SUBJECT AND TRUTH: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF ALAIN BADIOU'S MATHEMATICAL ONTOLOGY

Thesis
Submitted to the University of Calicut
for the award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN PHILOSOPHY

By

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I certify that the thesis entitled **Subject and Truth: A Critical Evaluation of Alain Badiou's Mathematical Ontology** submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) by **Sandhya V. P.,** is the record of research work carried out by her under my guidance and supervision and this work has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma or other titles in this University or any other University or institution of higher learning.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented in the thesis entitled **"Subject and Truth: A Critical Evaluation of Alain Badiou's Mathematical Ontology"** is based on the original work done by me under the guidance of **Dr. T. V. Madhu**, Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut and has not been included in any other thesis submitted previously for the award of any degree. The contents of the thesis are undergone plagiarism check using iThenticate software at C.H.M.K. Library, University of Calicut, and the similarity index found within the permissible limit. I also declare that the thesis is free from AI generated contents.

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Sandhya V P

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Title : Subject And Truth: A Critical Evaluation of Alain Badiou's Mathematical Ontology

വിഷയിയും സത്യവും : അലൈൻ ബാജ്യൂവിന്റെ ഗണിത ഭവ-ശാസ്ത്രത്തെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള വിമർശനാത്മക പഠനം.

ABSTRACT

This study pursues a twofold objective. Firstly, it undertakes an in-depth examination of Alain Badiou's philosophical system, focusing especially on his linking of set theory to ontology, concept of the 'event', concept of the formation of the 'subject', and his views on the conditions that render 'truth' possible. Secondly, it provides a general critical evaluation of Badiou's philosophical framework, assessing its implications and limitations. This critical evaluation helps us to develop a critical perspective on some fundamental tensions in linking set theory to ontology and, more importantly, provides us with a platform to have a critical view on how Badiou's system involves the elements of what can be called a correlative subjectivism which problematize its initial purpose.

Key words: Mathematical ontology, Set Theory, Subject, Event, Truth

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സംഗ്രഹം

ഈ ഗവേഷണ പ്രബന്ധത്തിന് രണ്ട് പ്രാഥമിക ലക്ഷ്യങ്ങളാണുള്ളത്. ഒന്നാമതായി, അലൈൻ ബാജ്യൂവിന്റെ ഗണിത-ഭവശാസ്ത്രത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാന വിവക്ഷകളെ വിശകലനാത്മകമായി പരിശോധിക്കുക. രണ്ടാമതായി, ഇവന്റ്, സബ്ജക്ട്, ട്രൂത്ത് എന്നിങ്ങനെയുള്ള ബാജ്യൂവിന്റെ സങ്കൽപ്പനങ്ങളെ വിമർശനാത്മകമായി വിലയിരുത്തുക. ഭവശാസ്ത്രത്തെ ഗണസിദ്ധാന്തവുമായി ബന്ധിപ്പിക്കുക എന്നതാണ് ബാജ്യൂവിന്റെ പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ട ഉദ്യമം. ഈ ബന്ധിപ്പിക്കലിൽ അടങ്ങുന്ന ആശയസംഘർഷങ്ങൾ പുറത്തെടുക്കുവാനാണ് ഈ ഗവേഷണ പഠനത്തിലൂടെ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നത്. ബാജ്യൂവിന്റെ തത്ത്വചിന്താപദ്ധതിയിൽ ഒരു തരം കോറിലേറ്റീവ് സബ്ജക്ടിവിസം ഉൾച്ചേരുന്നുണ്ടെന്ന് പ്രബന്ധം വാദിക്കുന്നു. ഈ കോറിലേറ്റീവ് സബ്ജക്ടിവിസം ബാജ്യൂവിന്റെ തന്നെ പദ്ധതികളെ ആഴത്തിൽ പ്രശ്നവൽക്കരിക്കുന്നതെങ്ങനെ എന്ന് കണ്ടെത്തുന്നതിനുള്ള ഒരു വിമർശനാത്മക വീക്ഷണം വികസിപ്പിച്ചെടുക്കുകയാണ് ഈ പ്രബന്ധം ചെയ്യുന്നത്.

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To
My Parents, V. Padmanabha Kurup
&
K. Kalyanikutty Amma

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CONTENT

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: MAPPING THE PROBLEM

1.1 Aim of the study

This study pursues a twofold objective. Firstly, it undertakes an in-depth examination of Alain Badiou's philosophical system, focusing especially on his linking of set theory to ontology, concept of the 'event', concept of the formation of the 'subject', and his views on the conditions that render 'truth' possible. Secondly, it provides a general critical evaluation of Badiou's philosophical framework, assessing its implications and limitations. This critical evaluation helps us to develop a critical perspective on some fundamental tensions in linking set theory to ontology and, more importantly, provides us with a platform to have a critical view on how Badiou's system involves the elements of what can be called a correlative subjectivism which problematize its initial purpose.

Alain Badiou's philosophy presents a unique challenge to traditional metaphysics and epistemology by asserting that genuine change is needed, that is neither a mere development within an existing structure nor a product of historical necessity. Instead, it requires a rupture that reconfigures the very parameters of what can be thought. This study investigates how such ruptures become legible within Badiou's system, how the subject is constituted in response to the events, and how truth is sustained. While his framework offers a compelling vision of transformation, it also raises critical questions: Are the conditions for truth as rigid as Badiou

claims? Does his reliance on set theory truly escape foundationalism, or does it introduce new limitations? Does his interpretation of the set-theoretic notion of the empty set help him escape foundationalism? Is this interpretation justifiable? Does it help him to enlarge the scope of set theory to capture the historicity of being? Do his concepts of truth, subject and event sit comfortably with his original ontological framework? By engaging with these concerns, this study aims to both elucidate and challenge the implications of Badiou's philosophical project.

1.2 Why Alain Badiou?

Alain Badiou's work has had a profound influence on contemporary philosophical debates around ontology, epistemology, and politics. What is unique about his work is that it links abstract mathematical ontology to existential inquiries into subjectivity, event, and truth. Furthermore, he makes use of the language of mathematics to speak about the complexities of contemporary society and politics. It is quite accurate to say that Badiou invents a new conceptual terrain, rather than simply travelling through established ones. His move is certainly innovative, in that he speaks about the familiar concepts, such as being, event and truth but reconfigures them in radically novel ways, combining them with mathematical and ontological ideas. Also, the novel concepts that he has introduced, such as the 'evental site', 'fidelity', and 'subtractive ontology', expand the philosophical vocabulary and create new possibilities of thought. Another important aspect to be noted is the interdisciplinarity of his approach. By integrating insights from mathematics, philosophy, politics and aesthetics, he created a unique interdisciplinary terrain. This unique blend of mathematical ontology and

commitment to universal concepts set him apart from other contemporary philosophers belonging to different traditions and schools such as poststructuralism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, and linguistic philosophy.

Badiou's use of set theory to think about being is to be understood in the backdrop of a long history of the close relationship between philosophy and mathematics in ancient, medieval and modern times. As we know from the history of philosophy, this relation has its roots in the Pre-Socratic period in western philosophy. Mathematics and numbers were seen as fundamental to understanding reality in the Pythagorean system. Numbers were considered eternal, immutable, and the building blocks of the universe. Plato, in his theory of forms, posited that mathematical concepts, like numbers and geometric shapes, were eternal, abstract entities that underlay the imperfect, changing world of sensory experience. Badiou would agree with this ancient understanding to a certain extent. Especially, the concept of the universality of mathematical truths has influenced his system.

However, he does not agree with Plato's mathematical framework, which posits the existence of a higher, eternal realm of being, separate from the imperfect, changing world of experience. According to him, this framework relies on a problematic dichotomy between being and becoming. It can be argued that Badiou takes mathematics as ontology, not metaphysics. Mathematics provides a rigorous framework for understanding being, but not in the sense of a metaphysical, eternal realm. Rather, mathematics discloses the underlying structure of being, inconsistency, and change.

The relationship between mathematics and philosophical thinking has its roots in medieval thinking as well. Thomas Aquinas, for example, integrated Aristotelian philosophy with Christian theology, emphasising the role of reason and mathematics in understanding God's creation. In the modern period, it is Descartes' philosophical and mathematical works that laid the groundwork for modern mathematics. The development of calculus by Leibniz and Newton marked a significant turning point in mathematics, and the philosophical debates surrounding the nature of infinity, limits, and mathematical rigour ensued.

The above mentioned perspective of the theological use of mathematics is obviously unacceptable to Badiou. He stands against the idea that mathematical concepts such as infinity and perfection can be used theologically, to prove the existence of God. Such attempts rely on an onto-theological framework, on an unjustified assumption that mathematical truths can be translated into theological truths. Especially his concept of the event, as a rupture in the fabric of being, challenges the onto-theological framework. Badiou's own approach to mathematics is more close to the Platonic ideals than to Aristotle's material-formal account[1] that influenced the development of medieval mathematics. Badiou's use of mathematics is fundamentally different from the rationalist perspectives, and his view is opposed to the reliance on intuition and innate ideas as the foundation for mathematical knowledge. His view also stands against the idea of a pre-existing eternal

[1] Aristotle's material- formal account, also known as hylomorphism, posits that reality consists of two fundamental aspects: mater, the raw material that provides potential for existence, and form, the structural essence that actualizes this potential. This concept of hylomorphism suggests that the form gives matter its identity, nature, and purpose, thereby defining what a thing is and its place in the world. Medieval thinkers, like Thomas Aquinas, viewed quantity as a form inherent in matter, leading to a focus on the study of proportions, ratios, and dimensions.

mathematical realm. Instead, he argues that mathematical truths are constructed through a process of axiomatic decision and formal proof. He sees axioms as a way to anchor mathematics on a rigorous, formal basis, rather than relying on intuition or innate ideas.

Georg Cantor's development of set theory revolutionized mathematics, introducing concepts like infinite sets and cardinality. In the early twentieth century, we have witnessed the development of mathematical logic (Russell, 1996) and also many attempts of philosophical critiques of mathematics that led to significant debates about the foundations of mathematics (Wittgenstein, 1956). A formalist movement has emerged where the works on formal systems and the axiomatic method led to the development of formalism (Hilbert & Ackermann, 1950), which emphasized the importance of rigorous, formal proofs in mathematics. Alain Badiou's philosophy, particularly his magnum opus, *Being and Event,* intervenes in this historical trajectory, arguing that mathematics, specifically set theory, provides the most adequate ontology for thinking about being, truth, and the event.

We choose to study Badiou's philosophy for the reason that a critical engagement with it is essential for understanding contemporary intellectual transformations, particularly in relation to ongoing controversies on the perennial questions of philosophy such as the questions of being, subject and the truth. As a philosopher who radically reinterprets ontology through set theory and challenges the dominant postmodern and the traditional perspectives, Badiou provides a unique framework that stands in contrast to both foundationalism and anti-foundationalism. Rather, he attempts to transcend the dichotomy between foundationalism and anti-

foundationalism. Foundationalism posits that there is a fundamental, underlying reality or principle that serves as the basis for all existence and knowledge. Anti-foundationalism, on the other hand, rejects the idea of a fixed, essential foundation, instead emphasizing the provisional, contingent, and contextual nature of knowledge and reality. Badiou's philosophy can be seen as an attempt to navigate between these two extremes. He critiques foundationalism for its tendency to posit a static, essentialized reality, which he sees as incompatible with the dynamic, event-driven nature of being. At the same time, he argues that anti-foundationalism often leads to a hopeless relativism, to a relativist, nihilistic, or pragmatic perspective that undermines the possibility of truth and universality. This attempt, to our view, itself is significant, regardless of the inherent tensions and challenges that come with it. By putting Badiou within the broader landscape of contemporary philosophy, this research investigates how his work challenges conventional paradigms and offers new directions for philosophical inquiry.

1.2.1 Relevance in Contemporary Philosophy

Significance of Badiou's philosophy lies, to a great extent, in his commitment to rearticulating the foundations of philosophy in an era where they have been increasingly challenged. While much of twentieth century thought has emphasized on the impossibility of a universal foundation for philosophical thinking, Badiou argues it can be retrieved. Retrieval is not just going back to the classical idea of philosophy. Rather, it is a rearticulation. His use of set theory as the basis for ontology, his idea of the post-evental subjectivity, and his rejection of relativism all place him in contrast to the poststructuralist and the postmodernist

trends. Unlike the philosophers who see reality as constructed through language or historical forces, Badiou defines being as pure multiplicity, best described using mathematical formalism. This sets him apart from the poststructuralist thinkers, who emphasized the instability of meaning in language, and the constructivists in general who take the notions of truth, subject, and knowledge as discursive constructs. Through rearticulating the very idea of philosophy on the basis of his notions of being, truth, and the subject, Badiou stands in opposition to a prominent trend of reducing philosophy to discourses and the historical contexts and of seeing it as purely a qualitative or interpretative discipline. This research addresses the above concerns by evaluating the relevance of Badiou's approach for the future of philosophy.

1.2.2 Politics and Subjectivity

We assume Badiou's proposal to rethink the role of philosophy as having wider applications. The suggestion implied in this proposal is that of doing philosophy in direct contact with other domains such as politics, culture, art and science. It means, Badiou does not just provide us with a formal conceptual framework of theorizing truth, but encourages us to actively engage with the diverse and context-specific truths found in these different domains. In other words, what we could find in Badiou is a proposal for a new way of doing philosophy, one that involves philosophy in dialogue with other domains. This research tries to highlight how Badiou's philosophy is enriched by a cross-disciplinary exchange of ideas between different domains, leading to innovative and provocative insights. The most important among these exchanges is the one that centers on the concern of politics

and subjectivity. Perhaps, it is this concern and Badiou's commitment to revolutionary politics that make him popular and more relevant in the contemporary intellectual world.

In political thought, Badiou challenges both Marxist structuralism and postmodern cultural critique. While influenced by Marxist ideas, he rejects the idea that political change is determined by class struggle or economic forces. Instead, he argues that political subjects emerge through their commitment to revolutionary events. His approach also differs from the structuralist and the poststructuralist thinkers who either see power as a pervasive force that cannot be fully escaped or emphasize fluid transformations rather than clear ruptures. Badiou, by contrast, insists on the possibility of true political events that break with existing structures. His political theory also differs from both liberal democracy and traditional revolutionary movements. While liberal theorists focus on gradual institutional change, and poststructuralists emphasize localized resistance, Badiou calls for commitment to radical egalitarianism and transformative moments. His politics is closer to revolutionary thinking but without relying on historical inevitability. This research does not discuss his political writing explicitly, but explores the basic conceptual framework on which Badiou anchors his radical, transformative politics.

1.3 Plan and Directions

This research project primarily explores Alain Badiou's philosophical contributions, with a major focus on an in-depth examination of his notions, especially the notions of mathematical ontology, the void, the event, the truth, and the subject. Badiou uses and discusses these notions in many of his works by linking

them to different contexts and events in science, art, politics and so on. This makes Badiou's arguments and perspectives complex and a philosophical engagement with his concepts challenging. Hence, we proceed not simply by describing his concepts but by exploring the implications of them. Exploring the implications of the concepts involves visiting the conceptual history, the historical background of the concepts and the debates, and it also involves comparative analysis. Following that, we will conduct a critical review of these implications, giving an in-depth investigation of the philosophical underpinnings and the importance of Badiou's views in current debates. The directions of this investigation are as follow:

1.3.1 Exploration and Analysis of Mathematical ontology:

The research begins with an inquiry deep into the core of Alain Badiou's philosophical thinking, focusing specifically on his mathematical ontology-an essential aspect that shapes his broader philosophical outlook. Badiou firmly believes that mathematics is ontology. According to him, to understand reality, we need to turn to mathematics and this study aims to unpack how he does this. We will carefully dissect the key principles, methods, and outcomes of his mathematical approach to ontology, aiming to shed light on what it reveals about the nature of reality. By scrutinizing Badiou's ideas in this way, we hope to not only deepen our understanding of his philosophy but also to contribute to broader discussions about the role of mathematics in shaping our understanding of reality. This part of the research serves as a bridge between philosophy and mathematics, showing how they can come together to offer new insights into fundamental questions about existence.

1.3.2 Analysis of the Notion of the Event:

Event is the central concept in Badiou's philosophy. Provisionally, it refers to a sudden, unpredictable rupture in the fabric of being. Badiou interprets it as a moment of radical change, which disrupts the established order and creates new possibilities, new truths, and new subjects. This concept is intimately tied to set theory through the notion of the void, specifically, the empty set in set theory. Linking the concept of event to set theory through the concept of void is perhaps the most problematic move of Badiou. Our purpose is to elucidate Badiou's definition of the term 'event' and investigate its implications for his philosophy as a whole. Additionally, this study looks at how Badiou's interpretation of the event subverts traditional ontological categories and reframes conventional philosophical concepts. The intention is to offer a close analysis that illuminates the transformational character of Badiou's conception of the event and see how it informs his theory of change, politics and aesthetics.

1.3.3 Exploring the Implications of the Concept of Truth:

Another important concern of our research is to make sense of Badiou's conception of truth, which is a crucial component of his philosophical system. Roughly, truth is post-evental in Badiou's account. The difficulty associated with his perspective is that it retains the universality of truth, while, at same time, treating truth as a matter of fidelity to the event. Our focus is twofold: first, to elucidate the intricacies of Badiou's understanding of truth, differentiating it from the traditional and the contemporary philosophical perspectives on truth. We delve into the nuances of his concept, exploring how he defines truth and the role it plays in his

philosophical system; and secondly, to evaluate how Badiou's conception of truth challenges conventional notions of knowledge and truth. Through this, we attempt to not only deepen our understanding of Badiou's philosophy but also to contribute to broader conversations about the nature of truth and knowledge in contemporary philosophy. This examination serves as a critical juncture in our research journey, paving the way for a more nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent within Badiou's philosophical thought.

1.3.4 Analysis of the Concept of Subject:

Badiou uses the notion of subject not strictly in the same sense in which it is commonly understood in philosophical literature. Hence, we need to make sense of this notion by means of a thorough analysis of its implications. On the one hand, our inquiry examines the ways in which Badiou's notion of the subject differs from other perspectives in philosophy such as the Cartesian, phenomenological, and the constructivist. On the other hand, it seeks to unravel the intricate relationship between the subject, event, truth, and mathematical ontology as delineated by Badiou. We explore how Badiou conceptualizes the subject within the context of the relations between the above said notions, addressing the complex interplay between individual agency, transformative events, and the pursuit of truth. Through this exploration, we seek to illuminate the complex terrain of Badiou's thought while contributing to ongoing debates concerning the nature of human subjectivity and its relationship to broader philosophical concepts.

1.3.5 Critical Evaluation:

One of the primary goals of this research is to perform an in-depth and critical examination of Badiou's philosophical framework. This entails a thorough assessment of both the strengths and weaknesses of Badiou's thought. To guarantee a thorough evaluation, we explore not just Badiou's own ideas, but also critiques from diverse thinkers and the critical readings of his work. By interacting with many viewpoints and criticisms, the research intends to produce a varied examination of the benefits and drawbacks of Badiou's philosophical contributions. Specifically, the critical evaluation focuses on the peculiar way in which Badiou constructs his ontology, examining whether his reliance on set theory truly departs from traditional metaphysical approaches. In doing so, it critically interrogates the underlying tensions in his ontology, questioning whether his claim to a non-foundational and indeterminate framework is justifiable or if it inadvertently reinstates some deep-rooted constraints. Furthermore, this research seeks to understand the precise manner in which Badiou derives the notions of subject, truth, and event from his mathematical ontology, assessing whether this derivation remains coherent within his broader system. Finally, the study aims to determine whether a critical approach to Badiou's ontology is possible from within his own framework, and if so, what limitations his system might reveal.

Does set theory genuinely accommodate an ontological notion of the void? Does it allow for an indeterminate and open ontology? Does it impose an underlying structure that limits the emergence of subjectivity and truth? If truth is conceived as a generic procedure that breaks with established knowledge, can such a concept fully

escape the mathematical formalism that underpins it? These are some of the crucial questions that we try to address as part of the critical evaluation of Badiou's project. We discuss these concerns and questions in different chapters, and on the basis of which we try to develop a critical perspective towards the concluding part of the thesis.

1.3.6 Correlative Subjectivism: A Critique

On the basis of the critical evaluation of various notions of Badiou's mathematical ontology, we arrive at a major difficulty or a deep-rooted tension in his theorizing of the notion of the void and the subject. In a significant sense, what Badiou has done is a translation of set theory into philosophy, but with a creative twist. More accurately, it is of the nature of a creative translation where he transforms the set-theoretical concepts to create new philosophical vocabulary. The main set-theoretical notion that is being transposed into a philosophical concept is the notion of empty set. This is certainly a crucial move for Badiou precisely because it is through this move that he could incorporate the notion of the subject within his ontology. This incorporation helps him to expand his ontological framework in such a manner that it captures the historicity of being. But, we find this move extremely problematic. We conclude this study by making an attempt to demonstrate how Badiou's ontology becomes vulnerable to a criticism that it entails the tendency of correlationism and also the tendency of what we call correlative subjectivism.

1.4 Outline of the Chapters

This thesis consists of five key chapters that offer a thorough analysis and critical assessment of Alain Badiou's philosophical undertaking, and a brief note offering some concluding remarks. The second chapter examines the foundations of Badiou's mathematical ontology, focusing on his adoption and adaptation of set theory to construct his philosophical framework. We begin with an outline of the implications of the term ontology and its brief history, specifically differentiating Badiou's use of it from the traditional and also from the Heideggerian fundamental ontology. We give a brief overview of the basic notions of set theory, and of the axioms of Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory and discuss how Badiou employs these concepts to develop his ontology. This chapter concludes with a critical evaluation of mathematical ontology, with a focus on Badiou's linking of the concept of void to the empty set in set theory. In chapter three, the discussion is specifically focused on the implications of Badiou's concept of the event, a central notion in his philosophical framework. The attempt here is to closely examine how Badiou incorporates mathematical ontology into his concept of the event. As a prelude to this, we discuss how Badiou's notion is different from the teleological and the Heideggerian notions of the event. The discussion includes Badiou's concept of the evental site, truth procedure, and the specific domains in which the event takes place such as politics, art, science and love. In short, the chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the formation of the event, highlighting its role in disrupting established order and creating new possibilities and also a critical evaluation of Badiou's claims, especially the claims regarding the truth procedures.

The fourth chapter will delve into the analysis of the notions of subject and truth. First part of the chapter begins with a discussion on the concept of subject, focusing on how Badiou's notion of subject is different from the Cartesian, Kantian, phenomenological, and constructivist uses of the notion. We examine Badiou's concept of subjectivation, exploring how the subject emerges through the process of fidelity to the event. Second part of the chapter is focused on the implications of Badiou's concept of truth. We discuss this notion, comparing it with the prominent theories of truth such as correspondence theory, coherence theory, pragmatic theory, discursive theory and the deflationary approaches. We also undertake a contemporary evaluation of Badiou's notions of subject and truth especially in the backdrop of various tendencies such as relativist, subjectivist and the constructivist. We conclude this chapter highlighting the distinctive nature of the idea of philosophy that Badiou proposes, which is anchored on his notions of truth and the subject, and evaluating its relevance particularly in the era dominated by the so called poststructuralist and the postmodern perspectives.

