's commitment to the multiple elucidates the meaning of identity in our one shared world. In this one set of infinite difference where what is in common is presence in the set, we are reminded that infinite alterity is not the exception, but precisely *what there is*: multiplicity.⁵⁹ Infinite alterity describes what exists in the world since the multiples are as different from each other as from any other.⁶⁰ From affirmation of the ontological priority of multiplicity, Badiou's account leads to a politics that actively affirms belonging based on existence in the set. Such a politics stands in contrast to the metaphysics of recognition that demands the appearance of qualities and essences to justify belonging.⁶¹

So Badiou can say in his *Ethics* that cultural, religious and national differences hold no difference for thought since the multiplicity of humankind manifests differences everywhere such that difference is "as obvious between me and my cousin from Lyon as it is between the Shi'ite community of Iraq and the fat cowboys of Texas."⁶² Human beings are difficult to recognize, or in danger of not being recognized, only when there is an essence that determines what makes one human. Having decentered a measure of the human, by taking multiplicity as what is most ontologically true, we see that identity only follows upon that multiplicity, and hence, no one is more like a human than another.

THE EVENT, SUBJECTIVIZATION AND THE PERFORMANCE OF ONE WORLD

The one world of equality is achieved through fidelity to the event wherein what is not counted in the "world that counts" shows itself to be a part of that same world. The shift from the situation to this new logic is accomplished by what Badiou calls "evental politics". As we have seen, the event brings to appear what the situation does not count and thereby affirms the generic. The generic is the positive designation of what cannot be discerned in the situation but is in fact the truth of the situation, the truth of its being.⁶³ In reply then to the accusations of Love and May that Badiou's event splits the universal and splits the situation, I maintain that for Badiou the event brings what was divided into its generic universality.⁶⁴ The void shows that the situation has been divided between what makes the count of the situation possible and the presented a consistent count. This division into two worlds is unified by the disruptive power of the event. The event is the performance of the universal insofar as it proclaims the generic, the inconsistent, the indeterminate, the unrepresentable and shows it to belong and to be equally so for all parts. Badiou explains what we can say about being *qua* being, that is, ontology, in order to show what is left out; what is left out is a founding part – as the proletariat is for capitalism, and the immigrant for France. By living and working in relation to the evental rupture so as to show that the political world is One, we perform what Badiou calls the truth procedure of politics.

While ontology can say nothing about the event, the event is not entirely unrelated to what is since the event must be localized within a situation.⁶⁵ Evental politics begin in an ontological position, that is, from within the situation. But the truth of politics is not itself ontological. The subject of politics is formed from an event that occupies a position that permits it to see from beyond the structure of the situation and hence, to disrupt the count of the situation. Beginning from within a situation, the event is therefore localized, and its localization is the generic set, that which belongs by virtue of belonging.⁶⁶ The generic has no other property than belonging. This is the property that is shared by all other terms of the situation, which is why it is called 'generic'.⁶⁷ The indiscernible possesses the properties of any part whatsoever; it is generic because its elements are the truth of the entire situation. To be here is to belong, Badiou says, and in the situation, the generic that is manifested in the event makes that apparent.

In subjectivization, the political subject is formed in its effort to activate the truth of the event. In politics, this truth is the oneness of the world, which is to say that the indiscernible is as much a part of the world as any multiplicity. In its faithfulness to the event, the political subject exhibits the indiscernible as the being that belongs in so far as it belongs, and that is the generic.

It is ironic, conceptually speaking, that it is only in this world of multiplicity and difference that one world comes to be. Badiou makes this distinction between what is and what comes to be at the heart of the distinction between being and event, ontology and truth. What is is the multiple. The truth of what is is the process whereby the one world of multiple-beings comes to be. Badiou calls this world Sameness. He insists that the one world must be performed in the same way that the equality between persons must be performed.⁶⁸ The one world must be performed because the politics that brings it into being is a procedure, not a structure within being.⁶⁹ Egalitarianism is not a state of being, but a performance. This egalitarianism is not the goal, but the assumption that politics is collective, that it makes an appeal to all and is thereby immediately universalizing.⁷⁰ Such universalizing produces the one world which we share.