The final chapter of the thesis consists of two sections. In the first section, we present a comprehensive critical evaluation of Badiou's philosophical project, emphasizing its internal tensions. A central focus is on the challenge of reconciling his mathematical ontology with the concept of the event, particularly the ontological discontinuity between being and the event. We critically examine whether Badiou successfully bridges this gap or if his reliance on set theory inadvertently reintroduces a structural framework that undermines the event's radicality. By interrogating these foundational tensions, this section seeks to determine the extent

to which Badiou's system remains consistent, viable, and compelling as a contemporary ontology of truth and change. Specifically, our critical analysis centers on three points: 1) the thesis of the indispensability of set theory, or, Badiou's firm belief that set theory is the only and the natural foundation of mathematics; 2) the problematic status of the notion of void; and 3) the conflation of epistemology with ontology. Regarding the first point, we discuss how the inevitability-thesis is being radically questioned in mathematics, especially by examining Sounders Mac Lane's arguments against conceiving set theory as the natural foundation of mathematics. The discussion of the problematic status of the concept of void highlights the tensions inherent in Badiou's attempt of translating the set-theoretical notion of the empty set into the philosophical concept of void. Regarding the third point, we demonstrate how Badiou's blurring of the boundary between epistemology and ontology deeply problematizes his own theorizing of truth, subject, and the event.

In the second section of the concluding chapter, we try to develop a critique, precisely by arguing that there is a tendency of correlative subjectivism in Badiou. As part of this attempt, we closely examine Quentin Meillassoux's criticism of correlationism in contemporary philosophy including that of Badiou. We extend the scope of Meillassoux's critique, but not by subscribing to his speculative realism, and argue that Badiou's concept of event reintroduces subjective mediation as a necessary condition of truth and thus falls back in what can be called a correlative subjectivism. By way of conclusion, we highlight the major points of critical evaluation discussed in various chapters of the thesis.

CHAPTER II

RECONFIGURING THE QUESTION OF BEING: MATHEMATICAL ONTOLOGY

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive review and detailed scrutiny of Alain Badiou's philosophical framework, with a specific focus on his mathematical/set-theoretical ontology. Ontology[1], concerned with the nature of being, existence and reality, has been a cornerstone of philosophical inquiry since ancient times. The question of being, in particular, has been a perennial concern in philosophy, with various philosophers seeking to understand the fundamental nature of reality. Broadly, it can be defined as a discipline that explores the questions such as what there is, what kind of entities that make up reality, what is the stuff and order of what we call reality, and so on.

While philosophers often use 'ontology' synonymously with 'metaphysics', there are crucial distinctions between them. Ontology, at its core, focuses on the general theory of existence, seeking to provide a comprehensive classification of all entities within reality. It investigates not the specific things that exist, but rather the fundamental modes of existence. In contrast, metaphysics, while encompassing ontology, has a broader scope. It delves into a wider range of fundamental concepts, including substance, causality, and relations, aiming to understand reality in its entirety.

[1] Etymologically, the expression 'ontology' means the logos of beings. In other words, it is concerned with the theoretical – conceptual interpretation of being, its structures and its possibilities (*Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, 1994.).*

Ontology deals with a deeper question, that what is it to be, or what is it to be real at all. The term 'being' cannot be identified with 'reality', in this sense. Everything *is* being, but at the same time, being is not any particular entity. Precisely, ontology tries to answer questions like, what is existence, what properties can explain *existence* etc. In this sense, the philosophical ontology enquires the features common to all beings. This is what can be called general ontology.

Western Philosophy is generally considered to have begun in ancient Greece as a speculation about the underlying substance of the physical world. Since then, the question of being has been one of the fundamental questions in philosophy. The first philosopher of historical record was Thales of the city of Miletus. His investigation led him to the conclusion that all natural phenomena are different forms of one fundamental substance. Thales believed that the fundamental substance, from which everything in the world evolves, is water. The dictum 'all whatness is wetness'[2] effectively summarizes Thales' metaphysical theory. The earliest speculations about the structure of matter are based on the idea that the different forms of matter are composed of a single primal constituent or a few such constituents. Thales said that this primal substance is water.

It is clear from this that his concern was primarily ontological that his attempt was to explain the world of plurality in terms of a single principle. In a sense, the greatness of his philosophy lies not in his theory that water is the fundamental stuff of the world and all the different things are mere transitory forms or formulations, but in his concern itself which is ontological in nature. Perhaps he

[2] Thales of Miletus (c. 624-546 BCE). This dictum encapsulates his idea that water is the fundamental substance underlying all existence.

was the first thinker who has made a significant attempt to conceive the multiplicity of nature under one principle – a move that has inaugurated a powerful tradition in the history of ontology. The two other ancient thinkers who have contributed much to the tradition of ontological thinking are Parmenides and Heraclitus.

According to Heraclitus, 'being' can be conceived only as 'becoming'. World is constantly changing, in flux, like a flame. Its apparent stability is an illusion. Behind the multitude of things in the world is a single unity, the *logos.* The logo unites all apparent opposites: it gives order to chaos; it provides laws for change. Logos for Heraclitus is not another kind of stuff. It is an abstract principle by means of which the world of multitude becomes meaningfully organized. Parmenides, on the contrary, insisted on permanence. Our everyday perception of the world, according to him, is mistaken, because the reality of the world is 'one being', an unchanging, indestructible whole. He believed that the phenomena of movement and change are simple appearances of a static, eternal reality. The fundamental postulate for Parmenides is that the thinking and being are identical; if something can be thought of, it must exist. It does not make any sense to speak about nothing or non-being. Non-being cannot possibly be known or expressed. What is able to be known and what is able *to be* is the same thing.

Aristotle has given a radical twist to the ontological discourse precisely by describing first philosophy as an inquiry into *being qua being*.[3] The first principles of metaphysics define *Being*, but not under any special description. They define

[3] . See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book 4. Aristotle defines metaphysics as an inquiry into "being qua being", as the study of being in its most universal sense, independent of specific categories.

Being simply as Being or what is it to be. According to Aristotle, being qua being is not a special class or kind of being; in fact, there is no such thing as being qua being at all. What does 'being qua being' exactly mean? It can be translated to 'being as being'. The phrase 'qua' is a Latin term that means 'in the capacity of' or 'as'. So, Aristotle's essential point is that he is interested in exploring being in its own right, as being. Broadly, his exploration includes three areas; that is, it includes 1) commonalities among all beings, that he seeks to identify the shared characteristics and principles that apply to all existing things, regardless of their specific differences; 2) the fundamental principles of being, that he seeks to uncover the underlying principles of causes and explanations that govern the existence of all things; 3) the nature existence itself, that he aims to understand what it means to exist, what existence entails. It is also to be noted that Aristotle's concept of substance (*ausia*) is closely tied to his inquiry into being qua being. Substance Refers to the underlying reality of a thing, which makes it what it is.

Alain Badiou's ontology, as outlined in his work *Being and Event* is influenced by Aristotle's concept of being qua being but it also significantly differs from it. The chief defect that Badiou identifies with Aristotle's being qua being is that it is grounded on the notion of substance and the categorization of beings. Aristotle's approach, according to Badiou, leads to a rigid and hierarchical ontology, where beings are understood in terms of their essential properties and relationships. The model that Alain Badiou explores, known as 'mathematical ontology' is a philosophical proposal that uses mathematics as a foundational framework for understanding the nature of reality, existence, and being. For Badiou, as for Plato,

Descartes, Leibniz and Kant, mathematics is to be considered as the model for doing philosophy, especially for dealing with the question of ontology. Badiou posits that mathematics serves as a foundational model for engaging in philosophical discourse, particularly when addressing the question of ontology. Just like how mathematics helps us solve problems with numbers, Badiou thinks it can help us understand questions about what exists and how things are.

At the beginning of his work, *Being and Event*, Badiou openly expresses his enthusiasm to the ancient question of philosophy: the question of being. This enduring question that has fascinated thinkers for centuries forms the basis of his unique philosophical approach. Badiou's commitment to this central question sets the stage for his unique philosophical approach. He acknowledges the significant influence of Martin Heidegger's project of reformulating the question of ontology. We shall attempt to have a brief exposition of Heidegger's reformulation of ontology.

2.1 Fundamental Ontology: Heidegger

We have briefly discussed Aristotle's emphasis on being qua being and Badiou's response that how it is focused on the concept of substance and the categorization of beings. Heidegger also is critical of the general philosophical tendency of treating the question of being with the question of substance. He is sharply critical of the whole tradition of western philosophy where the question of being has been misunderstood as a question of substance. For Heidegger, 'being' is to be understood as a verb, an event, rather than as a noun or substance. Classical philosophers have forgotten or neglected the essential difference between 'Being'

and 'beings'. 'Being' refers to being itself, as distinguished from specific entities (beings). The distinction between 'Being' and 'beings' is termed as ontic-ontological distinction, and this is crucial for understanding Heidegger's existential phenomenology and his critique of traditional Western philosophy.

To understand the ontic-ontological distinction we need to clarify the implications of the two terms, ontic and the ontological, in Heidegger's formulation. Ontic (*ontisch*) refers to the realm of things or entities that exist in the world. It concerns the specific, concrete aspects of entities, such as their properties and relationships. Precisely, the ontic inquiry is about the 'what' and 'how' of entities. The ontological (*ontologisch*), on the other hand, refers to the study Being (*Sein*) itself, which is the fundamental, underlying aspect of all things. Ontology is concerned with the sense or meaning of Being, rather than the structure of what there is. The question here is not what or how something is, but what is it *to be.* Heidegger's point is that the ontological is more fundamental than the ontic.

When we attempt to study the things we may do it at levels. On the one level, we study them at the ontic level where we look at the specific, particular facts or entities that exist in the world. It is concerned with the study of beings as they are their properties, classification and relationships. It deals with what things are in a concrete sense. The ontological, on the other hand, pertains to the more fundamental inquiry into the nature of being itself. It is the question of what it means for anything to 'be' at all. While the *ontic* deals with particular beings, the *ontological* asks about the underlying conditions and structures of being that make any being possible. His key point in introducing this distinction is that traditional philosophy often conflates

these two levels. Philosophers tend to focus on the ontic while neglecting the ontological question of what it means for something to be in the first place. Heidegger's project is to bring the ontological back into focus. He argued that any genuine understanding of beings (ontic) must be grounded in a deeper exploration of the nature of being itself (the ontological). The ontological priority of the question of being is rooted in the idea that being is always the being of a being. Heidegger's central concern is to explore what it means for something to be, or the nature of being itself, rather than focusing on particular beings or entities.

Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, aims to disclose the meaning of Being through phenomenological analysis. Fundamental ontology, for him, is the existential analytic of what he calls *Dasein*, which means being-there. The expression 'dasein' indicates the being of an entity where there is an awareness of Being. In this sense, it refers to the being of the human. Dasein is not a physical entity in the world but is characterized by its existential spatiality, which means it is deeply immersed in the world. In Heidegger's words, Dasein is Being-in-the-World. Also, Dasein's existence is characterized by its temporality, that it is always already situated in a past, present, and future. An ontological inquiry into the Being cannot be conducted on an entity as Being is not a quality possessed by entities. Being is not an entity among other entities in the world. 'Dasein is the only being for whom Being is a question'. Hence, the ontological inquiry is not about something 'out there'; rather it is about how entities are disclosed through what we are. Ontology, in this sense, is possible only as phenomenology.

2.2 Mathematical Ontology

Alain Badiou acknowledges Heidegger's dominant influence on contemporary philosophical ontology; but, at the same time, he is deeply critical of any phenomenological inquiry into the ontological questions. Badiou's disagreement with any project of phenomenological ontology is based on two points. 1) Phenomenology prioritizes subjective experience and the individual's lived experience, which Badiou sees as too narrow and limited. Secondly, Heidegger's focus on the ontological difference between Being and beings is not as fundamental as Heidegger claims. Prioritizing subjective experience results in some sort of humanist metaphysics and Heidegger remains trapped within the metaphysical tradition he critiques. Badiou takes a different path emphasizing on mathematical formalism to provide a rigorous and systematic account of being. As against the Heideggerian fundamental ontology, Badiou argues that the multiple is a more fundamental concept than ontic-ontological difference. We will be discussing mathematical formalism and the concept of the multiple later in this chapter.

Heidegger views science, including mathematics as the 'hard kernel of metaphysics'(Badiou, 2005a, p. 9). He claims that science is not just a neutral, objective pursuit of knowledge but is instead grounded in a set of assumptions that reflect a particular metaphysical stance. Science and mathematics embody the fundamental ontological and epistemological commitments of modernity. Alain Badiou, in contrast, views mathematics as a discipline with universality, precision, and creative potential. Unlike empirical sciences, which rely on sensory data, mathematics operates in pure abstraction, dealing with eternal and unchanging

concepts. Its clarity allows for rigorous structures and relationships that transcend contexts, offering insights into infinity and complex multiplicities. Badiou emphasizes mathematics' creative power to explore new possibilities and uncover truths independent of subjective or historical conditions. To overcome the limitations of Heidegger's subtractive account of being, Badiou provides a mathematical model, drawing on set theory and its axiomatic framework. It serves as the foundational language for understanding the structure of being, providing essential tools for explaining existence, events, and relationships between entities.

Since mathematics is exact and abstract, it is a useful instrument for investigating the big questions of reality and how things operate. According to Badiou, mathematics is the primary means by which the profound question of existence can be fully resolved. He claims that the basic idea of being itself is at the heart of mathematics' primary interest. This thesis facilitates Badiou to reformulate the classical language of ontology- being, relations, and qualities – in mathematical terms. More specifically he uses the language of set theory because it is one of the essential disciplines of contemporary mathematics. Badiou's concept implies that when mathematicians work with mathematical concepts and formulas, they are indirectly dealing with questions about what exists in the world. It is not that they explicitly discuss these philosophical questions, but the very nature of mathematical abstraction connects to these deep questions about the existence. To be precise, Badiou's ontology proposes that by adopting a mathematical approach, we can get new insights into the classical philosophical inquiries about the essence of being. However, Badiou describes a division between mathematics and philosophy. He

does not declare that mathematics and philosophy are the same. Instead, he asserts that mathematics, in particular when it involves set theory, gives a foundational support for philosophy. Mathematics is the foundation for understanding the structure of things, but philosophy still has its unique and essential role in exploring deeper questions and concepts that mathematics alone cannot address. Let us now discuss how Badiou uses mathematics to demonstrate being as multiple.

2.2.1 Being as multiple

Badiou's central thesis about ontology is that being is multiple. "There are only multiplicities, nothing else" (Badiou, 2004, p. 179). This assertion is a direct challenge to traditional ontology, which has often posited being as a unified, singular concept. Badiou argues that being is not a substantial, self-identical entity, but rather the unpresentable, inconsistent stuff of being (Badiou, 2005a).Badiou says, 'There is only one type of presentation of being: the multiple'(Badiou, 2005a, p.44). Everything that exists is a multiple of elements, and this multiplicity is the only way to present or understand being. Badiou articulates this thesis through his concept of 'inconsistent multiplicity'. Badiou states: "To be more exact; ontology can be solely the theory of inconsistent multiplicities as such. 'As such' means that what is presented in the ontological situation is the multiple without any other predicate than its multiplicity" (p.28). This refers to the idea that being is composed of multiple, disparate elements that cannot be reduced to a single, coherent whole.

"Any multiple is intrinsically multiple of multiples"(Badiou,2005a, p.45). To illustrate this concept, consider a simple example. Think of a forest. Within the forest, you have a multitude of trees, animals, insects, and other elements. Each of

these elements contributes to the multiplicity of the forest. Badiou's ontology depicts existence as a plurality by emphasizing that the forest is a sum of its constituent parts rather than a single thing. He contends that nothing exists in a vacuum and that existence is linked to belonging to a greater plurality. A society in which every individual is both distinct and a part of a larger social plurality best exemplifies this concept. The existence of a greater whole is interwoven with the lives of each individual

If being is 'inconsistent multiplicities', then the suitable discourse for talking about being is mathematical set theory. Why does Badiou think so? Badiou argues that set theory offers a novel approach to understanding the relationship between the 'one' and the 'multiple,' concepts that have been central to philosophical debates for centuries. Conventional philosophy, heavily influenced by Plato and Aristotle, has grappled with these concepts using dialectical frameworks, which usually result in futile fights between unity and totality. Set theory, on the other hand, goes beyond these traditional dichotomies by stressing the 'multiple' as an independent entity. It maintains that the multiple is more than a collection of individual units (the one) or a component of a larger whole; it is an irreducible entity in its own right. Set theory employs novel relational vocabulary by focusing on the 'multiple' as an independent entity, and moves beyond these traditional dichotomies. It introduces new relational concepts, to describe the complex interactions between different sets, offering a more nuanced and flexible framework for understanding being than the traditional categories of unity and totality. (Badiou,2005a,P.81)

Prior to exploring the implications of set theory ontology of Alain Badiou, it is important to recognize the crucial role that set theory plays in our understanding of his philosophical system. In many academic disciplines, including philosophy, set theory-a foundational topic of mathematics-has significant implications. Set theory is a foundational branch of mathematics with deep implications in various intellectual disciplines, including philosophy. A short overview of set theory will serve as an essential context for understanding Badiou's unique ontological perspective, which is firmly rooted in the principles and ideas of set theory.

2.3 Set Theory: An Overview

Set theory was created in the late nineteenth century by the German mathematician George Cantor and has since grown to be an essential branch of mathematics. It plays a pivotal role in our understanding of the structure of mathematical objects and the nature of mathematical reasoning. And since then, set theory has become an indispensable tool in various mathematical disciplines and even in the broader realm of philosophy. Cantor's work challenged traditional ideas about mathematics and led to a new way of thinking about numbers and sets. Before Cantor, people thought about numbers as just the regular numbers- 1, 2, 3, and so on. These are called 'Natural numbers'. People also used 'Real numbers', which include all the numbers you can think of, like Fractions, Decimals, and Square roots. Cantor asked a groundbreaking question: what if we go beyond these regular numbers? What if we explore numbers that are even bigger than all the natural and real numbers? These super-big numbers are what he called 'transfinite' numbers. These are numbers that go beyond the traditional natural numbers and real numbers.

This was a big challenge because it pushed the boundaries of what people thought mathematics was all about. It made mathematicians rethink how they define numbers and sets. Cantor's insight was that the set of all real numbers is 'uncountable infinite', and this uncountable infinity cannot be described using traditional mathematical notation. To overcome these limitations, he introduced different sizes of infinity, categorizing them as countable and uncountable infinities. This way, set theory allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the different levels of infinity and the vastness of mathematical objects. Set theory helps us understand and work with both types of infinity by providing a formal framework for defining and manipulating sets, including infinite sets. It wasn't just about counting objects or measuring things; it was about understanding the infinite and the immense diversity of numbers that exist.

This new way of thinking marked the beginning of modern set theory, which is a tool to understand these big, abstract collections of numbers and how they work together. At its core, set theory deals with the concept of 'set', which can be thought of as a collection of distinct objects. These objects, referred to as elements or members of the set, can be numbers, other sets, or even abstract entities like mathematical functions.

2.3.1 Basic Notions in Set Theory

Term & Notation	**Definition**	**Example**
Set	A collection of distinct objects.	Set of the first four natural numbers-{1, 2, 3, 4}
Element (∈)	An individual object within a set.	1 is an element of {1, 2, 3, 4}
Cardinality (|A|)	The number of elements in the set	A= {1,2,3,4}, Then, |A| = 4.
Subset (⊆)	A subset is a subgroup of any set	{1, 2} ⊆ {1, 2, 3, 4} {a, b} ⊈ { f, d, k, l}
Null Set (∅)	The set containing no elements.	{} , ∅
Union (∪) A∪B	The set containing all elements that are in either set A or set B, or both.	{1, 2} ∪ {2, 3} = {1, 2,3}
Intersection (∩) A ∩ B	The set containing all elements that are in both set A and set B.	{1, 2} ∩ {2, 3} = {2}. {a, b} ∩ {c, d} = ∅ - If two sets have no elements in common, their intersection is the empty set.
Difference (A - B)	The set containing all elements that are in set A but not in set B.	A **:** {1, 2, 3, 4, 5} B: {3, 4, 5, 6, 7} A - B = {1, 2}
Complement (A′)	The set containing all elements in the universal set that are not in set A.	If the universal set U is {1, 2, 3, 4} and A is {1, 2}, then A′ = {3, 4}
Power Set P(A)	The set of all possible subsets of a set A, including the empty set and the set itself.	if A={1, 2}, then P(A) = {{}, {1}, {2}, {1, 2}}
Cartesian Product (A × B)	The set of all ordered pairs (a, b) where a is an element of A and b is an element of B.	if A={1, 2} B={a, b}, then (A × B) = {(1, a), (1, b), (2, a), (2, b)}

(Stoll and Enderton, 1979)

Set theory is a simple and powerful approach to understanding complex mathematical structures and relationships. Its power lies in its ability to represent nuanced mathematical structures using fundamental principles. One of its basic ideas is set equality, which states that two sets are equal if they share the same elements, even if the order of elements differs. This concept forms the basis for more advanced concepts in set theory. Set theory introduces operations to manipulate and compare sets, such as union (combining elements from two sets), intersection (finding common elements between sets), and complement (finding elements in one set but not in another).

These operations enable mathematicians to analyze complex relationships and establish logical connections between various sets. Furthermore, set theory provides a framework for understanding infinite sets. The most famous example is the set of all natural numbers, denoted as N, which contains an infinite number of elements. Set theory allows us to explore the characteristics and properties of infinite sets, such as countable and uncountable sets, which have profound implications in mathematics, logic, and philosophy.

The foundation of Badiou's theory is the notion that sets are significant parts of reality, and his ontology examines the possibility of truths existing inside them. The concepts of 'being' and 'event' are essential elements with different functions in his ontology. Everything that exists is referred to as 'being' in this context. According to his philosophical theory of mathematical ontology, everything that exists, including concepts, abstract entities, and tangible things, is included in the notion of being. According to this method, he asserts that set theory is capable of

explaining and understanding everything in the universe. Being refers to that which exists, the totality of what is. In his view, being encompasses everything that exists, from physical objects to abstract entities and ideas, and the totality of what exists can be described and understood through the lens of set theory.

Let us consider the concept of 'numbers' as an example. In mathematical ontology, numbers are considered part of the realm of being. There is a set of natural numbers (1, 2, 3….) that represents all the natural numbers. This set encompasses a wide range of elements, and each element is a distinct number.

$$\text{Set A} = (1, 2, 3\ldots..)$$

Within the same framework, there is a set of real numbers which includes not only integers but also irrational numbers, decimals etc.

$$\text{Set B} = (0, 1, 1.5, \pi\ldots.)$$

Here, the sets A and B represent aspects of being, specifically the realm of numbers. These sets are vast and include all possible numbers, both those we use in everyday life and those that are more abstract, like irrational numbers. Badiou's view is that the entirety of what can be considered to 'exist' or to be a part of being can be understood as a collection of such sets, each representing a multiplicity of elements. This abstraction and inclusivity of set theory align with Badiou's approach to ontology, where he seeks to encompass the totality of existence within the formal framework of set theory. It provides a foundation for exploring the nature of being in a rigorous and precise manner.

2.4 Zermelo-Fraenkel Set Theory

The modern study of set theory was initiated by George Cantor and Richard Dedekind in the 1980s. After the discovery of naïve set theory, numerous axiom systems were proposed in the early 20th century, of which the Zermelo-Fraenkel axioms, along with the axiom of choice (ZFC) are the best known. The basis of set theory is simply a set of axioms. The operations in set theory are being made on the basis of these axioms. According to Badiou, using regular language and traditional definitions limits our understanding when dealing with abstract and complex concepts. Badiou proposes a different approach, which he calls the 'axiomatic thought'. It is not bound by the limitations of regular language and allows for a more flexible and abstract understanding of ideas. Axiomatic thought is akin to the way mathematicians think. It does not rely on fixed definitions or traditional language constructs. In mathematics, axioms are fundamental principles that serve as the foundation for exploring complex mathematical concepts. Similarly, in philosophy, Badiou suggests that axiomatic thought can serve as the foundation for understanding complex philosophical ideas like 'being as being'. Hence Badiou equates ontology, the study of being, with mathematics.

The abstract and open nature of mathematical thinking, guided by axioms is best suited for understanding complex philosophical concepts like being. Badiou's philosophical ideas, particularly his view of ontology, were significantly influenced by the Zermelo- Fraenkel formal system in mathematics. This system has two key features that Badiou found important. First, it involves a concept called 'belonging'(Badiou,2005a,p.501). This concept, represented by 'the one' is used as an operator

to show how things are related. 'The one' is not a specific number or object but rather a philosophical idea or operator. It is used to represent the concept of unity or singularity within Badiou's framework. In other words, it signifies the idea of individual elements or entities within a set or multiple. The second characteristic is that there is a single way of looking at everything, which he calls 'presentation of being'. He emphasizes the idea that everything is connected through a concept he calls 'multiplicity'. This is different from the traditional way of thinking about sets, where you have the set itself and then the individual things inside it. Whether you are talking about a whole set or the individual parts, they are all thought of as multiple. Being part of a set or serving as an element in a set highlights the concept of multiplicity and how things are presented within that set. This idea can be summarized as one multiplicity can be used to represent another multiplicity (Badiou, 2005a).

For Badiou these axioms constitute a starting point in set theory. The axioms themselves are the result of a series of reformulations made over the first few decades of set theory; these reformulations were designed to prevent the occurrence of logical inconsistency within the domain of set theory. Set theory itself comes in a number of varieties: for example, there are foundational and anti- foundational types, with varying numbers and types of axioms. One of the most influential of these varieties is the Zermelo- Fraenkel axiom set theory (ZFC). Zermelo Frankel set theory with the axiom of choice, named after mathematicians Ernst Zermelo and Abraham Fraenkel, is one of the several axiomatic systems that were proposed in the early twentieth century to formulate a theory of sets without the paradoxes of naïve

set theory such as Russell's paradox.[4] This is the very foundation of the origin of axiomatic set theory in mathematics. We will explore its implications in Badiou's ontology in another part of this chapter.

To provide a solid foundation for understanding set-theoretical ontology, we will first clarify several key technical terms from his work *Being and Event*.

2.5 Concept of the Situation

Situation is a technical term that refers to a specific, structured context in which beings, objects, or individuals exist and relate to one another. A mathematical set is a situation, with elements and operations defining their relationships. To take an example from our day today affairs, a classroom is a situation, with students and teachers and rules governing their interactions. It is a context in which beings are presented and organized according to certain rules and norms. In other words, a situation is a way of organizing and structuring the multiple elements that compose being. The concept of situation provides a framework for understanding how beings are presented and organized, and how they are related to one another. The situation is not just a passive backdrop for being, but rather an active structure that shapes and determines the nature of being.

One of the key implications of the concept of situation is that being is always situated. This means that being is never presented in a pure form, but is always mediated by the situation. Another implication of the concept of situation is that situations are multiple and dynamic. This means that there are many different

[4] A brief description of Russell's paradox is given on page no. 42

situations, each with its own unique structure and presentation. Situations are also dynamic, meaning that they are subject to change and transformation. This multiplicity and dynamism of situations has significant implications for our understanding of being.

According to Badiou, to exist is to be in a situation. “There is nothing apart from situations. Ontology, if it exists, is a situation” (Badiou, 2005a,p.25). This means that existence is always contextual. To make this concept more relatable, consider a fish in the ocean. The fish’s existence is inextricably tied to its situation in the ocean. It can only exist as a fish in the specific context of the ocean. If you take the fish out of the water and place it on land, it cannot exist as a fish anymore because its situation has changed. Existence, according to Badiou, is always dependent on the specific situation in which something finds itself. Everything that exists is part of a larger multiplicity and situated within a specific context. These ideas challenge traditional notions of ontology and push us to rethink how we understand being and existence in a more interconnected and contextual way.

He defines the situation as a ‘presented multiplicity’ (Badiou,2005a,p.522). Presentation is the process by which a multiplicity is structured and organized, making its elements appear as a coherent whole. Consider the same example of a classroom. Classroom is a presented multiplicity as it is a situation, with students, a teacher, desks, chairs, blackboards, knowledge, learning, and books. In this situation, there is a diverse collection of elements. Classroom presents these elements in a structured way, organizing them according to specific rules, norms, and laws. The presentation of multiplicity, here, creates a unified whole, making the

elements appear as part of a coherent structure. The concept of situation or presented multiplicity is also designed to accommodate anything which is, regardless of whether it is physical, non-physical, necessary, contingent, possible, actual, potential, or virtual. The classroom, for example, consists of humans, non-humans, physical objects, ideas, and so on. In set theory, the only relation between the set and the elements is the relation of belonging; that is, elements belong to the set. The multiple elements which are inconsistent in nature assume a unity when presented as belonging to a classroom.

This problem that Badiou sees in traditional philosophy is that it treats individual beings as plural, while being itself is thought of as a singular unity. Badiou views existence as a collection of diverse elements rather than a singular essence. Being is a concise fusion of multiple elements, rather than something with an inherent essence or part of a single ultimate being. According to him, any notion of unity in our world is a product of what he calls the 'count-for–one' operation. Count-for-one operation refers to the process of unifying a multiplicity of elements into a single, coherent whole. This operation involves 'counting' or 'enumerating' the elements of the multiplicity as one, thereby creating a unified set. For example, when we count a flock of birds as one group, we actually perform a count-for-one operation. Or, when we count a group of individuals as citizens, we perform such an operation of count-for-one. That means, being a bird or being a citizen is not a matter of fixed essence, but rather a product of the count-for-one operation. This operation can secure the multiple (multiplicities of bodies) as one consistent concept (citizen). That is, count-for-one is a structural operation. Every situation is structured

by such a count. A structured presentation is a situation. A structure determines what belongs and does not belong to the situation. A structure thereby generates unity at the level of the whole situation by unifying the multiplicity of elements. Unity is the result of this structuration; it is not a fundamental property of 'being'.

Unity is not primordial, but however, there is some kind of effect of unity in the presentation of being. In the perspective of traditional ontology, many individuals of the same kind form a species and many species with a similar characteristic form a genus. One of the age-old philosophical problems centers on the question how 'many' can be clubbed together as 'one'. Throughout the history of ontology, for instance the Aristotelian or Greek tradition of Philosophy, while beings themselves are plural and thought in terms of multiplicity, being is thought to be singular. There are many items in the world. But when we think about 'being', we assume there is only one 'being', one of the many. In Aristotle for example, the fundamental ontological claim is 'there are substances'. Substance (sub-stance) means that which stands under. It obviously refers to a unity, a unity that belongs to totality which is itself a unity. Badiou's ontological claim, on the contrary, is 'there are situations'. Badiou's solution to the above mentioned problem is that situations or presented multiplicities do have unity; but the unity of the situation is the result of an operation termed the count-for-one.

Precisely, Badiou's ontological claim is 'there are situations, or 'there are multiple multiplicities'. Situations do not have mutually exclusive identities. Since, a multiple that belongs to one situation may also belong to another situation. Badiou says: "I term situation any presented multiplicity. Granted the effectiveness of the

presentation, a *situation* is the place of taking-place, whatever the terms of the multiplicity in question. Every situation admits its own particular operator of the *count -as-one*" (Badiou, 2005a, p.24).

To explain this concept a little clearly, Feltham and Clemens used an analogy in the introduction of *Infinite Thought*. Consider the situation of a football team. A team is a situation or presented multiplicity. As a matter of fact, a team is not 'one', but is termed as a team, counted-as-one. Each member in that team has his own position, strengths etc. All the members of the team are united by their *belonging* to the team. When we consider the same team from the point of view of its being, it is a disparate multiplicity of human bodies. Each body is nothing but its own multiplicity of muscles, nerves, bones and arteries, each of these sub-elements in turn a multiplicity of cells and so on. These elements, at the bare level of their brute existence, have nothing to do with the 'unity' of the team. Team is the effect of the count-for-one. Thus, inconsistent multiplicity is the situation without the effect of the count-for- one. And with the effect of the count-for-one, it is a consistent multiplicity (Badiou, 2005b, pp.12-13).

If 'being' without the effect of count-for-one is inconsistent multiplicity, then what is required of the language of such being? As Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens, in their introduction to the collection of Badiou's essays titled as *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to philosophy*, points out, such a language must present multiplicity as inconsistent, that is, as non-unified. To fulfill such a requirement a number of conditions must be met.

First, the multiples described by this language cannot be composed of distinct, self-contained entities, as that would imply a unified structure at the foundational level. Instead, each multiple must itself be made up of further multiples, extending indefinitely in a way that prevents the emergence of an ultimate, indivisible unit. Second, ontology cannot treat these multiples as belonging to a single, all-encompassing totality, such as a universal set, because doing so would impose a unifying framework at a global level, contradicting the premise of pure multiplicity. Finally, there can be no single, definitive concept of multiplicity, as any attempt to define multiplicity in a fixed way would introduce a form of conceptual unity, thereby undermining the very notion of inconsistency. These conditions ensure that ontology does not reintroduce the One-whether explicitly or implicitly-and remains aligned with the principle of inconsistent multiplicity, which denies any foundational unity in being. (Badiou, 2005b, pp.10-11)

Badiou takes set theory to talk about being because it is the formal theory of non-unified multiplicities. “In a theory of sets, even functions must be thought of as pure multiplicities, which means that they are equated with their graph” (Badiou, 2004, 179.) He thinks it meets all the three conditions mentioned above. First, a set is a multiple of multiples called elements. However, there is no fundamental difference between elements and sets, since every element in a set is itself a set. Second, there is no set of sets; that is there is no ultimate set which includes all the different types of sets found in set theory. Such a set would have to include itself,

which is forbidden by one of set theory's axioms, that is the axiom of foundation[5].In set theory, there is infinity of infinite types of infinite sets. As for the third condition, there is neither definition nor concept of a set in set theory. What there is in its place is a fundamental relation belonging as well as a series of variables and logical operators, and nine axioms. These axioms are the principles that state how they may be used together.

The implications of these points require further clarification. Set is a collection of entities called its members or elements. Although any type of objects can be collected into a set, set theory is applied most often to objects that are relevant to mathematics. The elements of a set have no distinguishing quality other than that of belonging to the set. It is in this sense that they are called variables. The relation of belonging is the basic relation of set theory. Identity of an element is determined by its belonging to the set. Naturally, no principle of unity is intrinsic to the definition of being- qua-being itself.

Being, when understood set-theoretically, is pure multiplicity. The world is composed entirely of differences of pure multiplicities that are then arranged according to the concrete situations or sets. Inconsistent multiplicity is the pure presentation retrospectively understood as non-one. According to Badiou set theory also is the theory of inconsistent multiplicities. A set is multiple of multiple called elements. Every element of a set is itself a set. In set theory there are innumerable objects. Each object is distinct in the sense that they cannot have any kind of internal

[5] "This axiom implies the prohibition of self-belonging, and thus posits that ontology does not have to know anything of the event"(Badiou,2005a, pp.441,500)

relation between each other. For instance, consider the given set, a set of all natural numbers.

$$N = \{1,2,3\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\}$$

We know that 1 is an element of the above set and 2 is also an element of the same. The only relation between 1 and 2 is that they belong to the set of natural numbers. The relation is possible only set-theoretically.

Another point that Badiou emphasizes is that set theory does not allow the concept of the ultimate set, the set of all sets. According to Bertrand Russell, the naïve set theory of George cantor leads to a contradiction with regard to the concept of ultimate set. According to naïve set theory any definable collection is a set. Let 'R' be the set of all sets that are not members of themselves. If R is not a member of itself, then its definition dictates that it must contain itself, and if it contains itself, then it contradicts its own definition as the set of all sets that are not members of themselves. This contradiction is called Russell's paradox.[6]

$$\text{Symbolically} = \{x \mid x \notin x\} \Rightarrow (R \in R \Leftrightarrow R \notin R) \text{ (Quine,1963)}$$

[6] Russell's paradox is the most famous of the logical or set- theoretical paradoxes. The paradox arises within naive set theory by considering the set of all sets that are not members of themselves. Such a set appears to be a member of itself if and only if it is not a member of itself, hence the paradox. Some sets, such as the set of all tea cups, are not members of themselves. Other sets, such as the set of all non-teacups, are members of themselves. Call the set of all sets that are not members of themselves "R". If R is a member of itself, then by definition it must not be a member of itself. Similarly, if R is not a member of itself, then by definition it must be a member of itself." See Deutsch, Marshall& Irvine, 2024

Russell's paradox illustrates that there is no set of all sets. Set theory does not allow posit being outside of the set. Zermelo's axioms were designed to resolve Russell's paradox by again restricting the Comprehension axiom in a manner not dissimilar to that proposed by Russell. ZF and ZFC (i.e., ZF supplemented by the Axiom of Choice), the two Axiomatization generally used today, are modifications of Zermelo's theory developed primarily by Abraham Fraenkel.

2.6 Ontology through the lens of set-theoretical axioms

ZFC is composed of nine axioms from which all other set theoretic results can be deducted. They are axiom of extensionality, null set axiom, power set axiom (subset axiom), union axiom, axiom of infinity, axiom of foundation, replacement axiom, axiom of choice, and axiom of separation. The axioms of Zermelo – Frankel set theory which are more relevant in the context of Badiou's ontology are as follow:

2.6.1 Axiom of Extensionality

Unlike traditional metaphysical approaches, which often rely on qualitative descriptions, set theory operates on structural relationships that define multiplicities. Badiou presents these relationships through some foundational axioms or schemas, forming the basis of his formal ontology. Among these principles, the axiom of extensionality is crucial for defining how sets are identified and distinguished.

The Axiom of Extensionality is a fundamental principle in Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory (ZFC) that defines the equality of sets based solely on their elements. It asserts that two sets are identical if and only if they have precisely the same elements. Formally, it is expressed as:

$\forall X \forall Y [\forall Z (Z \in x) \leftrightarrow Z \in Y) \rightarrow X = Y]$ (Jech, 2002,; Cantor's Attic,n.d.)

This means that if every element Z that belongs to set X also belongs to set Y, and vice versa, then sets X and Y are equal. In simpler terms, a set is completely determined by its elements; no two distinct sets can have the same members (Jech, 2002).

It says that if x and y have the same elements, then they belong to the same set. For example consider the set α which contains the elements a, b and c, also consider another set β which contains the same elements. Then according to the axiom of extensionality, the set α and β are identical. But we can know that elements do not designate anything intrinsic. Consequently, in set theory ontology, the regime of identity and difference is found upon extension, not quality. That is, every difference is localized in a point: for two sets to be different, at least one element of one of the sets must not belong to the other.

According to this rule, the identity of a set is entirely determined by the elements it includes, without regard to any additional characteristics. For example, if every element that belongs to a set also belongs to another set, and vice versa, then they are the same. This extensional criterion ensures that multiplicities are defined solely through their structural composition-their 'count-for-one'(Badiou, 2005a,p.61).

Badiou contrasts the extensional criterion of identity with classical metaphysical notions that often tie identity to intrinsic essence. In the set-theoretical framework, identity is relational and determined solely by the presentation of

elements within a set. This shifts the focus from qualitative distinctions to structural relations, where 'the same' and 'the other' emerge from the composition of elements.

This perspective marks a significant departure from traditional ontology. For Badiou, what defines a 'set' is not its inherent qualities but the relational structure formed by its elements. The 'what' of a set is always a multiplicity, and its identity is established through the 'count-for-one' operation, which organizes the multiplicity into a coherent presentation. The universality of the axiom of extensionality lies in its indifference to the content of sets. It provides a general rule for determining identity based solely on structural relationships. This aligns with set theory's broader goal of offering a comprehensive framework for understanding being as pure multiplicity. While the axiom does not guarantee the existence of any specific sets or elements, it establishes a consistent method for differentiating any conceivable multiplicity. This makes it a foundational principle in the logical architecture of set theory.

By anchoring ontology in the axiomatic structure of set theory, Badiou redefines how sameness and otherness are understood. These concepts are no longer tied to inherent features but are determined through the logic of set-theoretical presentation. The axiom of extensionality, therefore, encapsulates a key aspect of Badiou's philosophy: that being is best understood as a formal multiplicity, differentiated through structural relations rather than the qualitative attributes.

2.6.2 The Axiom of Power Set

The Axiom of power set (P) states that for any set X, there exists a set, denoted

as P(X), called the power set of X, which contains exactly all subsets of X.

Formally, in axiomatic set theory, this is expressed as:

$$\forall X \, \exists Y \, \forall Z \, (Z \subseteq X \rightarrow Z \in Y) \quad \text{(Jech, 2002)}$$

Where Y = P(X) is the unique set containing all subsets of X. This axiom ensures the existence of the collection of all possible subsets of any given set, which is fundamental for defining functions, relations, and higher-order constructions in set theory (Kunen, 2011). In other words this axiom states that the set of all subsets exists.

Take an example.

consider the set, K ={1,2,3}.

The subsets of K are:

1. The empty set : Φ
2. The single element subsets : {1}, {2}, {3}
3. Two-elements subsets : {1, 2}, {1,3}, {2, 3}
4. The entire set = {1, 2, 3}

The power set of K, denoted as P(K), is the set that contains all these subsets as its elements.

$$P(K) = \{\Phi, \{1\}, \{2\}, \{3\}\{1, 2\}, \{1,3\}, \{2, 3\}, \{1, 2, 3\}\}$$

In Badiou's ontology, this axiom is crucial for the articulation of the condition under which subsets of a given multiple can be guaranteed existence.

From an ontological perspective, the axiom of power set ensures that any given presentation of being (a set) is accompanied by the presentation of its subsets as new multiples(Badiou,2005a,p.62). This condition illustrates the inexhaustibility of being, as the power set generates a higher level of multiplicity. The axiom's importance lies in its ability to formalize the idea that being, as multiplicity, can always be expanded upon within a structured framework.

2.6.3 The Axiom of Union

In the standard formalization of Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory (ZFC), the Axiom of Union is stated as:

$$\forall A \exists B \forall x (x \in B \leftrightarrow \exists C\ (C \in A \wedge x\ \in C))$$ (Kunen, 2011).

This axiom asserts that for any set A, there exists a set B (called the union of A) that contains exactly those elements that belong to at least one of the sets in A. In simpler terms, the Axiom of Union ensures that we can unify all the elements of the sets contained within into a single set. Sometimes, the axiom is written using the union operator notation:

$\forall A \exists B\ (B = \cup A)$ (Kunen, 2011). This expresses that the union of A , denoted as $\cup A$, is a set. This ensures that for any collection of sets, we can always form a new set that contains all their elements.

For example

Suppose we have a set containing three sets:

$A = \{\{1, 2\},\{3,4\},\{5\}\}$

The Axiom of Union guarantees that there exists another set B, which consists of all the elements inside these sets:

$B = \{1, 2, 3, 4, 5\}$

For Badiou, the axiom of union plays a pivotal role in addressing the ontological issue of composition. If a multiple is composed of other multiples, the axiom of union ensures that there exists a unified presentation of all the elements of those constituent multiples. This allows Badiou to affirm that multiplicities can be disseminated and recombined without losing their coherence as structured presentations.

2.6.4 The Axiom of Replacement:

The Axiom of Replacement (R) is expressed as: $\forall F\ \forall A\ \exists B\ \forall y\ (y \in B \leftrightarrow \exists x\ (x \in A \land y = F(x))$ (Kunen, 2011; Jech, 2003).

This axiom ensures that if we replace each element of a set with a unique object (according to a definable rule), the resulting collection still forms a set.

Imagine we have a set A containing different objects. The Axiom of Replacement says that if we apply a rule F to transform each element of A into a new object, the resulting collection is still a set. We can replace elements in a set using any 'function'. If we apply a 'function' to every element of a set, the result is also a set.

Example:

Suppose we have a set:

$A=\{1,2,3\}$

Now, define a function, $F(x)= x^2$

Applying F(x) gives $B =\{1^2, 2^2, 3^2\}$

Hence, $B = \{1, 4, 9\}$

The axiom of replacement guarantees that B is still a valid set in ZFC. This axiom is essential for building larger sets, ensuring that operations like defining sequences, functions, and even infinite constructions stay within the framework of set theory. In Badiou's framework, this axiom is vital for demonstrating how multiplicities can relate to one another under specific conditions or rules. The relational nature of this axiom aligns with Badiou's emphasis on the conditional structure of being. Being is not presented as an absolute entity but as something conditioned by formal rules of relation, exemplified by the functional mappings defined in replacement.

2.6.5 The Axiom of Infinity: The Foundation of Infinite Being

In ZFC, The Axiom of Infinity is stated as

$\exists I\ (\Phi \in I \wedge \forall x \in I, (x \cup \{x\}) \in I)$

This axiom asserts the existence of at least one set I (called an infinite set).

In Badiou's ontology, the axiom of infinity is fundamental for understanding the nature of infinite multiplicities. It guarantees the existence of an infinite chain of multiples, which is essential for the presentation of being as an unbounded multiplicity. Infinity, as articulated through this axiom, underscores the inexhaustible nature of being. For Badiou, the infinite is not a metaphysical or transcendental concept but a mathematical reality grounded in the formalism of set theory.

The axioms of set theory, as outlined above, provide the structural conditions for the presentation of being in Badiou's ontology. They define how multiples exist, relate, and combine, thereby offering a rigorous mathematical framework for understanding the nature of being. Importantly, these axioms also demonstrate the absence of any pre-given or absolute foundation for being. Instead, being is presented as conditioned and relational, aligning with Badiou's broader philosophical project of rejecting metaphysical essentialism. By adopting set theory as the language of ontology, Badiou redefines the discourse on being, situating it within the precision and universality of mathematics. The axioms not only ensure consistency within this framework but also reinforce the idea that ontology is an

open and dynamic field, capable of accommodating the infinite multiplicity of existence.

We have seen how the five axioms or axiom schemas form the foundation of Badiou's ontology[7]. These axioms govern the presentation of being and provide a framework for understanding how beings are presented and organized. However, Badiou notes that these axioms do not address the fundamental question of whether something exists rather than nothing. The axioms are like the rules of a game. They tell you how to play the game. But they don't tell you whether the game itself exists or not. Badiou's point is that this question is not something that can be answered by the axioms of ontology alone. Instead, it requires a more fundamental kind of inquiry, one that gets at the very nature of existence itself, and that is where the concept of 'the void' comes in.

2.7 Concept of the Void

Badiou argues that, in every situation, there is a 'void'. What does he mean by this? Let us try to unpack this slightly mysterious argument.