The fidelity to the event that proclaims the generic is the performance of equality, and this equality is at the heart of what Badiou calls the communist hypothesis. As the title of Badiou's original essay against Sarkozy, the communist hypothesis is the charge to assert equality in the face of division from the reign of the wealthy and the powerful. The communist hypothesis is that a "different collective organization is practicable, one that eliminates inequality of wealth and even the division of labor."⁷¹ Badiou argues that communism is not a program, but an idea with a regulatory function, an idea of pure equality. Because the two worlds must be actively imposed by the state, the one world in contest with it must be performed, and hence, operates as a political imperative and a principle of action.⁷²

CONCLUSION

Badiou's account of a politics of "one world" exhibits the truth of the conjunction "and" in his title, *Being and Event*. Badiou distinguishes ontology from ethics and politics to insist on the activity and performance of ethics and politics. Finding in the administration of state politics an ontology that attempts without success to totalize, Badiou insists on the separate order in which ethics and politics occur. This separate order activates what the world that is cannot achieve. The logic of ontology, Badiou argues, will always in-consist, but the truth of politics testifies to the unity of what that logic denies. Badiou hereby makes it possible to analyze the political situation before us, as seen in the problems of appealing to human rights, and to see the causes of division within this situation. When the state is driven by the effort to totalize, there will always be that which is left out based on the logic of totalities. Badiou's division of ontology from politics encourages an active response rather than resigned pessimism to this situation, a response that performs the truth that begins from within the situation as it is given. That truth is that the political world is universal.

This twin analysis of ontology and politics is made possible by Badiou's turn to the multiple as what is ontologically real. The analysis that results from the ontology of the multiple shows that the effort to achieve the one cannot be achieved by ontology, by the given situation, or the administration of the state, but only by the truth procedure of politics. This eventual politics performs the belonging of those who are uncounted rather than seeking, as the state continued to do, to more successfully totalize the world.

The problem of human rights with which this essay began further elucidates Badiou's solution. People seeking human rights are those excluded from the world recognized by the state. They occupy the void, the uncountable within the count that the count must occlude in order to be consistent. Under these circumstances, an appeal to the state does not accomplish recognition and rights to these persons. But the performance of solidarity with those who need rights, the performance that there is only one world, which is to say, the performance of the communist hypothesis, enacts a politics of equality. In contrast to the running of the state, this true politics denies the power of the count and instead asserts the equality of the differences of multiples. This politics shows that

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it is not becoming countable but the performance of equality that must be sought to address the circumstances that lead people to claim human rights. Recognizing the incapacity of the state to count or recognize those who must appeal to human rights, Badiou calls for a collective politics that performs the belonging of those who are uncounted. His account shows that no diplomatic recourse or pressure on governments from other governments will, for example, make the United States grant *habeas corpus* to “unlawful combatants.” No doctrine of human rights can show that undocumented workers belong. Only collective action to perform the unity of the world can.

Badiou’s insistence on an indivisible world attests to difference at the ground of being and the universalism of politics. It follows that the difference between myself and my brother as much as between myself and the migrant workers down the road is both immeasurable (infinitely other) and insignificant (in-different) for our inclusion together in the world. We perform the unity of this world when we insist that the plight of those workers is as much our concern as the plight of our own brothers and sisters.