The void refers to the fundamental, underlying emptiness or lack that characterizes every situation. This should not be understood as a physical emptiness, but rather it is an ontological one, related to the structure of being. The void is associated with an inconsistent multiplicity, which is a collection of elements that lacks a unified structure. The void represents the lack of unity or coherence within an inconsistent multiplicity. In other words, it is the inconsistency itself, the lack of

[7] See *Being and Event* (2005a), p.60-66 for the detailed discussion of these axioms.

structure or organization that characterizes an inconsistent multiplicity. It is an unrepresentable aspect of an inconsistent multiplicity, the aspect that cannot be represented or symbolized. We have already seen that whatever is represented in a situation is counted-for-one in that situation. It implies that the inconsistent multiple which exist before the count are, by definition, uncountable. They are necessary to the existence of a situation or presentation; precisely because they constitute a situation as a situation but they cannot be presented within the situation itself. As necessary but unpresentable, they constitute what Badiou terms the 'nothing' or the 'void' of a situation.

It is clear from the above that Badiou proposes his concept of the void by challenging the idea of the 'one', arguing that it does not exist. Instead, being consists of inconsistent multiplicity. The count-for-one acts as a process that organizes or structures being. "what has to be declared is that the one ,which is not, solely exists as operation. In other words: there is no one, only count-as-one" (Badiou, 2005a, p. 24). A presentation or situation refers to any grouping of elements that are structured through the count-for-one, which is necessary for us to understand, think about, or recognize 'being' as inherently inconsistent. Furthermore, Badiou asserts that mathematics is the only discipline capable of thinking about such multiplicity without reducing it to unity, as it relies on axioms rather than definitions. For this reason, ontology is grounded in mathematics because it identifies and works with inconsistent multiplicity as the essence of being. This brings us to the crucial question: how does Badiou's use of axioms relate to the notion of the void?

In Badiou's philosophy, the void is a foundational and essential concept. He sees it as the very name of being itself. This means that, for Badiou, understanding the void is key to comprehending existence. It is like the core building block of everything. From modern set theory, we know that every set includes the empty set, denoted as Φ

In Badiou's ontological articulation, this means that even this empty set or void is not mere absence but has its own positive existence as part of a set or structured situation. This might seem counterintuitive since we often think of nothing as the absence of anything, a kind of non-being. However, Badiou suggests that the void is not just absence- it is a 'present absence' that plays a crucial role in the structure. The empty set is unique because it is the only set that contains no objects; it is a set with no elements. Yet, it is a set, and it is included in the definition of every other set. The empty set becomes a symbol for the foundational lack within any structure or situation. While every element within a set is counted-for-one, the empty set represents the part of the situation that cannot be counted. It is what he refers to as the void of a situation. Badiou's concept of the void, thus, is not merely nothingness but a fundamental ontological condition that precedes and underpins all being and existence (Badiou, 2005a, p. 58). It is the 'multiple-without-one,' a state of pure multiplicity without any pre-existing structure or categorization (p. 59).

While the void precedes presentation, it is inextricably linked to it. Presentation, the act of categorizing and counting, necessarily creates exclusions- things that do not fit into the established categories. These excluded elements constitute the void, which emerges as a consequence of the very act of presenting

(Badiou, 2005a, p. 58).The void is not a fixed entity but an undecidable state between being and non-being. It is neither one nor multiple, neither present nor absent (p. 59). This undecidability is crucial for Badiou's ontology, as it challenges traditional dichotomies and opens up space for new possibilities.

Badiou argues that ontology itself is a theory of the void. Any attempt to define being or existence inevitably involves drawing boundaries and excluding something, thus creating a void by default (Badiou, 2005a, p. 58). Ontology, therefore, is inherently linked to the void, as it grapples with the limits and exclusions inherent in any system of presentation. Badiou proposes that the void is the 'proper name of being'(p. 59). This name, while enigmatic, signifies the fundamental indeterminacy and openness that underlies all beings. It acknowledges that any attempt to capture being in a fixed definition or system is ultimately inadequate. It is clear that Badiou's concept of the void is not a nihilistic concept. It is not about the absence of everything, but rather about the radical openness and indeterminacy that precedes and underpins all beings. By recognizing the void as the fundamental ontological condition, Badiou challenges traditional philosophical assumptions and opens up new possibilities for understanding being and existence.

We have already discussed how Badiou links the concept of void to the set-theoretical notion of the null set. The concept of the unrepresentable becomes crucial here. Let us try to clarify this further precisely to throw more light on the ontological implications of Badiou's use of set theory. In Badiou, the void and the null set are not identical. They are related but distinct concepts. The null set is a mathematical concept representing a set with no elements. The void is a

philosophical concept representing the lack of structure, unity, or coherence in a multiplicity. While the null set might seem to represent the void, Badiou distinguishes between the two. The void is a more fundamental, ontological concept, whereas the null set is a mathematical concept. The null set, for Badiou, represents the void of a situation. Situation is a presented multiplicity. The process of presentation, as we have seen, implies that there is something that cannot be captured or represented within the structure of multiples. Badiou suggests that the unpresentable can only be figured within language as what is 'multiple of nothing'. This phrase is crucial. The multiple of nothing refers to the idea that the unpresentable is not just a lack or absence, but rather a positive, ontological feature that is inherent to the structure of being. In other words, the unpresentable is not just something that is missing or excluded from presentation, but rather something that is inherent to the very process of presentation itself (Badiou, 2005a, p. 67).

Here, we examine how Badiou demonstrates the uniqueness of the void in relation to the axiom of extensionality, and the axiom of power set. According to the axiom of extensionality, the difference between two multiples can only be marked by the elements that belong to those multiples. That is, two sets are equal if and only if they have the same elements. Since the void has no elements, there is nothing to differentiate it from any other set. As the void has no elements, this axiom cannot be directly applied, highlighting its unique ontological status. The uniqueness of the void has to be understood on the basis of a distinction that Badiou makes between the 'one' and 'unicity'. The one is often associated with the count, the idea of individual units. Unicity, on the other hand, simply refers to being different in

itself. Badiou argues that the void's unicity does not arise from its difference from other sets but from its in-difference, its lack of any elements. This highlights that the void's uniqueness is not based on the traditional notion of the 'one'. The unpresentable has no differentiating mark because it doesn't belong to any multiple. "The unpresentable is inextensible and therefore in-different" (Badiou, 2005a, p.67). The existence of the unpresentable, thus, can only be affirmed through a negative inscription, meaning that we cannot point to any specific multiple to indicate its existence. This leads to the conclusion that being is fundamentally tied to negation, and that existence is initially affirmed through a negation (p.67).

Negation is the mark of the unrepresentable. It means, negation indicates the limits of presentation and the presence of the void. What does Badiou mean by negation? Negation is not a property of being but rather a feature of the relationship between being and presentation. When we try to describe something, we often use negation to define its limits. By saying what something is not, we actually point to the unrepresentable part of it. Imagine a black hole, for example. We cannot directly describe it since it is invisible and its properties are hard to grasp. We represent it by describing what it is not; for example, it is not a normal star, it is not visible to the naked eye, it is not a solid object. By saying what a black hole is not, we actually point to the unrepresentable aspects of it. Despite our attempts to describe it, the black hole remains unrepresentable. This means the unpresentable is essentially an entity that lacks belonging relation. Belonging relation in set theory, as we have seen earlier, indicates whether an element belongs to a set or not. The negation points to

the void and the excess that exists at the limits of any set. The unrepresentable, thus, is the excess, and it is indistinguishable as it lacks the belonging relation.

The notion of 'in-difference' needs our special attention in this context. Badiou argues that the uniqueness of the void has to be understood not in terms of its 'difference from the other' as it stems from its 'in-difference' (Badiou, 2005a,, p. 68). The void exists beyond the traditional logic of same and other, transcending the regime of the same where difference is established through belonging and non-belonging (p.68). Badiou argues that thinking of 'several' voids would risk collapsing into this regime of the same, undermining the very foundation of being. To emphasize this unique status, Badiou suggests that the void should be designated by a unique 'mark' Φ, that transcends the traditional alphabet, signifying its position as the 'multiple-of-nothing' (Badiou, 2005a, p. 69). In essence, Badiou's concept of the void is not merely an absence but a fundamental ontological condition that precedes and underpins all beings. It is the 'multiple-of-nothing,' a state of pure multiplicity that gives rise to all other multiplicities. By negating belonging and establishing a regime of 'in-difference', the void provides the ground for the possibility of new situations or sets.

In order to explicate the point that the void provides the ground for the emergence of something new, Badiou makes use of the implications of the power-set axiom. The power-set axiom states that for any given set, there exists a set of all its subsets, called the power set. This axiom demonstrates that the set of all subsets is itself a distinct multiple. Power set is generated by a process of 'meta-counting' or 'sub-composition' of internal multiples. Meta-counting refers to the counting of the

count, so to say. It involves counting the way we count. Consider counting a set of tables in a room. The initial count might be 50 tables. Meta-counting would involve counting the way we counted those 50 tables. This might reveal an excess, such as the fact that some tables are actually not tables of the first type, challenging the initial count. Meta-counting reveals the excess or inconsistency in the original count. Sub-composition involves breaking down a set into smaller parts, and then breaking down those parts again. A football team is a composition of players. Sub-composition would involve breaking down the team into human bodies, into mussels and so on. The power-set axiom thus reveals the dynamic nature of being, where new sunsets and possibilities emerge through the iterative application of meta-counting and sub-composition. In other words, it reveals the generative capacity of the multiple, showing how new multiples can emerge from existing ones.

It is in this context that Badiou's'theorem of the Point of Excess' becomes important. " The question here is that of establishing that given a presented multiple the one-multiple composed from its subsets, whose existence is guaranteed by the power-set axiom, is essentially 'larger' than the initial multiple'(Badiou, 2005a, p.84)." The theorem states that the set of all subsets of a given set P (a) always contains at least one element that does not belong to the original set (a). This means that the power-set of a multiple is inherently 'larger' than the multiple itself. Badiou emphasizes that there is no way to measure the 'excess' of the power-set over the original set. This 'passage' to the set of subsets is an operation of absolute excess, defying any attempt to quantify or measure the difference (p.84). The theorem of the point of excess highlights the fundamental disjuncture between belonging (an

element being a member of a set) and inclusion (a subset being contained within a set). This disjuncture is irreducible; there is no way to reconcile these two operations within the same framework.

The power-set axiom, which asserts that for every set, there exists a set of all its subsets, plays a crucial role in demonstrating the theorem of the point of excess. It underscores the generative capacity of the multiple, showing how new multiples can emerge from existing ones through the operation of forming the set of all subsets. The void is a subset of every set. This arises from the radical disjuncture between belonging and inclusion. Since the void has no elements, nothing can belong to it. However, this very lack of belonging implies a universal inclusion. If nothing can belong to the void, then, by logical necessity, it must be included within every other set. This seemingly paradoxical result highlights the unique ontological status of the void.

2.8 Forming-into-One and Formation of the Event

We have seen how the power-set axiom reveals the generative capacity of the multiple by which new multiples can emerge from existing ones. Furthermore, Badiou uses a term, 'forming-into-one' to refer to the process of creating a unified set or group from a collection of disparate elements. "The operation by which the law indefinitely submits to itself the one which it produces, counting it as one-multiple, I term forming-into-one. Forming-into-one is not really distinct from the count-as-one; it is rather a modality of the latter which one can use to describe the count-as one applying itself to a result-one" (Badiou, 2005a, p. 91). It involves counting and unifying elements into a single set, creating a new unity or identity.

This process creates a new situation or context, which can lead to the creation of the conditions for an event to occur. An event, in Badiou's sense, is rupture or a break with the existing situation, creating a new possibility or truth. We will discuss the concept of the event in detail in the next chapter of this thesis. However, for a provisional account of what he means by the event, let us consider an example. Consider a group of people coming together to form a new political movement. The process of forming-into-one creates a new situation, which can lead to the formation of an event, which could be a revolution or a new political rebellion. This entails a sudden rupture in the existing situation. The very logic of the situation gets problematized. This rupture entails subjecting the very law of the count to its own outcomes, treating the results of previous counts as new objects for further counting. Forming-into-one does not confer additional being onto the one; it is merely a modality of the counting process itself. One is always the result of a count, an effect of a structure, and not an independent entity. The concept of forming-into-one involves applying this counting procedure recursively, treating the results of these counts as new multiples for further counting.

This marks the beginning of an unlimited production of new multiples. Badiou's most important point here is that these multiples emerge from the void through the combined effect of the power-set axiom (which allows for the formation of the set of all subsets of a given set) and the process of forming-into-one. Finally, Badiou asserts that this framework authorizes the generation of an infinite series of multiples, each differentiated from the others. This differentiation, based on the concept of forming-into-one, structures the presentation of infinity of multiples.

2.9 Void and the Historicity of Being: an Evaluation

We shall conclude this chapter with a brief evaluation of Badiou's project with a focus on the concept of the void and its set-theoretical representation. The term 'void' is often understood as 'nothing' or the absence of all things indicating non-being in popular discourse and even in many intellectual traditions. In set theory, the null set, represented by {0} or just {}, is the set that has no elements. Though it is empty, it is not 'nothing' in the traditional sense; rather, it is a set, a well defined mathematical object. Because it serves as the basis for other sets, it has a beneficial presence in the field of mathematics. It is recognized as something that 'is' within the framework of set theory since it is a subset that is included in every set. Badiou takes this mathematical concept and applies it ontologically to suggest that the void (null set) is not mere absence. It has a 'positive existence' because it is included in the ontology of set theory as an essential part. This challenges our intuitive understanding of nothingness as non-existence. Badiou proposes that the 'void' or 'nothing' is an essential aspect of existence. It has a role and a place in any situation's structure, just as the null set has a role and a place in set theory's structure. In other words, the 'nothing' is something because it can be counted and defined within the framework of a set. This position is apparently paradoxical and it culminates in the assertion that 'nothing' both is and is not. It 'is' in the sense that it exists as the null set within the framework of set theory and has implications within structured situations (like social or political structures).

Badiou's linking of the void to the null set is a contentious issue among philosophers and mathematicians. Null set is a mathematical concept, whereas the

void is a philosophical concept, and conflating the two may not be entirely justified. It can even be argued that linking a specific mathematical object, called null set, to a more abstract philosophical concept of the void could involve a category mistake. Some argue that the null set could be interpreted in other ways, such as representing the absence of a specific property, rather than the void. Graham harman (2002; 2009), an American philosopher, has argued that Badiou's use of set theory is problematic and that the void cannot be simply identified with the null set. Ray Brassier, British philosopher, has criticized Badiou's linking of the concept of the null set to the philosophical concept of the void, arguing that this conflation leads to inconsistencies in Badiou's ontology. However, we assume that Badiou's linking involves a creative interpretation of both the concepts where they get new ontological dimensions.

The implications of this are significant for understanding the nature of being and existence. Badiou's ontology suggests that situations or structures are not just defined by the elements they contain but also by what they do not contain. The void is an integral part of any structure, which means that any situation is always linked to what it excludes, its own non-being. This has a radical impact on how we think about the existence and the structure of reality. This challenges traditional metaphysics, substance-metaphysics in particular, that often posits some ultimate substance or foundation to being. Instead, Badiou's ontology sees the foundation as a form of nothingness, the void, which paradoxically is present with in every situation. This concept critiques the idea that a situation can be fully accounted for by listing its elements. Badiou points out that the structural void is part of the

situation but is not an element that can be counted. It provides a philosophical interpretation of an abstract mathematical concept, bridging the gap between mathematics and philosophy and showing how mathematical ideas can inform metaphysical questions.

Badiou posits set theory as the foundation for his ontology, asserting that the 'multiple' is the fundamental ontological category. Set theory, with its focus on collections of elements, provides the necessary tools for analyzing and manipulating these multiplicities. However, Badiou acknowledges the inherent limitations of set theory in capturing the dynamic and transformative aspects of reality. Set theory, in its core, is primarily concerned with the static properties of sets and their elements, struggling to account for change, emergence, and novelty. Moreover, it lacks an inherent sense of history or time, failing to model events as ruptures in the established order. To overcome these limitations, Badiou introduces the concept of 'the event'. Mathematical ontology reveals that being is unstable and multiple. This instability creates an opening for new possibilities to emerge. The event is born from this instability, disrupting existing structures and revealing new truths.

The event, as a rupture in the existing order, is a point of emergence where new possibilities arise. It cannot be predicted or anticipated within the framework of set theory, as it introduces a dimension of novelty and dynamism that transcends the static nature of sets. The event, therefore, necessitates a shift beyond the purely mathematical domain of set theory, demanding an engagement with the dynamic and unpredictable aspects of reality. Its exploration and implications will be the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE EVENT AS DISRUPTION: EXPLORING THE IMPLICATIONS

In the previous chapter, an attempt was made to analytically explore the implications of Badiou's mathematical ontology and also to have a brief evaluation of the way Badiou links set theory to his notion of being. In continuation to these, in the present chapter, we attempt to have a thorough understanding of Badiou's concept of the event. That is, the primary objective of this chapter is to look specifically at the specificity and the significance of the concept of event within the philosophical framework of Alain Badiou. We will also have a brief evaluation highlighting the tensions in his theorizing, especially touching upon the questions surrounding his seemingly paradoxical claim about unpredictability, chance and necessity. As a matter of fact, the event is a philosophical concern and it has nothing much to do with set theory in the conventional sense. According to Badiou, mathematics is enough, or is the only suitable language, to speak about the question of being; but, however, one has to move beyond mathematics to address the question of the event. Once mathematics takes on the responsibility of contemplating 'being', the philosophers are freed from that burden. Then their subsequent and more specific task is to think about the exception to the concept of 'being', which is called the 'event'. Badiou (2006) states:

> What will philosophy say to us? It will say: "We must think the event." We must think the exception. We must know what we have to say about that which is not ordinary. We must think change in life (p. 8).

Perhaps the above remarks of Badiou represent the true spirit of his approach to the event. Event is the site of exception. It is outside the purview of mathematical ontology. But, it does not mean that we can address the question of the event without any reference to being. To address the question of the event we first need to understand, mathematically in Badiou's sense, what *is* being, being *qua* being. So, mathematical ontology is the prerequisite for understanding the event. We have already discussed the concept of being *qua* being, how mathematics is all about being *qua* being according to Badiou, in the previous chapter. Having comprehended the concept of being-qua-being mathematically, we are left with the question: what is not being *qua* being? This question opens up a new horizon of inquiry, one that leads us to the threshold of the 'event'. Then their subsequent and more specific task is to think about the exception to the concept of 'being', which is called the 'event'.

3.1 Philosophy and the Event

The concept of the event has long been a subject of inquiry in philosophy, with various thinkers offering distinct perspectives on its nature and significance. In the context of Alain Badiou's philosophy, the event represents a fundamental break with the established realities. Let us first examine the prevailing notions of the event in philosophy and then explore how Badiou's conception diverges from these traditional understandings. However, we here do not venture into the philosophical history of the concept. Rather we focus on some perspectives on the concept of the event which are particularly crucial for understanding Badiou's reformulation of the notion.

The word 'event' derives from the Latin word *eventus*[1] (Harper,n.d). In Latin *eventus* refers to an occurrence or outcome. The word *eventus* and its related forms were commonly used in Latin to describe various happenings. Over time, the word eventus entered the English language and evolved into the word 'event' that we use today. According to the lexical definition, an event is a change or happening (*Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1994, p. 123). The concept of 'event' holds a significant place within the realm of philosophy, encompassing a diverse range of interpretations and perspectives throughout history. From ancient philosophical thinking to contemporary philosophy, philosophers like Martin Heidegger, Alain Badiou, and Giorgio Agamben have grappled with the notion of the event, offering unique insights and frameworks for understanding its existential and ontological implications. In ancient philosophy, the notion of the event began to take shape as thinkers sought to understand the nature of change, causality, and the unpredictable aspects of existence. This period witnessed a shift from mythological explanations to more rational and philosophical inquiries into the workings of the world.

One of the early philosophers who laid the conceptual framework for the concept of the event was Heraclitus. He did not explicitly develop a philosophy of the event as we understand it today. He emphasized the fundamental principle of flux, stating that everything is in a constant state of change. He famously asserted the transient and ever-changing nature of reality. For Heraclitus, events were not

[1] The term *eventus* in Latin conveys the sense of "occurrence, accident, event, fortune, fate, lot, or issue," derived from *evenire*, meaning "to come out, happen, or result". This etymology reflects the assimilation of the word as something contingent or accidental, as well as something that comes from outside. See Harper, D. (n.d.). *Event*. *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Retrieved March 15, 2 018, from https://www. etymonline.com/word/event.

fixed entities but rather dynamic processes, always in motion and evolving. Events are integral components of a dynamic and interconnected system, where each event emerges as a result of prior events and serves as precursor for subsequent ones. Heraclitus employed the metaphor of a river, ever-flowing and never the same, to illustrate the ephemeral nature of events and their linkage to the ongoing process of change. This concept made a significant impact on the development of later philosophical systems including those of Heidegger and Badiou.

Another important figure in ancient philosophy, who contributed to the understanding of events, in a simple way, was Aristotle. The notion of an event is closely tied to the idea of change and the purposeful unfolding of things in the world. While Aristotle acknowledged the flux and change that Heraclitus spoke of, he also introduced the idea of teleology. Aristotle (2002) believed that events were not just random occurrences, but had a purpose or a final cause toward which they were detected. The teleological account, obviously, does contrast with the modern notion of the event in several ways. Teleology implies a deterministic view of the world, where events unfold according to their inherent purposes and final causes. In contrast, the modern concept of the event often emphasizes indeterminacy, unpredictability, and contingency. Teleological accounts in general suggest that events are necessary and inevitable, given the inherent nature of things. Modern event theory, on the other hand, often highlights the contingent and accidental aspects of events. Moreover, Aristotle's teleology relies on a causal framework, where events are the result of prior causes and are directed towards specific ends. In contrast, some modern theories of the event, such as those influenced by post

structuralism or phenomenology, question traditional notion of causality and emphasize the non-causal, emergent, or self-organizing aspects of events. They often adopt an anti-essentialist stance, emphasizing the accidental and contextual nature of events and subverting traditional teleological accounts.

There are at least four features that could be identified in the concept of event as employed in contemporary continental philosophy. One, events interrupt the routine and expected course of things and disrupts the normal flow of time. Two, each event is unique and cannot be reduced to a general rule or category. Three, events are often unexpected and unpredictable. Four, events can bring about changes and transformations. All these features are directly or indirectly interwoven with Heidegger's critique of the traditional notion of the event understood as occurrences within a linear timeline with a clear beginning, middle, and end. The two perspectives that Heidegger fundamentally rejected are; one, the perspective that events are objective occurrences that can be observed and measured independently of human experience, and secondly, the view that events are something that affects or happens to individuals, groups, or objects, rather than a fundamental transformation of being itself. The traditional, especially teleological notion of the event, focuses on the surface-level, observable aspects, overlooking the deeper, ontological significance of the events. As Heidegger understands, it fails to account for the way events can transform human existence and our understanding of being.

Heidegger, drawing on Heraclitus' insights, explored the concept of the event as the transformative occurrence that reveals new possibilities and brings about an authentic human transformative moment that disrupts our ordinary understanding of

reality. He posited that authentic human existence can only emerge through an encounter with the event, which prompts a radical reevaluation of our existence and opens up new possibilities for being-in-the-world. For Heidegger, the event is not merely a discrete occurrence but rather a transformative experience that shakes our conventional understanding of the world. An event is the disclosure of being itself. What does he mean by this? Let us try to unpack this slightly mysterious claim.