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NOTES

1. Hannah Arendt, "The Decline of the Nation-State" *Origins of Totalitarianism*. San Diego: Harcourt, 1973, 296. See also Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998.
2. Arendt, "The Decline of the Nation-State," 291-292. For other resources in Arendt for developing a notion of human rights, see Peg Birmingham, *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights: The Predicament of Common Responsibility*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006. See also Butler, Judith. and Guyatri. C. Spivak. *Who Sings the Nation-State? Language, Politics, Belonging*. New York: Seagull Books, 2007.
3. This debate is at the heart of the conflict between Jürgen Habermas and Michel Foucault, or rather, between their followers. See Amy Allen, "Discourse, Power and Subjectivation: The Foucault / Habermas Debate Reconsidered" *The Philosophical Forum* 40 (published online Jan 29, 2009, 1-28). See also Michael Kelly, ed., *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault / Habermas Debate*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994; David Owen and Samantha Ashenden, eds., *Foucault contra Habermas: Recasting the Dialogue Between Genealogy and Critical Theory*. London: Sage, 1999. Rancière similarly argues against the ruse of imposing reason upon political life in Plato, Aristotle and Hobbes in *Dis-Agreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Trans. Julie Rose. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1999.
4. Jacques Rancière, "Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103:2/3 (2004, 298-310).
5. For example, Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender and the Family*. New York: Basic Books, 1991; and Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.
6. Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*. Trans. Peter Hallward. London: Verso, 2001, 25.
7. Badiou, *Ethics*, 24.
8. Badiou, *Ethics*, 9.
9. Badiou, *Being and Event*. Trans. Oliver Feltham. New York and London: Continuum, 2005, 28-29.
10. Badiou, *Being and Event*, 24.
11. Badiou, *Being and Event*, 28-29.
12. Badiou, *Being and Event*, 25-26.
13. This point is apparent in the paradoxes that Cantor and Russell's definitions of the set encountered (*Being and Event*, 40). Both Cantor and Frege had problems in defining sets, intensively and extensively, respectively, because both of their attempts required a regression toward a one, the very claim that set theory denies by founding itself on the multiple that constitutes the element of the set. Russell formalizes the problem with defining the set by a property and showcases the inconsistency at the limit of this approach by positing the set which is not an element of itself. The set of sets that are not multiples of themselves is itself included if it is not included and if it is not included it is included (39-42). Zermelo's axiomatic set theory overcomes this problem by subordinating the induction of any multiple in a set to the existence of an initial multiple that exists prior to that induction, hence, what belongs to a multiple is always a multiple. And an element of a set is not an element by virtue of an property nor is being an element itself a property of the multiple; all that is presented is that it is a multiple (44-45). The implication of Cantor, Frege and Russell's paradoxes and Zermelo's axiomatization solution that Badiou draws is the necessary already existence and being-there of the multiple, which shows mathematically that the multiple must be posited first in order to develop a consistent account of the count (48).
14. Badiou, *Being and Event*, 44.
15. Badiou, *Being and Event*, 40, 43.
16. Badiou, *Being and Event*, 55.
17. Badiou, *Being and Event*, 57.
18. Elias José Palti describes Badiou's account as detached from any kind of substantialism in "Post-Structuralist Marxism and the 'Experience of Disaster': On Alain Badiou's Theory of the (Non-)Subject" *The European Legacy* 8:4 (2003, 465).
19. Badiou, *Being and Event*, 8.
20. As Badiou writes in "Plato, Our Dear Plato," this universal accessibility of mathematics makes it the truly democratic discipline in contrast to the aristocratic approach of poetry," Trans. Alberto Toscano. *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 2:3 (December 2006, 40). Srnicek remarks on the fact that the state is not the agent of the situation or the count in "What Is to Be Done? Alain Badiou and the Pre-Evental" *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy* 12:2 (2008, 118). Power argues that a difference must be drawn for both Badiou and Rancière between equality, which both take to be a sort of pre-condition, and equivalence, which is the quantitative counting of the state. In the state, each individual is counted, and so any equivalence is founded in the count that only operates on what is visible, but there remains an equality that is presumed between all regardless of visibility to the state in "Which Equality? Badiou and Rancière in Light of Ludwig Feuerbach" *Parallax* 15:3 (August 2009, 63-80).
21. And so Badiou writes, "[S]et' is what counts-as-one a formula's multiple of validation," in *Being and Event*, 39. The set is organized by the situation's presentation and the structure of the situation's representation in order to overcome the inconsistency that at the same time grounds the set ("[T]he regime of presentation is consistent multiplicity, the result of the

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count" (53). But in all these operations, there is no agent.