Heidegger notes that the German word 'Ereignis' comes from the verb 'ereignen' which means 'to occur' or 'to happen'[2]. He also explores the etymological connection between 'Ereignis' and the old German word 'aigen' which means 'to own' or 'to possess'. He interprets this etymological connection as suggesting that an event (Ereignis) is not just something happens, but rather something that 'appropriates' or 'owns' us, revealing our fundamental relationship with being. Let us consider an example. Imagine you are walking alone on a stormy night, the darkness, wind, and the rain surround you, making it difficult to see or to move on. In everyday life, you might experience the storm as an obstacle, something to be overcome. Your focus would be on finding a shelter, staying safe, and waiting for the storm to pass. But, as you walk the storm intensifies. Lightning illuminates the dark sky, and the thunder shakes the ground beneath your feet. In this moment, the ordinary familiar world withdraws and you are confronted with the raw power of nature. The lightning unveils the world in a new way, revealing the intricate web of relationships between the natural world, your own existence, and the universe as a

[2] Heidegger's work *The Event (Das Ereignis)* is a collection of notes and sketches from 1941-1942, published posthumously. See, Heidegger, Martin. *Contributions to Philosophy(Of the Event)*, translated by Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu, Indiana University Press, 2012.pp. 26-27 and pp 155-156

whole. Your experience of the storm transforms your understanding of yourself and your place in the world, revealing your own vulnerability, mortality and connection to the natural world. This stormy night could be taken as an event in the Heideggerian sense. It discloses Being by revealing the underlying, primordial forces that shape the world, and transforming human existence in the process.

Three points in Heidegger's account that are particularly important in the context of understanding Badiou's notion of the event are as follows: One, the event unveils being in its most original sense, allowing humans to experience Being in a new, more authentic way. Two, humans receive the disclosure of Being through the event. Three, humans respond to this disclosure, which involves a fundamental transformation in their understanding of Being and their relationship with the world. Badiou's theory of the event is heavily influenced by the Heideggerian insights, although he does not link it explicitly to the phenomenological category of experience. However, he links it to the concept of subject, that something becomes an event only when there is a subject that declares fidelity to the event. This point of Badiou will be discussed in the next chapter of this thesis, which is focused on the question of the subject.

3.2 Set Theory and The Event

Unlike the Heideggerian phenomenological move, Badiou looks at an event as inextricably linked to a situation, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is composed of multiples. Multiples are the fundamental building blocks of a situation. And they can be either normal or singular. Normal multiples are those that are both *presented* and *represented* within a situation-they are clearly identifiable

and counted within the existing order. Singular multiples, conversely, are presented but *not* represented. They exist within the situation but are not officially recognized or categorized. This distinction highlights the gap between the bare existence of something (presentation) and its integration into the established structure (representation). Badiou illustrates this with the image of a family: if all members are registered, they are both presented and represented; but if one member is unregistered, the family as a whole is presented, but not fully represented, making it a singular multiple (Badiou,2005a, p. 174). This notion of singularity paves the way for understanding the more radical concept of the *evental site*.

Evental site refers to a location where an event can potentially occur. It is characterized by a high degree of uncertainty, instability, and undecidability, making it ripe for an event to occur. Consider the example of Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011. Zuccotti Park in New York can be seen as an evental site. Prior to the occupation, the park was an ordinary public space. However, the conjunction of economic crisis, social discontent, and political activism created a situation where an event could emerge. The occupation of the park on 17th September 2011 was an event that disrupted the normal functioning of the space and challenged the existing economic and political order. The evental site, the park, provided the conditions for the event (the occupation) to occur, which in turn created new possibilities for political action and social change. But, an evental site is not necessarily spatial. It can also be a non-spatial, relational, or symbolic configuration. Badiou often uses the term ‘site’ in a more abstract sense, referring to a point of intersection, a crossing of trajectories, or a moment of undecidability. In this sense, an evental site can be a

social or cultural configuration (e.g., a shift in public opinion) a symbolic or discursive space (e.g., debate or a controversy), a temporal or historic moment (e.g., a moment of transition or a turning point history) or a relational networked structure (e.g., a social movement or collective action). In each of these cases, the evental site provides the conditions of possibility for an event to occur.

> I will term *evental site* an entirely abnormal multiple; that is, a multiple such that none of its elements are presented in the situation. The site, itself, is presented, but 'beneath' it nothing from which it is composed is presented. As such, the site is not a part of the situation. I will also say of such a multiple that it is *on the edge of the void, or foundational* (Badiou, 2005a, P.175).

It is clear that Badiou uses the language of his set theory ontology to describe the evental site as referring to a multiple, that is, none of its members are presented in the given situation. Evental site refers to a multiple that disrupts the normal presentation of elements within a situation. This 'void', as we have discussed in the previous chapter, is not simply nothingness but rather the unnamable, the unclassifiable, the foundation from which all other multiples arise. It refers to the fundamental, underlying emptiness or lack that characterizes being *qua* being. The void is not just the absence of being but rather the constitutive lack that makes being possible. In a significant sense, it refers to the groundlessness of existence. By saying that the evental site is on the edge of the void, Badiou means that the evental site is situated at the boundary between being and the void. This boundary is not a fixed or stable one but rather a dynamic, liminal zone where the event can emerge.

In this sense, the evental site is not just a passive or a neutral location but rather a site of maximal intensity, where the void and being intersect. This intersection creates a kind of rupture that allows the event to occur. The evental site is thus foundational because it is minimal and underivable-it cannot be broken down into smaller components within the terms of the existing situation.

Badiou (2005a) emphasizes that evental sites are not intrinsic or absolute; a multiple that is singular in one situation may be normal in another (pp. 175-176). This relativity underscores the contextual nature of events. Badiou's distinction between 'evental sites' and 'natural multiples' is important here. Natural multiples are defined by inherent qualities, existing consistently across contexts. Evental sites, conversely, are defined by their situation, not intrinsic traits. A multiple may be ordinary in one situation, yet 'evental' in another, depending on its context. The park, in the earlier example, is an ordinary place in one situation, yet 'evental' in another situation. Evental sites exist 'on the edge of the void' disrupting the established order of a situation.

3.3 From Evental Site to the Event: Badiou's Formalization

Badiou's formalization of the event emphasizes that it is not a miraculous occurrence but rather rooted in a specific situation. As he states:

> First of all, it is necessary to point out that as far as its material is concerned, the event is not a miracle. What I mean is that what composes an event is always extracted from a situation, always

> related back to a singular multiplicity, to its state, to the language connected to it, etc (Badiou, 2004,p.104).

An event is not a substantial entity or a thing in itself, but rather a fragment of being. He says:

> In fact, if we want to avoid lapsing into an obscurantist theory of creation ex nihilo, we must accept that an event is nothing but a part of a given situation, nothing but a fragment being. (Badiou, 2004, p.104).

In this sense, it is a rupture or a break that reveals a new aspect of being. It reveals new possibilities and truths. This fragment is not a static nature, but rather a dynamic and unfolding process that reveals new aspects of being. Every event has a site, a singular point within a historical context, representing the multiplicity the event "concerns." A site's existence doesn't necessitate an event; an event requires a specifically identified site-a situation with at least one multiple on the edge of the void. Confusing a site's existence with an event's inevitability is a hallmark of deterministic thought. A site is merely a possibility for an event. Natural situations preclude events. A multiple on the void's edge offers only the potential for an event. A site becomes "evental" retroactively, qualified by an event's occurrence. Yet, it possesses an ontological characteristic: it is an abnormal multiple on the void's edge. No event exists outside a historical situation. Badiou formalizes this: $ex = \{x \in X, ex\}$, where ex is the event, X the evental site, and x the elements of X. This underscores the event's reflexive nature (Badiou 2005a, pp. 178-179). Precisely, according to Badiou, a site with the potential for an event- an evental site- does not

necessarily guarantee that an event will occur. However it creates a possibility for an event to take place. Nevertheless, there is still an element of uncertainty, and it is possible that an event may not happen. Only in retrospect, then can a site be identified as evental, provided that an actual event has occurred.

According to Barker (2002), Badiou's point is that "the event has no cause". Badiou himself asserts that 'events happen' (P.80). This notion implies that events are not predetermined or predictable, but rather emerge unexpectedly and spontaneously. If this is the case, then why does Badiou assert that even is not a miracle? Apparently there is a contradiction in Badiou's account of the status of the event. But, a close reading reveals that his formulation is based on a subtle distinction between a miracle and an event. An event is an immanent process that arises from within the situation, whereas a miracle is often seen as a transcendent intervention that comes from outside the normal order of things. Event is a rupture or a break that occurs within the situation itself, based on its internal logic and contradictions. As a rupture it creates a new possibility, whereas a miracle could be a reversal of the normal order of things. The event is indeed a matter of pure chance; "An event is the unpredictable result of chance and chance alone" (Hallward, 2003, p.114). But, this chance is not opposed to necessity. Instead, it is a chance that is immanent to the situation, arising from its own internal tensions and contradictions. In other words, the event is a chance occurrence in the sense that it is not predetermined or predictable, but it is not a chance that comes from outside the situation.

3.4 Disruption and Transformation

It is clear from the above that the concept of the event is closely associated with the idea of disruption. An event, according to Badiou, is not a mere occurrence within the existing order of things; rather, it is a radical rupture or break that challenges the established norms, structures, and systems that govern our lives. That is, something becomes an event only when there is a disruption. The event disrupts the smooth continuity of the status quo and introduces something new, unexpected and transformative. The events are not predictable or predetermined, but they emerge unexpectedly, and disrupt the prevailing order. They are characterized by their suddenness, unpredictability, and their capacity to challenge the existing state of affairs. The event, in its disruptive nature, exposes the limitations and contradictions of the prevailing order, revealing its potential for change and transformation.

It is commonly understood that an event brings about a change that is inherently disruptive. However, one might rightfully question whether all disruptive changes can be classified as events. Badiou firmly answers this question with a resounding “no”. In France, there was a popular slogan, “not everything moves in red” (Badiou, 2005a, p.129) which Badiou used to emphasize this point. He asserts that “not everything that changes is an event” (129). The unpredictability can sometimes reintroduce the familiar within a situation as a surprise, and this cannot be labeled as an event in any way. For something to be classified as an event, it must bring about a significant and groundbreaking change rather than perpetuating the status quo. It always unveils novelty. The event’s novelty derives from ‘that it

interrupts the normal regime of the description of knowledge that always rests on the classification of the well-known, and imposes another kind of 'procedure'[3]. Hence every event demands a change within the structure as a new being. In this sense it is a creation of a new possibility. An event is that which interrupts the rules and structure of the situation. It is a rupture of the symbolic order, the possibility for change and novelty.

Consider the example painterly practice given by Badiou himself (Badiou, 2002). There have been many schools already existing within the field of painterly practices during 1906-07. Pablo Picasso's paintings up to 1905 can be treated as elements of this already existing situation. But in 1907, he produced a painting that today is considered the precursor of Cubism: *Les Demoiselles d' Avignon.* This painting was totally different from the painterly practices of that period. In this painting, Picasso challenges all conventional forms and representation of traditional art. The work illustrates five nude females in a brothel, a street in Barcelona. This is an innovative path which challenges the expectation that paintings will provide idealized portrayal of female beauty. Due to the negative attitudes of people, he kept it in his studio for several years. The first exhibition of *Les Demoiselles d' Avignon* was in 1916. At that time the painting was considered immoral.

It was a very revolutionary kind of change in the world of art. The first name of this painting was *Le Bordel d'Avignon* (the Brothel of Avignon). After a few years, Andre Salmon renamed it *Les Demoiselles d' Avignon* to reduce its horrible and shocking effect on society. Badiou says this particular painting horrified

[3] See Meillasoux Quentin, *History And Event in Alain Badiou*, trans. Thomas Nail (Parrhesia 12, no.1,2011 vol.1-11

everyone, even Picasso's close friend Georges Braque 'by its ugliness and intensity'. This is an event, according to Badiou. Its Occurrence can no way be inferred from the situation. All the twentieth century movements in painting took place within the aftermath of this event.

Another example of Badiou is the French revolution. France in the 18th century was a rich and populous country. By the end of that century Europe had undergone a profound intellectual and cultural shift, known as enlightenment. Many philosophers and artists promoted the notion of freedom, the notion of reason etc. It encouraged the political awareness of people. But France was still governed by an ancient regime of three social classes, called Estates. The king Louis xvı granted special privileges to the first and second estates. The third estates include middle class merchants, craftsmen, peasants etc. They had far less power though they were the only ones who paid taxes. The king and nobles lived lavishly on their extracted wealth. This is the major cause of the French revolution.

The revolution transformed France and Europe in so many ways. As a result of this revolution the feudal system was abolished. The churches in France had lost much of their power. The acknowledgement of the rights of citizens had been published by the national constituent assembly. These effects can still be seen today. Individual rights and freedom became fundamental. The idea of democracy spread through Europe. There was a huge growth of nationalism. One of the big effects was the nationalistic feelings that spread across the world. After this revolution politics could not be practiced in exactly the same way as before. That is why Badiou called this an event.

According to Badiou, event paves the way for change, a complete transformation of the given situation. That is the power of the event. In the movement of their taking place, event cause their situations to bend. As we have seen in the example of Picasso, the event of *Les Demoiselles d' Avignon* transformed the entire situation. However the event itself is not enough. Events require the recognition of their 'evental' status by individuals. Individuals who act in fidelity to an event become the event's subjects. In the earlier example, Braque, who was completely horrified by the event of *Les Demoiselles d' Avignon,* Joined Picasso and for the next several years enacted something called Cubism. In other words, Braque has become the event's subject.

The events that Badiou talks about just 'happen'. There is no process to create an event intentionally. An event discloses newness through pure chance. The chance-based newness involves the reality of another world. To put it in a different way, an event always demonstrates that there is something beyond what already is; it is a wholly genuine phenomenon which interrupts the flow of history. Every event acts as a radical departure in the flow of history and as the creation of a distinct possibility. Another important point that Badiou emphasizes is that the event becomes what it is only when people declare what he calls fidelity[4] to it. That means, an event does not occur objectively; there should be 'subject' of the event, that there should be humans already committed to the events, having fidelity to the event, which is not not just a matter of faith as in the case of miracles. Badiou goes even to the extent of saying that the subject is born, or one becomes a subject only

[4] The concept of fidelity and subject will be discussed in chapter IV.

through the adherence and passionate fidelity to the events. We will be discussing this notion of fidelity and the subject in the next chapter of this thesis.

A discussion of Badiou's theory of the event will not be complete without looking at his identification of various domains in which events take place. The event, according to Badiou, takes place only in specific domains. These domains involve the conditions that are capable of producing truth. Therefore, they are 'truth procedures', according to him. Badiou's notion of truth is different from the ways in which the notion is being used in conventional philosophical theories. It is not a matter of correspondence to an objective reality or a matter of coherence among propositions. Instead, truth is a process that emerges from the faithful pursuit of an event. Badiou identifies four such primary domains, art, love, science and politics that provide the conditions enabling the events to spring forth. The truth procedure of art involves the creation of new forms and expressions that reveal the underlying truths of existence. Politics has the truth procedure that involves the collective pursuit of justice and equality, often through transformative means. The truth procedure of science involves the pursuit of knowledge through rigorous experimentation and observation. Love is to be understood as a domain involving the fidelity to an encounter between two individuals, which reveals the universal truth of human existence. Let us try to briefly explore the implications of Badiou's claims regarding the four conditions or truth procedures.

***3.5 Event in Politics*:** Political events are moments of rupture or discontinuity that challenge established order and open up new possibilities for change. They disrupt dominant norms, ideologies, and power structures, creating space for new

subjectivities and forms of organization. These events are not predictable or predetermined, and are generated through the active engagement of individuals. They possess unique qualities, such as unpredictability and contingency, distinguishing them from other phenomena. They emerge from the complexities of historical contexts, shaped by a complex interplay of factors, but not bound by predetermined scripts or fixed patterns. They are shaped by the decisions and initiatives of those committed to effecting change. In *Metapolitics* (2005c), Badiou assigns politics a special place in the possibility of fidelity, arguing that an event is only considered political if it is universalizing, meaning it has generic consequences impacting a broader range of individuals or entities. This sets politics apart as a truth procedure as it generates generic outcomes and relies on an inherently generic subject.

Take the French revolution, for example. It is an event in the strict Badiouian sense of the term, as it meets all the criteria that he sets out for an event, which we discussed above. The French revolution was a sudden and unexpected rupture with the existing social and political order. Secondly, it created a new situation and new possibilities. Thirdly, the revolution's declaration of the Rights of Man and citizens introduced a new universalist discourse, which asserted equality and freedom of all citizens. In other words, the revolution created a new political subject, the citizen, who is active, equal and free. Finally, the revolution required a commitment from its participants, who had to work to sustain and develop the new political and social order.

> When, and under what conditions, can an event be said to be political? What is the 'what happens' insofar as it happens politically? We will maintain that an event is political, and that the procedure it engages exhibits a political truth, only under certain conditions (Badiou, 2005c, p.141).

When an event is considered political, it has the ability to have a universal impact, affecting and involving a wide range of people, not just a specific group or individual. An event is political if its material is collective, or if the event can only be attributed to a collective multiplicity. 'Collective' is not a numerical concept here. We say that the event is ontologically collective to the extent that it provides the vehicle for a virtual summoning of all. 'Collective' means immediately universalizing" (Badiou, 2005c, p. 141). It carries significance that goes beyond individual interests and resonates with a broader scope of individuals or entities. Active participation in revolutionary movements allows individuals to develop a critical understanding of the political landscape, enabling them to discern correct and incorrect approaches to change. In revolutionary contexts, individuals are encouraged to educate themselves about the goals, principles, and strategies of their movement, empowering them to navigate the complexities and challenges of the political environment more effectively. This knowledge and understanding enable informed decisions and a more effective political environment (Badiou, 2005c).

In his article, "The Communist Hypothesis," Badiou posits a definition of politics as follows: Politics is "collective action, organized by certain principles, that aims to unfold the consequences of a new possibility which is currently represented

by the dominant order" (Badiou, 2008, p. 31). This articulation of politics has crucial implications for the frame of possibility of the political subject in his thought. Politics is not about voting or party politics, for him. Politics, according to this definition, is not simply about state activity or the actions of what we usually name public administration. It is essentially about the declaration of universality that opens up the possibility for the unfolding of the truth of the political event and not about policies and programs. Politics requires a broader collective form of recognition of and fidelity to an event. According to Badiou, a political event is the only event that is collective. It is slightly different from the other three conditions of the event, art, science and love. The formation of political truth necessitates everyone's participation. The political event creates a new measure for evaluating the state's action and power, allowing individuals and groups to challenge and resist its authority in new and innovative ways. They re-evaluate their relationship with the state (Badiou, 2004, pp.161-162). Badiou's perspective suggests that anyone, regardless of their social status, race, or gender has the potential to experience an event. An essential criterion for an event is that it remains accessible to anyone, irrespective of their economic standing, racial background, or gender identity. This inclusivity ensures that the transformative power of an event is open to all individuals, promoting a sense of equality and universality in the potential for experiencing significant shifts or breakthroughs.

***3.6 Event in Art*:** Art possesses the potential to reveal truths and create transformative experiences. It involves the possibility of emergence of a genuine novelty, a rupture from the predictable and familiar. This novelty disrupts our

habitual ways of perceiving, thinking, and feeling. And it has the potential to create transformative experiences for both the artist and the audience. The history of western art, as Badiou understands, is full of moments that changed the way people think and experience. Badiou and Tarby (2013) argue that these moments illustrate the concept of the event as a rupture that fundamentally alters the fabric of reality. As a result, people's understanding of what art could be also was transformed. This process continues to shape the art world, as new forms of expression are developed and accepted (Badiou & Tarby, 2013, pp. 68-69).

An artistic event often involves expanding what counts as form. For example, before abstract painting, people believed that art had to show recognizable objects or people. But with abstract artists like Kandinsky, painting no longer needed to represent anything specific. Similarly, in music, atonal composers like Schoenberg challenged traditional harmony, creating a new way of making music. Even classical composers like Haydn and Mozart caused an artistic event by shaping a musical style that became dominant in the 18th century. In each case, these artistic events introduced new forms that had never been fully accepted before (Badiou & Tarby, 2013, pp. 69-70).

Here are a few examples that illustrate Badiou's notion of art as an event. Kazimir Malevich's 'black square' is a painting created in 1915 and that was very different from traditional art. Instead of showing recognizable objects or people, it just has a black square on a white background. This was a big change because art at that time usually tried to look like real things. The 'Black Square' was a way for Malevich to break away from the usual subjects of art and reject the idea of trying to

make a painting look like something from the real world. It was a bold statement that challenged the way people thought about art. It broke the rules of traditional art, showed that art can be more about ideas and feelings and influenced other artists to explore new ways of creating art.

Guernica by Pablo Picasso, created in response to the bombing of Guernica during the Spanish civil war, embodies the power of art to bear witness to historical events and convey profound social and political messages. Picasso's depiction of the horrors of war and the suffering of innocent civilians transcended the boundaries of traditional representation. By evoking strong emotional responses and catalyzing discussions about the nature of violence and the role of art in society, Guernica became an event, contributing to the discourse on the responsibility of artists and the transformative potential of art. Art as an event can certainly be applied to Pablo Picasso's famous painting, *Les Demoiselles d'avignon.* This was previously addressed in the first part of this chapter. In each of these instances, the artworks embody the transformative power of art as an event. They challenge established norms, provoke critical engagement, and stimulate discussion about social, political and philosophical dimensions of our existence. By disrupting prevailing orders, these artworks open up new possibilities for interpretation, perception and understanding.

The most important point to be noted in Badiou's formulation is the idea that the transformative potential of the artistic events involves the creation of the artistic subject as well: art creates the artist, in a significant sense. Who is the artistic subject? We usually think that the subject of an artistic event is the artist, the person

who creates something new. This idea became especially strong during Romanticism, a time when artists were seen as solitary geniuses who created through inspiration. Musicians like Beethoven and Schumann fit this image perfectly. However, before Romanticism, artists were often seen as craftsmen rather than individual creators. Badiou's point is that the artist alone is not the true subject of an artistic event. Instead, the artistic event itself creates the subject. This means that an artistic event is not just about who made the art but also about how the event changes what people see as art. The subject of an artistic event is not only the creator but also the process of recognition and the new form itself. Art is not simply the result of an individual's talent; it is the effect of a major shift that transforms how people think about art (Badiou & Tarby, 2013, pp. 69–70).

***3.7 Event in Science*:** For Badiou, science is a systematic and rigorous method of inquiry that seeks to discover objective truths about the natural world and its underlying laws. It is concerned with developing precise theories and models based on empirical evidence and logical reasoning. Science aims to provide explanations for phenomena and predict their occurrences, leading to advancement in knowledge and technology. Like other truth procedures, scientific investigations are connected to events, which are ruptures in the prevailing order that introduce new possibilities for knowledge and change. In the context of science, an event may be a revolutionary scientific discovery or a paradigm shift that radically transforms our understanding of a particular phenomenon. For instance, the heliocentric model proposed by Copernicus and further developed by Galileo was an event in the history of science that challenged the prevailing geocentric worldview and

revolutionized our understanding of the solar system. Through fidelity to these events, scientists can engage in truth procedures, and contribute to the ongoing advancement of scientific knowledge.