22. Badiou, *Being and Event*, 59.
23. Badiou, *Being and Event*, 53. Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*. Trans. Alberto Toscano. New York: Continuum, 2009, 112, 153.
24. Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, 110.
25. Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, 105.
26. Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, 94.
27. Todd May and Jeff Love, "From Universality to Equality: Badiou's Critique of Rancière" *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy* 12:2 (2008, 61). Elsewhere, May makes this problem with Rancière more evident when he continues to describe the Rancièrian struggle for equality in terms of recognition, describing the claim to equality as the assertion that "everyone is capable of constructing a meaningful life for himself or herself alongside others and that communities should be arranged to ensure recognition of that capability" (May, "Equality as Foucaultian Value: The Relevance of Rancière" *Philosophy Today* 51 Supplement (2007, 133)). Jason Read distinguishes Rancière and Badiou in a similar vein to Love and May by arguing that Rancière is concerned with the proletariat as the excluded part whereas Badiou is concerned with consistency ("Politics as Subjectification: Rethinking the Figure of the Worker in the Thought of Badiou and Rancière" *Philosophy Today* 51 Supplement (2007, 130). This is not quite fair to Badiou whose concern for consistency and inconsistency is a concern with how the count excludes the void, the part that has no part.
28. Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003, 94.
29. Badiou, *Metapolitics*. Trans. Jason Barker. London: Verso, 2005, 150.
30. Badiou, *Metapolitics*, 115.
31. Badiou, *Metapolitics*, 145.
32. Badiou, *Metapolitics*.
33. Badiou similarly prioritizes the Two in *Theory of the Subject*, where the Two of a contradiction is prior to the One that joins them in the contradiction (Trans. Bruno Bosteels. New York and London: Continuum, 2009, 22, 29, 54, 117). Badiou's emphasis there on the Two as this scission is commensurate with his ontological account of the multiple in *Being and Event*, and neither treatment denies the One which he speaks of as the political subject. In *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou writes of a one that is achieved, reached, performed. This is a One that joins what is disjointed and excessive; a One of a different kind (243). The subject is the heterogeneous One, not the One of metaphysics (98). As in *The Communist Hypothesis*, Badiou speaks in *Theory of the Subject* of a politics that is valid for all, such that the emancipation from class is the emancipation of all humanity, and he calls this a communist politics wherein the in-existent is what is proper to the political whole (262).
34. Badiou, "The Communist Hypothesis" *The New Left Review* 49 (2008, 38).
35. Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*. Trans. David Fernbach. London: Verso, 2008.
36. Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, 63.
37. Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, 54.
38. Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, 58.
39. Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, 61.
40. Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, 39.
41. Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, 38.
42. Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, 271.
43. Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, 127, 262.
44. Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, 172.
45. Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, 60.
46. Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, 19.
47. Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, 11.
48. Badiou, *Being and Event*, 391-409.
49. Badiou, "The Communist Hypothesis", 38.
50. Badiou, "The Communist Hypothesis".
51. Badiou, "The Communist Hypothesis", 39.
52. Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, 114.
53. Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*.
54. Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, 62-63. As Hallward explains Badiou, the human universe is that within which there is absolutely no criterion of membership or belonging. Or further, Hallward explains that there is nothing about people to suggest that they should be grouped one way rather than another. Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject of Truth*, 87, 89.
55. Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, 63.
56. Badiou, "The Communist Hypothesis", 40.
57. Badiou, "On Subtraction".
58. Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, 65.
59. Chiesa calls the multiple the real, à la Lacan and explains that oneness or unity is only ever symbolic, consistent with

Badiou's claim that the one is an operation in "Count-as-One, Forming-into-One, Unary Trait, S1," 82-84.

60. Badiou, *Ethics*, 25.

61. Badiou, "The Communist Hypothesis", 38.

62. Badiou, "The Communist Hypothesis", 26.

63. Badiou writes that the generic is almost equivalent to the indiscernible, *Being and Event*, 327. The difference between the generic and the indiscernible is that the indiscernible has a negative connotation, that something cannot be discerned, while the generic is a positive designation of what actively does not permit itself to be discerned and is the truth of the situation.

64. Love and May, "From Universality to Equality", 61. Power offers a careful comparison of Rancière and Badiou on equality concluding that both Rancière and Badiou share a commitment to "a notion of equality that is postulated and not willed" and the difference is in the strategy one ought to take in light of that commitment ("Which Equality?" 77). For Rancière equality disrupts the situation; for Badiou, equality allows us to perform the whole, the one world in which we live.

65. See Sedofsky, "Being by Numbers: Lauren Sedofsky Talks with Alain Badiou" *ArtForum International* 33:2 (October 1994, 84-87, 118, 123-24), an interview where Badiou says there that as an absolute immanentist, he does maintain that the event is not transcendent to the situation, it is in it; the event is what "pushes the system in another direction" (87).

66. Badiou, *Being and Event*, 327.

67. Badiou, *Being and Event*, 339. See Power's argument that the generic has "quasi-Feuerbachian" resonances ("Which Equality?" 73-76) and Power and Toscano. "The Philosophy of Restoration: Alain Badiou and the Enemies of May" *Boundary* 2 36:1 (2009, 42).

68. Badiou, "The Communist Hypothesis", 38; *Ethics*, 27.

69. Badiou, *Being and Event*, 345.

70. Badiou, *Metapolitics*, 99.

71. Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, 99.

72. Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, 68.