Here are some examples of scientific discoveries that can be seen as 'events' in the Badiouian sense: The discovery of the Higgs boson particle at CERN was a significant event that confirmed the existence of the Higgs field, a fundamental concept in particle physics. The discovery of the Higgs boson was a long-awaited confirmation of the standard model of particle physics. It opened up new possibilities for research, including the study of Higgs boson properties and its potential connection to other areas of science. Discovery of the structure of DNA is also considered as an event in biological science. It was a pivotal event that revolutionized our understanding of genetics and molecular biology. Various developments in mathematical sciences are also considered as events.

Badiou views art and science as 'mixed situations' because they combine universal validity with subjective creativity in a unique way. Both art and science entail a creative act that results in something universally significant outside individual or historical restrictions, in contrast to politics and love, which are more rooted in social or personal particularities. A mathematical proof or discovery in science might be the result of a team effort or an individual's work, but if proven, it is universally valid. Similar to this, a piece of art-whether it be music, painting, or literature-emerges from subjective invention while expressing universally relatable truths. This method is consistent with what Badiou refers to as a generic procedure, a notion drawn from set theory, in which a truth is revealed by faithfulness to an

event that cannot be reduced to pre existing classifications. A truth procedure starts with an incident that upsets the status quo, then a subject engages with its effects over time to produce something that is applicable to everyone. This results in fundamental changes in both art and science, whether in creative forms or mathematical axioms, that go beyond conventional classifications.

***3.8 Event in Love*:** The concept of love has long been a subject of contemplation for philosophers and writers throughout history. Plato's exploration of love introduced a perspective that intertwines aesthetics and asceticism. Plato argues that love is fundamentally the pursuit of beauty, differentiating true love from eros. In *Symposium*, Diotima's speech describes the ascent of the soul from particular, earthly love to the universal, eternal and divine love of the Beautiful. The lover moves beyond the physical beauty of the beloved to the eternal, spiritual beauty of the Forms or Ideas (Plato, 360 B.C.E/2008). Plato's point, as described by Badiou, is that when we experience love, we are drawn towards the 'Idea', which represents a universal, eternal and perfect concept. "The experience of love is an impulse towards something that he calls the idea" (Badiou & Truong, 2012, p.16). That is, in Plato, love is characterized by a longing for ideal beauty that cannot be fully satisfied in its physical manifestation. Badiou starts by building on Plato's idea that love contains a seed of universality.

Badiou acknowledges the influence of Plato's idea that love contains a seed of universality, an ascent to the universal. However, he also distances himself from the Platonic metaphysics that his focus is not on the idea as a pre-existing eternal concept. Rather, Badiou's universality implies a move beyond the particularities of

the individual relationship to a deeper, more fundamental level of human existence. Echoing Plato, he emphasizes the experience of love as a process of transition from chance to universality. Let us try to understand this view a little more clearly.

> I believe that love is indeed what I call in my own philosophical jargon a "truth procedure", that is, an experience whereby a certain kind of truth is constructed. This truth is quite simply the truth about two: the truth that derives from difference as such. And I think that love- what I call the "Two-scene"- is this experience (Badiou & Truong, 2012, p.38).

It is clear from the above quote that love is a committed relationship between two individuals; it begins with a random encounter. The event in love is precisely this encounter between two individuals, which disrupts their existing lives and creates a new possibility. The encounter is not just a casual meeting, but a profound and unexpected event that reveals the possibility of a shared life. This encounter is not predetermined by social, cultural, or familial factors, but rather occurs by chance. The encounter is characterized by undecidability, meaning that it cannot be predicted or determined in advance. The two individuals involved must make a decision, a wager, or a commitment to each other, without knowing the outcome. Love requires fidelity, which involves a commitment to the encounter and its consequences. Fidelity is not just a feeling of emotion, but a deliberate choice to sustain the relationship. Through fidelity, the individuals involved in the encounter undergo a process of subjectivation, becoming new subjects, transformed by the

experience of love. It is precisely because of these features that love is considered a truth procedure by Badiou.

In his book, *Conditions*, Badiou (2008a) critiques three conventional definitions of love, rejecting the fusional conception, which suggests love merges two individuals into a single unity. He argues that this view suppresses multiplicity and aligns with a philosophy of the One, which he rejects. Instead, he believes love affirms the persistence of the Two in a shared world and does not dissolve two individuals into a higher unity. He also critiques the oblative conception, which frames love as an act of self-sacrifice. Instead, he sees love as an experience of the world transformed by the existence of Two, removing it from the traditional dialectic of Eros (desire) and Eteros (the Other) to present it as more profound. Badiou also rejects the common view in psychoanalysis and French moral philosophy that love is a mere cover for sexual desire, a sublimated form of the sex. He argues that love is not a compensation for a lack of true sexual relationships but a supplementation, producing something new. Instead of reducing love to personal emotions or biological drives, Badiou frames love as a transformative force that reveals the possibility of the two persisting within the broader situation (Badiou, 2008a, p.182)

3.9 Universality and the Truth procedures: Some Criticisms

Are the truth procedures universal? Do they satisfy the condition of universality that Badiou talks about? Is there any tension between the very notion of universality and the concept of truth procedures? These are some of the questions that immediately come to our mind while evaluating Badiou's perspective discussed above. Some critics point out that Badiou's perspective involves some tensions and dilemmas. For example, Ghisalberti (2023), in his recent work on Badiou, *Dilemmas of Truth in Alain Badiou's Philosophy*, highlights a dilemma surrounding the four generic procedures that Badiou posits as conditions of philosophy. The dilemma arises from the question of whether these four procedures can coexist without contradictions, or if the individual reader must make a choice that alters Badiou's project and conclusions. In Badiou's philosophy, as we have seen earlier, each truth procedure is supposed to be a distinct, autonomous domain that produces its own unique truths. However, Ghisalberti's critique suggests that these procedures might not be seen as separate or incompatible as Badiou claims. Different procedures do intersect or conflict. An artistic truth intersects with a truth produced by love, a personal relationship. A scientific truth may not be entirely separate from a political truth, for example, a social justice movement. More importantly, Ghisalberti's critique suggests that Badiou's system requires the individual reader to make a choice or prioritize one truth over others, which could lead to a subjective and inconsistent application of Badiou's own philosophical framework. This challenges the idea of a unified, coherent system.

The universality of truth in the truth procedures is a contestable notion. Badiou's notion of universality is closely tied to the idea of universal accessibility. That is, a universal truth is one that can be addressed by everyone, regardless of their particular identity. In this sense, universality is not about a pre-existing essence, but about the possibility of a truth being universally accessible. Hence, it could be argued that this concept of universality is formal, not substantial. It is a matter of the formal structure or procedure by which a truth is established, rather than the specific content of that truth. This idea of universality is in a way justifiable about truth in science and politics. In the domain of science, scientific discoveries create models that apply universally, regardless of the observer's location or perspective. Political truths, such as the principle of equality, are similarly accessible and understandable to all. Artistic truths are more interpretative in nature. They can be called universal only in the sense that they reveal something essential about the human condition that transcends individual subjectivity. However, the status of love as a truth procedure within Badiou's theory remains more problematic. Unlike science, politics, or art, love is a deeply personal and individualized experience. If truth is to be universal, how can love qualify as a truth procedure? As argued by many, Badiou's conception of love as a truth procedure reduces love to a formal, abstract process, neglecting the everyday, mundane aspects of the relationships.[5] This exposes a possible inconsistency in Badiou's categorization of truth.

[5] See Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* (2007). Judith Butler, in her Book, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004) contends that Badiou's theory of love abstracts from the social and historical context in which loving relationships take place.

As we have seen in Badiou's analysis of love, he defends the inclusion of love as a truth procedure by claiming that it constructs a world from the perspective of difference-an encounter between two individuals that produces a shared perspective beyond the individual egos. But still, this assertion raises further concerns. Even if love generates an innovative way of seeing the world, this perspective remains unique to the individuals involved. Unlike scientific or political truths, which claim general applicability, the insights derived from love are often deeply subjective. Truth in the encounter of love is restricted to the individuals who experience it, as it is not accessible or communicable beyond their experience. Since all acts of love involve an encounter with difference, the actual truths that emerge from these encounters are not universally communicable. Each experience of love is unique, and hence it does not make much sense to say that love can be considered a truth procedure on the same level as science, politics, or art.

Why does Badiou assert that truth can only arise in four domains? Why does he exclude other domains? As we have seen in the previous sections of this chapter, Badiou offers arguments for why science, art, politics and love generate truths. But, he does not sufficiently explain why other fields are inherently incapable of doing so. This gives us the impression that the exclusion of additional domains is arbitrary. Badiou argues that truth emerges through subjectivation, where individuals or collectives maintain fidelity to an event. It can be argued that this process is not unique to his four domains. There is no reason why truth should not emerge in other fields such as economics, technology, law, or even daily ethical decisions. More importantly, Badiou's attempt of confining truth to some fixed domains results in

constructing a framework that determines in advance where truth can appear. This deeply problematizes his own claim that truth is an unpredictable break in the situation.

Another issue in Badiou's conception of universality that attracts criticism is his failure to account for mediation. If an event is to be recognized as universal, it must, in some way, be transmitted, interpreted, and taken up by subjects within a given historical and material context. However, Badiou insists on a rigid distinction between the event itself and its consequences, assuming that truth is self-evident once it occurs. In reality, truth is always mediated-whether through discourse, institutions, or subjective experience. By refusing to engage with this mediation, Badiou's concept of universality becomes abstract and disconnected from the concrete conditions in which truth is lived and practiced. Slavoj Žižek critiques this limitation in Badiou by showing how his rejection of postmodern complexity results in an oversimplified notion of truth. As Žižek[6] observes, Badiou dismisses the postmodern idea that everything is interconnected; reality is so complex that it is accessible to us only in approximations. However, in doing so, Badiou overlooks the crucial fact that truth itself cannot be isolated from the network of relations that constitute reality. Truth does not simply emerge in a pure and singular form; rather, it is always shaped by the historical and material conditions in which it is recognized. Žižek's point here is that Badiou's concept of truth-event is not as radical as it claims to be, since it assumes that a universal truth can exist outside the very complexity that gives it meaning.

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[6] See Žižek (2008), *The Ticklish subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, Chapter3, "The Politics of Truth or Alain Badiou as a Reader of St Paul", pp.149-197.

Furthermore, Žižek critiques Badiou's reluctance to consider economic crises as sites of truth. The exclusion of economic contradictions from the theory of truth, according to Žižek, is not just a weakness of Badiou's philosophy. Rather, it is symptomatic of a larger issue in his philosophy. As Žižek notes, the underlying assumption of Badiou's perspective is the separation of the realm of truth from the realm of economic and social relations. By emphasizing the importance of truth-events and the subjective fidelity to these events, Badiou disavows the economic and social contexts in which these events take place. Žižek connects this to the New Age rejection of Cartesian subjectivity that often functions as a way of disavowing political economy (Žižek, 2008). Badiou grants revolutionary politics the status of an event; but he is reluctant to extend the same recognition to economic upheavals, even though they fundamentally transform social structures. This selective application of 'eventality' suggests that Badiou's universality is not as neutral as he claims. Instead, it reflects an implicit political bias, according Žižek, reinforcing the idea that truth must be recognized within certain ideological parameters.

3.10 Set theory and the Event: A Brief Evaluation

As we have seen in the first part of this chapter, Badiou's most important move is to link set theory to the theory of the event. Is this move a little slippery at the conceptual level? This is one of the questions that come immediately to our mind. Badiou does not directly apply set theory to theorize the event. Rather he uses set theory as a philosophical framework to inform his ontology and the concept of the event. Specifically, he draws on the three concepts: (1) The void, representing the null set that symbolizes the lack or inconsistency in any situation; (2) the

multiple, describing the inherent multiplicity and complexity of being; and (3) the undecidable, borrowing set theory's concept of the undecidable propositions to describe the event's unpredictable nature.

We have already looked at some criticisms leveled against Badiou's problematic reliance on merging the ontological notion of emptiness or nothingness with the set-theoretical notion of the void, in the last part of the previous chapter. However, the void is a necessary concept for Badiou, especially in theorizing the event. It represents the inherent lack or inconsistency in any situation, which is necessary for the event to occur and for new possibilities to emerge. The events that Badiou talks about are concrete occurrences having many complexities associated with their social and historical contexts. The concept of the void (the null set), on the contrary, is a formal one in set theory. By relying on such a formal, mathematical notion as the foundation, Badiou's attempt appears to be overly simplistic and neglecting the complexities of social historical contexts. The question here is a fundamental one, that it is about the very possibility of using mathematical concepts to describe the events that are concrete and historical. Could it be argued that Badiou's project risks reducing the complexity and richness of historical and social events to abstract, formal structures? It is true that Badiou does not attempt such a reduction. But, however, the question gets momentum especially in view of the fact that Badiou's set theory ontology is detached from empirical reality, making it challenging to connect his philosophical framework to concrete historical or social events.

Another tension that one can identify in Badiou's account of the event, which is also connected to the above discussed difficulty, is about the conditions of possibility of the events. It could be very well argued that Badiou's focus on the event as a sudden rupture overlooks the complex power dynamics and structural inequalities that shape social and historical events. This is particularly applicable to the political events that Badiou talks about. Take the French revolution for example. To say that it involves sudden rupture results in denying, at least neglecting various factors related to the power dynamics, economic relations and so on that determine the emergence of such an event. It is true that Badiou argues that events are not miracles as they emerge from the contradictions and tensions that are immanent to the situation. An event, if it emerges from the inherent contradictions, will have some amount of inevitability. But, at the same time, he claims that the event is a matter of pure chance. Hence, it could be argued that Badiou's concept of the event is characterized by a seemingly paradoxical claim: the event is both a matter of chance and necessity.

The emphasis on the necessity or the inevitability of the event might result in undermining the event's genuinely unpredictable nature. Explaining an event in terms of the internal logic of the situation would imply the risk of falling back to determinism, which is incompatible with human agency and free will. Describing an event as a matter of pure chance, on the other hand, would involve the risk of neglecting the historical conditions of emergence of the event. This paradox highlights the tension between being and becoming, chance and necessity, freedom and determinacy, reflecting the complexities of change and transformation. To

conclude, the above paradox is at the heart of Badiou's concept of the event, but it does not in any way undermine the significance of his project. In some important sense, the event's paradoxical nature reflects its complexity, encompassing both the unpredictable and necessary aspects. Also, it could be argued that Badiou's claim challenges traditional notions of chance and necessity, and free will, offering a nuanced understanding of the event's dynamics, and it is this move that makes his philosophy unique and thought-provoking.

CHAPTER IV

SUBJECT AND TRUTH: EXPOSITION AND EVALUATION

Discussion of the previous chapter was focused on the concept of the event in Badiou's philosophy. The subject, according to Badiou, emerges through its fidelity to an event, which as we have seen, is an unpredictable occurrence that interrupts the existing order. Before going to the implications of this claim, we need to understand what exactly Badiou means by the notion of the subject. Does he use the notion in the same sense in which it is being used in philosophy, the Cartesian, the Kantian, the phenomenological and so on? What way Badiou's use of the term is different from its epistemological sense, i.e., the knower? What way does it differ from the essentialist account of the subject? Is it simply another version of discursive constructivism where the subject is not the essence, but the effect or the product of discourses? Is it the case that Badiou is interested in the 'how' question, that is, how the subject is formed, rather than the 'what' question, that is, the question of what the subject is? We shall discuss these questions first and then proceed to his notion of fidelity, and then to the concept of truth.

4.1 Notion of the Subject in Philosophy

First of all, Badiou's notion of the subject is fundamentally different from the traditional use of the term in philosophy. The word 'subject' comes from the Latin 'subiectus', which means 'thrown under'. (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition,1989,p.33-40). This Latin term is derived from 'subicere', a combination of

'sub', meaning 'under', and 'icere' meaning 'to throw'. In ancient and medieval philosophy, the term 'subject' referred to the underlying substance or essence of a thing, as that which is 'thrown under' or supports its attributes and properties. Over time, the meaning of subject expanded to encompass various senses, including; a person or entity that is under the authority or control of another (e.g., a subject of a state); the person or entity that performs an action or experiences a state (e.g., the subject of a sentence); in philosophy, the self-aware, thinking, and experiencing being (e.g., the subject of consciousness). It is this third sense of concept of the term 'subject' that becomes a central theme in modern philosophy, encompassing various schools like political philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. This sense becomes crucial for philosophers for various reasons. It helps them especially to explore the complexity of human life, the human condition, and the intricate interaction between people, society, and reality. These investigations have important implications for understanding agency, free will, knowledge, ethics, personal identity, and social and political institutions.

The modern philosophical notion of the subject makes sense in the backdrop of a conceptual environment provided by the subject-object dichotomy. The subject referring to something interior as opposed to the object referring to something exterior is a key philosophical idea that profoundly affects how we see the world, knowledge, and human experience. The fundamental idea here is the duality between the subject-the thing that sees, thinks, or experiences-and the object-the thing that is seen, thought about, or experiences. This duality has its historical origins in the writings of Plato where the subjective realm of sensory experience is

separated from the objective realm of abstract forms or Ideas. Modern philosophy expanded on the subject-object distinction. The subject is presented as a thinking, non-material substance that may be known with certainty in Descartes' well-known statement, *cogito ergo sum*. On the other hand, the concept of the subject is linked to the idea of transcendental unity of apperception-the subjective unity of consciousness that underpins all of our experiences, in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Our perception of reality and knowledge is significantly impacted by the subject-object duality. How can we be sure that our understanding of the object matches its true nature if the subject and object are separate entities? With certain thinkers arguing for a more objective approach to knowledge and others highlighting the importance of subjective experience and interpretation, this dilemma has generated discussions in the field of epistemology.

In phenomenology, the subject is understood in terms of intentionality; that is, the subject is characterized by its directedness towards objects, and the world. The subject is the center of experiences, perception, and feelings. In Husserl, it is understood as transcendental ego. The subject is a pre-constituted, essential self that underlies all experiences. In some other formulations of phenomenology, especially in Merleau-Ponty, the subject is inextricably linked to its bodily experiences. The body is the locus of intentionality. The body plays a crucial role in shaping its understanding of the world through its experiences and perceptions. The phenomenological view emphasizes the subject's immediate, lived experience and its role in constituting reality. In the Kantian formulation, the subject is linked to the concept of the transcendental unity of apperception where it is active, imposes

categories and structures on sensory data to constitute experience and reality. It is a necessary condition for experience, or rather, a single coherent self that synthesizes diverse experiences. The subject here is not directly knowable, but rather inferred through its role in shaping experience. The phenomenological subject, in contrast, is directly experienced through introspection and self-awareness. It is characterized by its directedness towards objects, or by its intentionality. To be precise, Kant's subject is a transcendental, abstract entity that shapes experience, whereas the phenomenological subject is a conscious, intentional, and embodied entity that is directly experienced through its lived experiences.

Another important perspective with which Badiou's concept of the subject could be compared and contrasted is that of discursive constructivism[1]. The core idea of discursive construction, influenced by thinkers like Foucault and Derrida, is that the subject is an effect of discursive practices. The subject, in sharp contrast to the essentialist accounts, is not the essence, neither the knower nor the center of experience, but the effect of discourses. It is not a unified, coherent entity, but rather a complex, multifaceted construct, shaped by power relations, language, and cultural norms. The subject's meaning and identity are relative to specific contexts and power dynamics.

4.2 The Subject in Badiou's Thought

Badiou's concept of the subject differs significantly from the traditional philosophical notion of the subject in many ways, of which the following points are

[1] Discourses are generally understood as frameworks of language, symbols, and practices that shape our understanding of the world. Discursive constructivism is a broad term referring to various perspectives that claim that discourses construct knowledge and reality through the language and meanings they employ.

crucial: One, the subject originates from an event and there cannot be any subject as a pre-existing entity. Two, there is no subject as a central, autonomous, rational, self-conscious entity, since the emergence of the subject involves a process of subjectivation. Three, traditional philosophy often seeks to unify the subject, whereas Badiou's subject is an inconsistent multiplicity, composed of conflicting elements that are held together through what he calls fidelity. Four, Badiou is against the essentialist notion of the subject, that is, the view that the subject is defined by the underlying essence or nature. Instead, the subject is shaped by its fidelity. Five, Badiou emphasizes on the importance of practice and commitment, whereas traditional philosophy often focuses on knowledge, rationality, and contemplation. It is not merely the case that Badiou's approach to the question of the subject differs from that of phenomenology; it implies a powerful critique of the very foundation of phenomenological thinking which somehow entails the Cartesian notion of the subject. Badiou's account of the subject, however, emphasizes the ways in which the subject is constituted through its relation to the event, which blurs the subject-object distinction.

Badiou (2005a) reconceptualizes the notion of the 'subject' moving away from traditional metaphysical understandings. "I term *subject* any local configuration of a generic procedure from which a truth is supported" (p.391). This definition emphasizes the subject's relational and processual nature, emerging from an engagement with a truth-generating process. Badiou clarifies his position by outlining what the subject is *not*, thereby distinguishing his theory from the

established views centering on the notions of substance, unity, and the centrality of experience. He states:

> A subject is not a substance. If the word substance has any meaning it is that of designating a multiple counted as one in a situation. I have established that the part of a situation constituted by the true assemblage of a generic procedure does not fall under the law of the count of the situation. In a general manner, it is susbtracted from every encyclopaedic determinant of the language . (Badiou, 2005a, p. 391).

Firstly, Badiou argues that ‘substance’, in its traditional sense, refers to a countable element within a situation. We have already seen how Badiou understood ‘situation’ through the lens of set theory and the count-for-one operation in the first chapter of this thesis. For something to become what it is, to have an identity, it should have been *always, already* counted for one within a situation. There is no substance outside the situation. However, truths, generated by ‘truth procedures’ that we have discussed in the first previous chapter, transcend such categorization. Truth procedures are ‘generic’, because they produce new, universal truths that challenge existing knowledge and understanding. These truths exist outside the established structures of a situation, "subtracted from every encyclopaedic determinant of the language," as Badiou (2005a) notes. The "intrinsic indiscernibility" of a generic procedure further reinforces the subject's non-substantial nature.

Secondly, “a subject is not a void point either" (Badiou, 2005a, p. 391). That is, to say that the subject is not a substance does not imply that it is pure nothing.

Badiou rejects the idea that the subject is a mere empty or passive receiver of experiences, events, or structures. The subject is an active, dynamic, and creative entity that emerges through its engagement with the world, particularly through its encounter with events. A 'void point' would be a mere spectator, unaffected by the world. Subject is not a mere spectator. Badiou distinguishes the 'void' as an ontological concept, associated with the inhuman and a-subjective realm of being itself, rather than a characteristic of the subject. He emphasizes the 'multiplicity' inherent in generic procedures, contrasting it with the idea of a subject as a singular, empty point. This highlights the dynamic and multifaceted nature of the subject's formation.

Thirdly, "a subject is not, in any manner, the organisation of a sense of experience" (Badiou, 2005a, p. 391). The subject, for him, is not a synthesizer of sensory data or experience. Traditional notions of the subject emphasize its role in organizing and making sense of experiences. Badiou's fundamental point is that the subject is not just a sense-maker. The question of the subject is not primarily about organizing experience; it is about responding to and being transformed by events that exceed and disrupt the ordinary flow of experience. The most important point here is that Badiou differentiates between 'experience' as mere presentation and the transformative power of a generic procedure. He argues, "a generic procedure, which stems from an, evental ultra-one and a supernumerary name, does not coincide in any way with presentations" (p.391). Both these expressions, 'evental ultra-one' and 'supernumerary name' refer to the surplus of naming. That is, the truth produced by a generic procedure, such as a scientific discovery, cannot be

reduced to the existing language or categories. It is not a matter of applying existing names or concepts; rather, it requires the invention of a new name, 'the supernumerary' name. This is to say that meaning is a matter of subjective interpretation of a term within the existing system, whereas truth requires a new subject. Meaning cannot capture truth. Existing language and categories are insufficient to capture the novelty of truth. Badiou relies on the distinction between truth and meaning, suggesting that truth goes beyond subjective interpretation. The subject, then, is linked to the "post-evental truth" produced by a generic procedure.

It is clear that Badiou (2005a) aims to propose a relational and processual understanding of the subject, one that is constituted through its interaction with truth procedures (p. 391). By delineating what the subject is *not*, he establishes the groundwork for his own theory, emphasizing the subject's connection to events, multiplicity, and the emergence of truths that reshape situations. This framework offers a nuanced understanding of the subject's role in the unfolding of truth, moving beyond traditional essentialist and subjectivist perspectives.

On the basis of the above discussed features, it could be argued that Badiou's perspective of the subject is more close to the perspective of discursive constructivism in a significant way. Both the perspectives stand vehemently against the essentialist notion of the subject. More importantly, these perspectives imply a powerful rejection of the traditional way of looking at the subject as knower as opposed to the object of knowledge. They also imply a rejection of the phenomenological approach that gives primacy to the realm of experience and the subject. Both in Badiou's theory and constructivism the category of experience

should not be taken as the starting point, because experience is relative to the specific contexts and dynamics of power or relative to the events. It is precisely the concept of the event that makes Badiou's perspective fundamentally different from the constructivist account of the subject. The subject is event-driven. It emerges through its relation to a disruptive event that configures the way it understands the world. The subject, thus emerged, is committed to the truth of the event, and works actively to unfold its consequences. Thus the subject is not a fixed entity, but rather a dynamic process of subjectivation. Unlike in the constructivist framework, Badiou's subject is not reducible to individual or group identities, but rather relates to universal truths. Badiou's subject is actively engaged in the process of subjectivation, which involves fidelity to the event and the unfolding of its consequences. In contrast, discursive constructivism often relies on the concept of interpellation, where the subject is hailed or called into being by discourse. For example, Althusser's theory of ideology is an important version of discursive constructivism where individuals are interpellated as subjects.[2] In Foucault, power produces subjects by means of what he calls inscriptions.[3]

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[2] Althusser's concept of ideology is that it is a system of practices that creates individuals as subjects, masking the underlying social and economic structures that govern their lives. He uses the expression 'interpelletaion' to refer to a process by which individuals are 'heiled' or 'summoned' into subject hood. See Althusser,'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus', in *Lenin and philosophy and Other Essays*,1971,p.1-52 Verso, London.

[3] Foucault argues that the subject is created through the inscription of power relations into bodies, shaping individuals through disciplinary practices. The inscription carves out the subject. See, Foucault, *Discipline and Punish- The Birth of the Prison.* 1977, Vintage Books, New York.

4.3 Fidelity and Subjectivation

What exactly does Badiou mean by subjectivation? What way fidelity becomes the fundamental aspect of subjectivation? These questions need to be explored further especially in understanding the distinct nature of Badiou's theory of the subject. Subjectivation, in precise terms, is a process that emerges from an individual's encounter with an event. This process begins with the individual's declaration of fidelity to the event. This declaration is an act of commitment, where the individual acknowledges the event's significance and decides to explore its consequences. This process involves inquiry, decision, and transformation. That is, becoming the subject means the individuals examine the event's consequences and explore its effects on the world. Also, they make decisions based on the event's implications, which may involve taking risks and confronting uncertainty. Moreover, they undergo a transformation, as the individual's understanding of the world and themselves is reconfigured by the event.

Badiou often cites Saint Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus as an exemplary instance of subjectivation. Saint Paul, originally known as Saul of Tarsus, is one of the most influential figures in the early Christian church. He is the central figure in the New Testament of the Bible. He was Jew, a Pharisee, and a Roman citizen. Initially, Paul persecuted the early Christian church, even participating in the stoning of Stephen, one of the first Christian martyrs. While travelling to Demascus to persecute Christians, Paul had a dramatic conversion experience. According to the Bible, Acts 9:1-13, Paul saw a blinding light and heard the voice of Jesus, saying, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' This experience transformed Paul, and he

became a devoted follower of Jesus. This is interpreted as Paul's encounter with the resurrected Christ, which, for Badoiu, is an event. The unexpected encounter profoundly disrupts Paul's understanding of the world and his role as prosecutor of Christians.

Paul declares fidelity to this event, committing himself to spreading the message of Christ's resurrection and reinterpreting the Jewish scriptures in the light of this event. Paul embarks on a journey of inquiry, exploring the implications of Christ's resurrection and his relationship to Jewish law and tradition. He engages in intense debates, writes letters, and establishes Christian communities. Through this process, Paul undergoes a profound transformation, shifting from a zealous prosecutor of Christians to a passionate apostle of Christ. His understanding of himself, his mission, and the world is radically reconfigured. Badiou's point is that the subject 'Paul' emerges through this process of subjectivation, as he becomes a new person, with a new identity, mission, and the understanding of the world.

The above example illustrates how Badiou's concept of subjectivation involves the event, the fidelity to the event, exploration of the event's implications, transformation of the individual, and the emergence of the new subject. It does not mean that an event necessarily implies subjectivation. Not everyone who experiences the event will undergo subjectivation. As Kelly and Piero says, there are three ways the individuals could respond to an event: Acceptance or fidelity, denial, and occultation (Kelly & Piero, 2014, p. 17). However, only fidelity constitutes a subject, as it involves an active commitment to the consequences of the event. Through fidelity, an individual becomes a subject by working to integrate the event

into reality, allowing a new truth to emerge. In contrast, denial is a reactionary rejection that seeks to suppress or undo the event, aiming to restore the previous order. Occultation, on the other hand, does not directly reject the event but obscures its significance by idealizing the past, thereby neutralizing its transformative effects

Denial and occultation are responses to events that resist subjectivation and remain bound to the previous order. Denial actively opposes the event, attempting to erase its effects and reestablish the pre-existing situation. Occultation neutralizes the event's transformative potential by reducing it to insignificant or glorifying the past's stability. These responses prevent the emergence of a new truth and subject formation. Only fidelity affirms the rupture introduced by the event and works toward its realization, thereby producing both truth and the subject. Fidelity demands persistence and an ongoing effort to sustain the consequences of the event in the face of resistance. Badiou's theory of subjectivity thus emphasizes that the subject is not a pre-existing reality but an ongoing process created through fidelity (Kelly & Piero, 2014, p. 17).

Badiou identifies three possible subjective forms that emerge in response to an event: Faithful subject, reactionary subject, and obscure subject. Faithful subject is committed to unfolding the consequences of the event and bringing the truth into being. This subject is characterized by its fidelity to the event and its willingness to take risks and challenge established norms and power structures. This subject is driven by a desire to unfold the truth of the event and to create a new situation. The reactionary subject denies or ignores the event, seeking to restore the old order, to maintain the status quo. This subject is driven by a desire to suppress or erase the

event. The obscure subject is ambiguous and unclear in its relation to the truth, neither declaring fidelity nor reacting against it. The desire here is to escape the event's consequences.

In the light of what we have discussed so far, it can be argued that the notion of the subject has been used in Badiou's writings in a specific sense. For him, there is no subject outside events. Humans are not pre-constituted subjects, but rather, they become subjects through their encounter with and fidelity to events. Humans are only biological animals, but they become subjects only through their fidelity to events. In the example that we have discussed earlier, Paul's biological existence before the event was defined by his cultural, social, and religious context. Through the fidelity to the event of the encounter with the resurrected Christ he transcended his biological existence as a Jew and a Pharisee, embracing a new identity and mission. He has become a subject. It is the encounter with the event that interrupts the ordinary, animal-like existence and opens up the possibility for a subject to emerge. Through fidelity to the event, individuals transcend their animal existence and become subjects, capable of thought, action, and commitment. This process of subjectivation is what distinguishes humans from mere biological animals.

As Kelly and Piero note, Badiou's subject does not represent a human person or an individual. It does not refer to the individual as they currently exist. "The subject represents not the individual, but what the individual is ultimately capable of becoming" (Kelly & Piero, 2014, p. 18). The subject represents the individual's potential for transformation, change, and becoming something more than what they currently are. In other words, the subject is the individual's capacity for self-

transformation and self exceeding, not reducible to the individual's personal identity, experiences, or characteristics. The subject has a universal and impersonal dimension, as it is connected to the event and the truth it reveals. This means that the subject is linked to a broader, universal process of truth and transformation.

We shall conclude this section by briefly showing how the view that one becomes the subject through fidelity and the view that subject is a discursive construct, since this distinction is crucial for understanding Badiou's concept of truth and universality that we discuss in the next section. In both Badiou and discursive constructivism, there is an idea of subjectivation. Both perspectives agree that the subject is not a pre-existing entity, but emerges through a process. Both views acknowledge that the subject's emergence is conditioned by external factors, either the events or discourses. But, Badiou's events are unpredictable, singular, and disruptive. In contrast, discourses are often seen as structured systems that shape subjectivity. Badiou's subject emerges through fidelity, implying a degree of agency and commitment. In contrast, the discursive subject may be seen as more passively shaped by dominant discourses. Badiou's subject is a thinking entity, but a doing or acting entity that takes part in shaping the world. The subject, as agent, is characterised by its decision, action, and commitment. More importantly, Badiou's subject, unlike the discursive subject, uncovers the universal truth revealed by the event. What is the idea of the universality of truth proposed by Badiou? Let us try to look at this point more closely.

4.4 **Truth as Post-evental**

Badiou's idea of truth is quite different from the way truth has traditionally been understood in the history of philosophy. In traditional philosophy, truth is typically viewed as an epistemological concept. Consequently, the concept of truth and knowledge are intrinsically linked to each other. To know is to make a judgement, to have a representation of something out there, which could be true or false. The pursuit of knowledge is often motivated by the desire to uncover the truth, with truth serving as the ultimate standard for evaluating knowledge claims. Truth is a property of judgment in this sense. For Badiou truth is not limited to the form of judgment. Truth does not occur in the context of knowledge at all. Knowledge is relegated to 'opinion' or '*doxa'*. It discerns objects and classifies them. It divides objects from one another. It consists of judgments and connections between judgments. Knowledge, in this sense, can function only with reference to a situation. Truth, by contrast, is produced on the basis of events. We can distinguish them by the degree to which they break with existing situations. The categories of truth and knowledge thus are quite separate from one another. Badiou suggests that when we talk about truth, we are discussing something that cannot be fully captured or described within the framework of what we already know. In other words, it is not like adding another piece of information to an encyclopedia of knowledge. Instead, truths are so unique and different that they do not neatly fit into the existing encyclopedia of what we know. Hence to understand a truth, we have to 'subtract' it from what we already know because it doesn't follow the same rules as our existing knowledge.

For Badiou (2005a), truths are universal singularities. That is, truth is universal, addressing all, regardless of particular identities or contexts; it is also singular, emerging from a specific, unique event. As we have seen earlier, in set theory, a set is a collection of unique elements, known as multiplicity. Badiou sees multiplicities as fundamental to understanding beings, as they represent complexity and diversity of existence. We have also seen earlier how Badiou uses the concept of 'void', which represents the empty set or null set. The event, which is central to Badiou's philosophy, is a rupture or disruption that occurs when a new set or multiplicity emerges from the void. Badiou's use of the term 'generic procedures' is important here. These procedures are mathematical operations that construct new sets of multiplicities. They are 'generic' because they are not limited to specific sets but rather create new, unforeseen sets that reveal new truths. Badiou takes the notion of 'forcing' from set theory to describe how an event can create new truths (Badiou, 2005a, p.508). Forcing involves adding new elements to a set, which can lead to the creation of sets. Similarly, an event can 'force' new truths into existence by disrupting existing sets.

We can now take a closer look at the key characteristics of the generic procedure in set theory. Generic procedures involve the creation of new sets that are 'indiscernible' from existing sets. This means that the new sets cannot be distinguished from existing sets using existing knowledge or language. That is, the new sets were not previously conceivable. Generic procedures often involve undecidable propositions, which means that they cannot be proven or disproven using existing knowledge and axioms. While Badiou's concept of generic

procedures is abstract and mathematical, here are some examples to illustrate the idea; 1) Georg Cantor's proof of the existence of uncountable sets can be seen as a generic procedure. Cantor's argument 'forces' the existence of new, previously unforeseen sets. 2) Kurt Godel's theorems demonstrate the existence of undecidable propositions in formal systems. This can be seen as a generic procedure, as it reveals new truths that were not previously conceivable.

Badiou's point is that truth is post-evental. There is no truth in the situation. The situation, as we have seen earlier, is merely a presented multiplicity which is ruled by its own internal logic and rules. Truth is not something that can be found within the situation itself. Indeed, truth emerges as an 'evental supplement' to the situation, as it is produced from the situation through generic procedures. Let us try to clarify Badiou's argument that truth is post-evental and it emerges as evental supplement with the help of an example. consider the statement 'all humans are equal'. In the pre-event scenario, that is, before Enlightenment or before the event of the French revolution, the above statement is not universally accepted. In fact, many societies and cultures have hierarchical structures, slavery, or caste systems, which explicitly deny human equality. The event occurs; the enlightenment, the French Revolution, and other similar events that emphasizes human rights, dignity, and quality. In the post-event scenario, the statement 'all humans are equal' becomes true. The event has created a new situation in which human equality is widely recognized and enshrined in human rights documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is to say that the event has a retroactive effect, making the statement true. Before the event, the statement was not universally

accepted, but after the event, it becomes a fundamental principle of modern human rights discourse.

From Badiou's perspective, the statement 'all humans are equal' is not a self-evident truth that exists independently of the event, rather, it is a truth that emerges from the event, which creates a new situation in which human equality is recognized. Badiou emphasizes the importance of undecidability in the pre-event scenario. Statements are undecidable because they cannot be evaluated as true or false within the existing situation. A statement's truth or falsity is determinable only in a post-event scenario. In a significant sense, the event resolves this undecidability, allowing statements to be evaluated as true or false in the post-event scenario. This evaluation is not a matter of correspondence to an objective reality but rather a matter of coherence with the new possibilities revealed by the event.

4.5 **Correspondence, Coherence, Practice: Badiou's Deflationary Stance**

Truth has been a central question of philosophy since ancient times. It is a question that is multifaceted and has been debated across various traditions and centuries. The question is often linked to the concerns about existence, reality, and being. Philosophers investigate what constitutes reality and how truth relates to it. The question of truth, primarily understood as an epistemological one, concerns how we acquire knowledge, justify beliefs, and understand the nature of knowledge itself. How do we balance the objective pursuit of truth with the subjective nature of human experience? Is truth universal and timeless, or is it relative, contextual and dependent on the historical factors? Can we attain certain knowledge or truth, or is uncertainty an inherent aspect of human understanding? These are some of the basic

concerns addressed in the debates on truth at the epistemological level. The heart of this dispute is an understanding of the essence of truth. There have been diverse philosophical theories of truth that prevail in the contemporary world of philosophy. These include the correspondence theory of truth, the coherence theory of truth and the pragmatic theory of truth, among others. Let's take a brief look at these ideas precisely to see how the above discussed notion of truth of Badiou differs from them.

The correspondence theory of truth is the most familiar and common way of understanding the nature of truth and falsehood. This theory, which holds a prominent place in philosophical discourse, is underpinned by a straightforward yet profound notion: truth is contingent upon its harmony with reality (Quine, 1936). It states that an assertion or belief can be labeled as true only if it accurately corresponds to the actual state of affairs in the world. Conversely any statement or belief that fails to align with the way things exist in reality is deemed false within this framework.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the correspondence theory of truth, it becomes crucial to distinguish between two fundamental notions: facts and beliefs. While facts provide objective representations of the state of affairs in the world, beliefs encompass our subjective interpretations of these facts. According to this theory, a belief earns the label of "true" when it accurately aligns with the factual reality it aims to portray (Quine, 1936). This harmony between beliefs and reality is the fundamental idea of this theory, which is why it is often called the 'correspondence' theory. Badiou deeply problematizes the very idea of

correspondence and the assumption that there exists an objective reality that truth corresponds to. His major claim is that correspondence theory reifies reality, treating it as a fixed entity rather than a complex, multifaceted process. While the correspondence theory is about matching beliefs with reality, Badiou's notion of truth is more about sticking to an event that shakes things up.

The coherence theory of truth introduces a fascinating concept in our quest to understand what makes a belief or statement true. Put simply, a belief is considered true when it effortlessly aligns with the entirety of our belief system, creating a cohesive and logically interconnected framework. Central to this theory is the idea that the truth of a belief is not determined in isolation but rather in relation to its coherence with other beliefs or propositions within a set. This means that for a belief to earn the label of truth, it must coexist with other beliefs within the same network. Should a believer disrupt this harmony by introducing conflicts or contradictions, it is promptly relegated to the realm of falsity according to the coherence theory. Badiou agrees with the coherence theorists especially in their rejection of the very idea of correspondence. Both Badiou and the coherence theorists emphasize the relational aspects of truth, and they critique the empiricist approaches to truth, which rely on sense experience or observation. But the key distinction is that while the coherence theory values the internal harmony and consistency of beliefs, Badiou's truth is more concerned with how truth arises precisely when there is a rupture in the existing coherence.

The pragmatic theory of truth proposes a distinctive perspective on truth, emphasizing how useful our beliefs and ideas are in the real world (James, 1907). In

this view, whether something is true or not depends on how practical it is. An idea is deemed true when it successfully predicts real world events, emphasizing practical effectiveness over abstract correctness. Here, truth is defined by how well something works in practice rather than how closely it aligns with abstract reality. Unlike some other theories that suggest truth can be found by deep thinking alone, the pragmatic theory reminds us that we actually learn about truth by doing stuff in the world. We do not just figure out what's true by sitting alone and pondering; we discover it by getting out there, testing ideas, and seeing if they help us make accurate predictions or achieve our goals.

Badiou's theory of truth shares some similarities with the pragmatic account of truth, but differs from it in a radical manner. Both Badiou and pragmatists, like Williams James and Richard Rorty, reject the idea that truth is a matter of accurately representing an objective reality. Both perspectives emphasize the importance of consequences and effects in determining truth. For Badiou, truth is revealed through the consequences of an event, while for pragmatists, truth is a matter of practical efficacy. Badiou's truth is driven by an event, which disrupts existing knowledge. In contrast, pragmatic truth is driven by utility, practicability, and effectiveness. More importantly, Badiou's truth is universal, addressing all regardless of context. Pragmatic truth, on the other hand, is often contextual, depending on specific situations and interests.

It is clear from the above discussion that Badiou's concept of truth does not fit into the main theoretical frameworks available within the philosophical tradition. Rather, Badiou is not interested in providing a theory of truth, defining what truth is.

His concern, on the other hand, is to see how truth emerges as a response to an event. This means the 'what' question is bracketed off. We don't have to ask the question of what the truth is precisely for the reason that there is no truth in a substantive, metaphysical sense. This, in an obvious and significant sense, reflects a deflationary view of truth. Deflationary view of truth suggests that truth is not a deep concept. It is not a special property or quality that some statements have. There is no underlying reality or correspondence to an objective world that makes a statement true. It means that we don't need an overarching theory to explain the truth. In tune with this view, Badiou also believes that truth should be stripped of any inflated meaning. Stripping away of the inflated meaning means, for the advocates of the deflationary move, to say that truth is simply a matter of assertion. That is, when we say something is true, we simply assert or endorse the statement. In some versions of the deflationary view[4] , truth is a redundant category. In W.V Quine, for example, to say " 'Snow white' is true" is simply to say "Snow is white", as the expression 'true' is redundant. This redundancy also suggests that the concept of truth is merely a useful tool for communication and linguistic convenience. Badiou adopts this approach and his approach can be seen as deflationary, though it is not a straightforward rejection of truth. He offers a robust, event-based notion of truth, which reflects the above discussed ideas especially when he argues truth is not

[4] The deflationary theory of truth, originating in the early 20th century, is influenced by key figures such as Frank Ramsey, Alfred Tarski, W. V. O. Quine, and Paul Horwich. Ramsey introduced the idea in his paper, *Facts and Propositions* (1927), while Tarski developed a formal approach in *The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics* (1943). Quine supported a disquotational view of truth in his book *Philosophy of Logic* (1970). Horwich later formalized the minimalist theory of truth in his influential book *Truth* (1990).

predefined but rather constructed through the process of making judgments or statements about the event. These judgments are not passive reflections of reality but are active engagements with the event. They involve interpretations, analysis and discussion. Truth, in this framework, emerges from the ongoing interaction between the event and the judgments people make about it. It is a dynamic and evolving process where the understanding of truth can change over time as more judgments and interpretations emerge.

Consider an example to illustrate Badiou's deflationary approach to truth. Take the scientific discovery of the Higgs Boson particle. In traditional philosophical terms, the discovery of the Higgs Boson might have been seen as a profound revelation about the ultimate nature of reality. It could have been portrayed as uncovering a fundamental truth about the universe, potentially leading to metaphysical interpretations or grand narratives about the cosmos. However, Alain Badiou's deflationary view of truth would approach this discovery differently. According to Badiou's perspective, the discovery of the Higgs boson would not be viewed as a revelation of some metaphysical truth or the ultimate nature of reality. Instead, it would be seen as a significant event, a major scientific milestone. Scientists, theorists and the general public make judgments about this event. They interpret its significance, explore its implications for our understanding of the physical world, and engage in discussions about its importance. Truth, in the deflationary and ontological sense, emerges from the ongoing interaction between this event (the Higgs boson discovery) and the judgments people make about it. These judgments might include refining our models of particle physics, developing

new technologies, or even inspiring philosophical reflections about the nature of scientific discovery.

The axiom of truth is "this took place, which I can neither calculate nor demonstrate" (Badiou 2004, p.112). The axiom of truth, as described by Badiou, is a fundamental concept. It states that when we talk about truth, we are referring to something that has happened or taken place, but it is something we can't predict or prove in advance. In other words, truth is not a predefined, certain thing; instead, it is an outcome of an event. It can be argued that there is some sort of the idea of immanent break implied in Badiou's approach to truth. Immanence, in philosophy, refers to the idea that something exists or operates within a particular context or domain, rather than being external or transcendent to it. Consider the truth of a scientific discovery, like the theory of gravity. In Badiou's framework, the truth of this scientific theory is immanent to the field of physics and the experiences and observations that led to its development. The truth of the theory of gravity is not something separate from the field of physics. It emerges from within the discipline itself. Physicists, through their observations and experiments, uncovered the truth of how gravity works. This means truth is immanent as it is deeply connected to the field of physics but there is a break as it bursts forth from within the situation.

4.6 Reclaiming the Truth: A Contemporary Evaluation

Badiou mainly opposes three tendencies in theorizing truth: Relativism, subjectivism and constructivism. We call them tendencies, because they are not theories in the strict sense, and they manifest in different forms in different theoretical models. Relativism is a tendency where truth is reduced to a matter of

perspective, cultural variation, or historical context. Within this, truth exists in relation to culture and our society, and differs in different historical contexts. What is true for one community or in one conceptual scheme might not be true for another community or in another conceptual scheme. Relativism refuses the possibility of a conceptual scheme capable of capturing the way the universe actually is. Our way of knowing the world is restricted in a specific historical context. Subjectivism refers to the tendency of starting from the experience in theorizing truth. The focus here is the point that truth arises from the experience of the subject. This could involve relativising the truth, and also the phenomenological way of experiential characterisation of truth.

Constructivism is another tendency that at times involves the other tendencies as well. It posits that truth is constructed through social, or linguistic process. There is an obvious rejection of the traditional notions of truth and knowledge as something objective, universal, and existing independently of human cognition. Knowledge, here, is conceptualized as being shaped and molded by human perception, interpretation, and social interactions. This tendency is manifested in different forms, such as cultural constructivism, social constructivism, linguistic constructivism and so on. In some versions of constructivism, even science does not have any immunity, as it is mediated by the cultural, historical, and social factors. For example, scientific paradigms, which are often considered objective and universally valid, are understood within this framework as products of social negotiation and consensus-building among scientists within a specific cultural and historical context (Gergen, 1999).

By opposing these two tendencies, Badiou aims to reclaim the possibility of universal truth, though in a way that is distinct from traditional notions of truth, rendering truth in the metaphysical sense redundant. All the contemporary philosophical approaches i.e., analytic, phenomenological/ hermeneutic and postmodern approaches imply the above tendencies, though in different forms, and disdain the notion of truth. The ideal of truth upon which classical philosophy was based has come to its end. Truth has lost its universal character and has been reduced to cultural contexts. Badiou is one of the most important thinkers in the contemporary world who stands vehemently against these trends. Let us try to see how phenomenological, hermeneutic and the deconstructive models, which are more relevant in the context of Badiou's critical engagements with contemporary philosophy, depict the above tendencies, and also see how Badiou's concept of truth differs from them. We specifically focus our attention on the concept of truth with regard to Heigegger's notion of *Aletheia*, Gademer's notion of interpretation and Derrida's notion of indeterminacy.

Heidegger's concept of truth, as outlined in his work *Being and Time* focuses on the Greek term, *Aletheia*, which means unconcealment (Heidegger, 1996). This notion is particularly important for Badiou, as it suggests a radically different understanding of truth as an event of disclosure, where being is disclosed. Like Badiou, Heidegger also is critical of the concept of truth as a matter of correspondence between statements and reality out there. Truth as *Aletheia* refers to the way a thing is revealed or disclosed within their practical and ontological contexts. It is not about how things are represented in our mind, but about the way

things are disclosed. *Aletheia* is an event that occurs when something is disclosed. This event is what Heidegger calls the 'truth of being'. The whole idea is anchored on Heidegger's concept of the ontic, ontological difference according to which Being is not an entity among other entities in the world. Being is not a quality possessed by the entities; rather, it is the way entities are disclosed. Heidegger takes *Dasein,* the being of human as this site of disclosure.

It goes without saying that Badiou is highly appreciative of Heidegger's move in providing a fresh perspective of truth through his concept of Aletheia. But, he is also suspicious of the linking of truth to the realm of experience which might result in a form of subjectivism. This is a part of his general criticism of the project of phenomenological ontology, i.e., looking at being from the point of view of subjective experience. His point of concern is that Heidegger's account of truth ultimately entails a subjective characterization of truth. Badiou believes that Heidegger's philosophy of Dasein and the ontological difference, despite its critique of traditional humanism, ultimately remains tied to a humanistic framework (Badiou, 1992). Secondly, Heidegger's *aletheia* does not explicitly account for the evental nature of being, that is, being as dynamically produced through events. It could be argued that Heidegger's concept of *aletheia* is not meant to imply a static understanding of being. *Aletheia* could be understood as a dynamic process of unconcealment, not a fixed state. This would become particularly clear when we look at Heidegger's emphasis on temporality of being. Heidegger's project in *Being and Time* is anchored on the temporal nature of human existence and the importance of understanding being in relation to time. This anchoring on temporality is close to

the dynamic account that Badiou tries to provide through his concept of truth and event.

Gadamerian hermeneutics is a Heidegger-inspired philosophical tradition where we find a very powerful critique of the traditional understanding of truth and the notion of the primacy interpretation. This notion has influenced many contemporary schools of philosophical thinking, including analytic philosophy. Richard Rorty's critique of the representational model can be taken as an instance of the hermeneutic influence in analytic philosophy, and Badiou is critical of this hermeneutic turn on account of its neglect of the very concept of truth.[5] The key idea of Gadamerian hermeneutics is that interpretation is the primary mode of understanding. Interpretation here is not merely a matter of reading a text as it indicates the fundamental way humans engage with the world. All understanding involves prejudices, some prior judgements, which are its conditions of possibility. Prejudices are given to us by the tradition, set of meanings and values, to which we belong. That is, every understanding is traditional, in the hermeneutic sense.

Badiou's response to the hermeneutic theory of interpretation has two aspects. On the one hand, he points out the limits of interpretation, and on the other, he emphasizes the need for a new thinking that goes beyond interpretation-model. Interpretation is always already situated within a pre-existing framework or context. This means that interpretation is limited by its own presuppositions and cannot fully

[5] In *The Century* (2007), Badiou reflects on the 20th century's philosophical landscape, including the rise of hermeneutics. He critiques Gadamer's influence on contemporary thought, arguing that it has led to a relativization of truth and a neglect of the event.

account for the novelty and unpredictability of events.[6] Event, for Badiou, requires a new thinking addressing rupture with existing knowledge rather than simply interpreting the event within a pre-existing framework. In response to the limitation of interpretations, Badiou develops the concept of the truth procedure that we have discussed earlier. A truth procedure is a process that aims to uncover the truth of an event. This process involves a subjective commitment to the event, and a willingness to reconfigure one's understanding of the world in the light of the event. Badiou's contention is that hermeneutics effectively reduces truth to a matter of interpretive frameworks, contexts and perspectives. In other words, his contention is that hermeneutics collapses the distinction between truth and interpretation, and this undermines the very notion of truth as a universal concept. Badiou's concern is not much about the inadequacy of interpretation per se, but rather about the hermeneutic tendency to conflate truth with interpretation, thereby relativising and subjectivizing truth (Badiou, 2005a).

As a matter of fact, hermeneutics does acknowledge the importance of universality. Gadamer's concept of universality is rooted in the idea of fusion of horizons. This refers to the process of understanding, where the interpreter's own horizon of understanding merges with the horizon the text or tradition being interpreted. In this sense, universality is an emergent property of the interpretive process. It arises from the dialogue between different perspectives and traditions, leading to deeper understanding of the truth. However, Badiou does not find this

[6] In the collection of Badiou's essays, titled *Conditions,* Badiou critiques Gadamer's emphasis on tradition and context, arguing that it undermines the possibility of genuine innovation and truth .

theory of the fusion of horizons adequate in providing any perspective to account for the universality of truth. In *Manifesto for Philosophy*, he further develops his critique of hermeneutics, targeting the theory of the fusion of horizons as a way of reducing truth to a mere overlap of interpretive perspectives (Badiou, 1992).

Badiou's main point of disagreement with poststructuralism, in general, and deconstructionist approach in particular, revolves around the concept 'undecidability' and the relationship between truth and being. Derrida's notion of undecidability suggests that truth is always deferred, never fully present, and subject to endless reinterpretation. The notion of truth, according to Derrida, is prefixed on the concept of 'transcendental signified', that is, 'the original' that is supposed to exist outside the signifiers. In his essay *Structure, Sign, and Play In the Discourse of the Human Sciences,* Derrida argues that meaning is never fully present and is always deferred within an endless chain of signification. He critiques the idea of a fixed center or transcendental signified, asserting that signification operates through a continuous process of substitutions. As he states:

> Henceforth, it became necessary to think both the law which somehow governed the desire for a center in the constitution of structure, and the process of signification which orders the displacements and substitutions for this law of central presence-but a central presence which has never been itself, has always already been exiled from itself into its own substitute. The substitute does not substitute itself for anything which has somehow existed before it. Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no

> center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the center had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of non locus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play. This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse- that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely (Derrida, 1967/ 1978, pp. 353-354).

In other words, transcendental signified is the ultimate meaning of an expression or a sign. Derrida's point is that we can only move from one signifier to another, resulting in endless signification. That is, we can only glide through the chain of signification and will never be able to arrive at the transcendental signified. Meaning involves 'differing' and 'deferring'. Derrida combines these two expressions and coins a new term, 'differance'. This neologism captures the sense of the endless play of differences, traces of differences, and the spacing by which elements are related to each other. This challenges the notion of determinacy in language. Obviously, Badiou's worry is that this approach leads to a relativistic and nihilistic conception of truth, where truth becomes merely a matter of interpretation and context.

In *Manifesto for Philosophy*, Badiou critiques Derrida's deconstruction as a form of 'sophistry' that undermines the concept of truth (Badiou, 1992). The

sophist, in contrast to the philosopher, denies the existence of truth and the category of truth. One of the key features of sophism is that of relativising the truth. Another feature, which is naturally connected to the relativist tendency, is the perspective that knowledge is a matter of opinion (doxa) that has nothing to do with certainty. This led the sophists of ancient Greece to emphasize on the importance of probability and plausible argumentation. It is an obvious fact that sophist's relativism has influenced postmodern thought, particularly in the areas of poststructuralism and discursive constructivism. In understanding Derrida's deconstruction as a form of sophistry, Badiou does not simply mean that Derrida is a relativist. His usage of the term sophistry is pejorative. Badiou claims that Derrida's emphasis on *differance* and the instability of meaning undermines the very possibility of truth. Deconstruction, for Badiou, does not engage in genuine philosophical inquiry as it relies more on rhetorical tricks. It contributes to a broader cultural relativism, where the concept of truth is collapsed to the opinion or the cultural context.

Against the tendency of textualism, that is, the tendency of reducing truth to the domain of interpretation, Badiou's alternative approach suggests that the event is outside text. More precisely, the event is outside language and symbolic order. It breaks with the existing symbolic order, which includes language, social norms and cultural conventions. The event, as we have seen earlier, is something that cannot be anticipated by the existing order; it is a surprise, a shock, or an encounter that disrupts the status quo. It is not something that can be captured or represented by language of text. Rather, it is a supplement to the text, something that transcends the

established language and symbolic order. Badiou makes use of Jaques Lacan's notion of the 'Real' to characterize the event as supplement to the text (Badiou, 2005a,pp.432-434). For Lacan, the Real is the unrepresentable aspect of reality that exceeds language and the symbolic order. Badiou adopts this notion to describe the event as an occurrence that disrupts, revealing the inconsistencies of the order. In short, Badiou's point against textualism is that the event is not a part of the text, but rather an occurrence that reveals the text's limitations and creates new possibilities for meaning and truth.

This alternative of Badiou has its implications for understanding his departure from Derrida's views on the transcendental signified. Derrida attempts to demonstrate the impossibility of the transcendental signified. Badiou would accept this move. He would respond to it by arguing that the critique of the transcendental signified is correct, but that it does not lead to the conclusion that truth is relative. Because, truth is to be understood as the result of a process of fidelity to the event. Impossibility of the transcendental signified, for Derrida, means there is nothing as original truth that cannot be deconstructed further. However, in Badiou, the event is undeconstructionable in an important sense. The undeconstructuionability of the event means that the event is not subject to the same kind of critical analysis or deconstruction that can be applied to other concepts or phenomena. Instead, the event serves as a kind of founding moment that creates new possibilities. For example, the French revolution, particularly the event of the storming of the Bastille prison, on July 14, 1789, functioned as a founding moment as it reconfigured the existing symbolic order by creating new meanings and possibilities for political

action. The event created new subjectivities, such as the citizen, the revolutionary, and the patriot. Creation of modern democracy, rise of new political ideologies, and the transformation of politics were some of the consequences of this event. In short, the French revolution, particularly, the storming of the Bastille, exemplifies an event becoming a founding moment. So, while Derrida's deconstruction seeks to expose the underlying contradictions of texts, Badiou's event represents a kind of limit or excess that cannot be deconstructed by Derrida's methods.

Is there anything undeconstructionable in Derrida? What about *differance?* It can be argued that *differance* is undeconstructionable because it is the condition of possibility for all construction, and meaning-making. In other words, *differance* is the underlying process that enables and disables all attempts at fixing meaning or constructing a stable identity. There is always a remainder or excess that escapes the reach of deconstruction, a kind of supplement that disrupts the possibility of complete understanding or mastery. Interestingly, Derrida's concept of *differance* can be seen as analogous to Badiou's concept of event. However, while Badiou's event is seen as a sudden occurrence, Derrida's *differance* is a more fundamental, underlying process that shapes reality.

It is clear from above evaluation and comparisons that Badiou's account of truth is not radically opposed to, or fundamentally different from, the various contemporary perspectives that deeply problematize the traditional understanding of truth. He is against relativism, but it does not mean he falls back to essentialism. In other words, his project is of the nature of a reinvention where truth retains its universality. Basically, he reacts to an age dominated by cultural relativism by

putting forward the idea of universal truths. This is obviously linked to his attempt of rearticulating the possibility and necessity of philosophy. In *Manifesto for Philosophy*, Badiou rejects all affirmations concerning the 'end of philosophy' and instead declares that philosophy operates in terms of the concepts of truth, event and subjectivity. Badiou writes:

> 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 the following means: taking 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. (Badiou,1992,p. 32)

Specifically, he rejects the two versions of the thesis of the 'end of philosophy'; the Heideggerian version regarding the exhaustion of metaphysics and the positivist version that sees philosophy suspended by the developments in the natural sciences. Badiou responds to this situation by rearticulating the classical aspect of philosophy emphasizing its role as a that synthesizes and connects the diverse truths found across various aspects of life.

In *Manifesto for Philosophy*, Badiou (1992) presents a contemporary view of truth that challenges conventional ideas about philosophy's role in truth production. Badiou's central thesis asserts that truths do not originate within philosophy itself but are intimately tied to what he terms 'conditions'. These conditions are represented by four distinct areas, he calls truth procedures: art, science, love and

politics. As we have discussed in the previous chapter, each of these procedures operate in its own unique way and is associated with different domains of human experience. Badiou suggests that in order to preserve the fundamental desire for philosophy, we should be open to recognizing various kinds of truths. Instead of confining ourselves to a singular, overarching truth, Badiou proposes that we acknowledge and embrace truths that emerge within specific contexts or conditions. Obviously, this notion of truths as being created within conditions implies that truth is not something pre-existing or fixed. It emerges as a product of interactions, events, and experiences within specific situations or domains. Different domains of human experience provide unique contexts for the emergence of truths. For example, political truths may arise from the dynamics of societal change, while artistic truths may be born out of creative expression.

According to Badiou, philosophy should not exist in isolation or as a detached, abstract pursuit. It should actively involve itself with the various areas of human experience and knowledge, each of which may produce its own unique truths. Imagine these domains as separate islands, each with its own set of truths that emerge from the specific conditions and dynamics within them. These truths are context-dependent and may not necessarily apply universally. Badiou's view encourages philosophy to act as a bridge between these islands of truths. What does this mean in practical terms? Philosophy, according to him, should engage with the diverse and context-specific truths found in these different domains. This means that philosophers should actively study, analyze, and learn from the insights and discoveries in areas like science, politics etc. This enriches the philosophical

conversation and allows it to benefit from a wider array of perspectives. It seeks to find commonalities, interconnections, and fundamental concepts that can help us better understand the world as a whole. By actively engaging with these different domains and incorporating their truths, philosophy remains relevant and applicable to the complexities of human existence. Fundamentally, Badiou's perspective encourages philosophy to be an inclusive and integrative discipline that draws upon the verity of truths existing within different aspects of human experience. This approach allows philosophy to play a vital role in helping us make sense of the diverse and complex nature of the world we inhabit.

Badiou's proposal to rethink the role of philosophy as a unifying force can be seen as implying a revisiting of the classical idea of philosophy as a synthesis of all knowledge. Philosophy was conceived, especially in ancient and medieval times, as a meta-discipline or a meta-level inquiry aiming at the synthesis of various fields of knowledge. For example, in Aristotle, philosophical thinking integrates knowledge from various fields, including metaphysics, ethics, politics, and biology. It can be argued that there is a significant gesture of returning to the classical idea of philosophy in Badiou's project. This is anchored on philosophy's ancient connection with mathematics, having its roots especially in Platonism where mathematics provided a conceptual framework to think about universality. In this sense, by anchoring philosophy in mathematical ontology, Badiou aims to revive Platonism, and to restore philosophy's status as a rigorous discipline, challenging the notions of philosophy as a purely qualitative or interpretative discipline, capable of accommodating the universality of truth. But, the universality that Badiou talks

about is significantly different from that of the platonic framework, as the concept of event gives a radically new dimension to it. More importantly, Badiou's return to this idea can be seen as a critique of postmodernism and its rejection of the grand narratives and universal truth, and of the contemporary perspectives embracing fragmentation and relativism.

CHAPTER V

CORRELATIVE SUBJECTIVISM: TOWARDS A CRITIQUE OF BADIOU

In this chapter, we try to develop a critique of Alain Badiou's use of set theory as an ontological framework and its complex interrelation with the notions of event, subject and truth. In the previous chapters, we have discussed and evaluated the implications of these notions, comparing and contrasting them with the various other perspectives. On the basis of this journey, this chapter explores the availability of a critique specifically digging out the internal inconsistencies of Badiou's project. We proceed on two levels. In the first section of this chapter, we aim to illuminate the tensions inherent in his attempt of formalizing being and the event through the lens of set theory. In the second section, we try to show how Badiou's project falls back to what can be called a correlational subjectivism and thereby contradicts its own ambition of providing a non-subjective and non-correlational foundation for ontology. To put it briefly, this critical venture aims at problematizing the two fundamental motives of Alain Badiou; the first one is to see mathematics, more especially, set theory, as providing the adequate language to describe the structure of being *qua* being, and the second one is his motive of enlarging the framework of set theory so as to accommodate a theory of the subject in order to capture the historicity of being.

5.1. Section 1

5.1.1. Tensions in Linking Set Theory to Ontology

Mainly, we discuss three points here precisely to show how Badiou's theorizing involves some deep rooted tensions:

1. Indispensability of set theory.
2. The problematic status of the void within the mathematical ontology.
3. The conflation of ontology with epistemology.

Badiou's project of mathematical ontology or his claim that mathematics is ontology is based on his conviction that set theory is the only and the natural foundation of mathematics. Selection of set theory, for Badiou, is not just arbitrary as it is assumed to be indispensable. But, the indispensability of set theory is a contested notion in mathematics. Also, it is not clear how Badiou defends his assumption against this contestation. Secondly, Badiou's employment of the concept of void linking it to the set-theoretical notion of empty set also could be contested by arguing that the empty set is a specified construct inside mathematics that does not sit comfortably with Badiou's ontological thesis of indeterminacy. Thirdly, Badiou's belief that mathematics directly portrays being, independently of epistemological categories, might result in collapsing the very distinction between knowing and being, implying the thesis that our knowledge of the world is inextricably linked to our subjective experience and it is impossible to know the world independently of our correlation with it. Let us examine these points more closely.

5.1.2. Indispensability of Set Theory

For Badiou, set theory provides the ontological foundation for mathematics, and it is the only coherent way to think about being and the multiple. There are two ideas here: Set theory is inevitable to mathematics and it is indispensable to thinking about being. The whole of Badiou's philosophical construction is based on this indispensability-thesis. The ontological framework built on set theory could be claimed to be objective only on the basis of the assumption regarding its indispensability. He takes three basic features of set theory to be particularly important for his philosophy, which are, one, the ontological neutrality, two, its universal applicability, and three, its inherent consistency. Ontological neutrality means set theory does not impose any particular structure or essence on being; instead, it provides a formal framework for thinking about the multiple. The universal applicability of set theory means it can be used to formalize and understand all mathematical structures and concepts. It is also assumed that set theory has an intrinsic consistency, precisely for the reason that it is free from contradictions and provides a coherent framework for mathematical reasoning. It is clear from these that the indispensability of set theory for Badiou is not just a matter of convenience or utility, but rather an ontological necessity. It is uniquely suited to capture the essence of being and it is the most natural foundation of mathematics.

Obviously, questioning the indispensability-thesis would challenge the central role that set theory plays in Badiou's philosophy. As a matter of fact, there

are alternative foundational systems in mathematics[1] itself where the inevitability-thesis is deeply questioned. What would this questioning suggest? To our mind, there are at least three suggestions it could have. To say that set theory is not indispensable is to suggest that there are other mathematical frameworks that can serve as foundations for mathematics. Different frameworks could potentially provide different ontological and epistemological perspectives. It means set theory is not the only possible foundation for mathematics, as other approaches might be equally viable. Some of them could be even more suitable for certain mathematical purposes. It also suggests that mathematics can be formalized and developed using different axiomatic systems and logical frameworks. And, these frameworks might not rely on set theory. Thirdly, questioning the inevitability of set theory could imply a rethinking of the relationship between mathematics and ontology, which potentially challenges Badiou's thesis that mathematics is ontology.

To further support this, we shall draw on the arguments of Saunders Mac Lane[2] regarding the foundation of mathematics. In *Mathematics: Form and Function*, Saunders Mac Lane (1986) challenges the assumption that set theory is the only or the most natural foundation for mathematics. While acknowledging its historical significance, he highlights the fact that mathematical structures often

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1 Some examples of alternative foundations for mathematics include category theory, type theory, homotopy type theory, finitist and constructivist approaches. For example, Category theory, introduced by Eilenberg and Mac Lane in the mid-20th century, provides a structural framework that extends beyond set theory. It abstracts mathematical objects and their relations, offering a foundational perspective that contrasts with and generalizes set-theoretic approaches. See, 'Category Theory' Lectures by Peter Johnstone https://pi.math.cornell.edu/~dmehrle/ notes/partiii/ cattheory_ partiii_notes.pdf .

2 Saunders Mac Lane (1909–2005) made important contributions to algebra, working on structures like groups, rings, and fields; and category theory, which he developed with Samuel Eilenberg. He also studied the foundations of mathematics and what mathematical truth is.

emerge from within mathematics itself rather than from set-theoretic principles. Mac Lane argues that mathematical ideas originate from various human activities such as counting, measuring, and comparing, which then evolve into formalized structures (p. 35). This suggests that set theory is not an inherent necessity for mathematical reasoning but rather a framework that was historically adopted for convenience.

Moreover, Mac Lane (1986) illustrates that mathematical development frequently follows paths independent of set theory. He points out that many key mathematical notions-such as groups, vector spaces, and topology-arose from solving specific problems rather than from a foundational commitment to set theory. For instance, the concept of a group did not emerge from set-theoretic reasoning but from the need to understand polynomial equations and their symmetries. Similarly, vector spaces arose from the study of linear equations and differential equations, emphasizing structural properties over foundational concerns (MacLane (1986, p. 37–38).

Another significant point in Mac Lane's discussion is the role of *common structure* and *intrinsic structure* in mathematics. He notes that mathematical objects are often understood through their shared properties, relationships, and structures, rather than through their set-theoretic construction. That is, mathematical objects can be defined and understood through their universal properties, which describe how they interact with each other. This approach focuses on the relationships and patterns between mathematical objects, rather than their internal structure. By shifting the focus from set-theoretic constructions to shared properties and relationships, Mac Lane's perspective emphasizes the importance of abstraction and generality in

mathematics, and it highlights the role of pattern recognition and structural insight in mathematical understanding. Set theory focuses on the internal structures of mathematical objects. Mac Lane's approach, on the other hand, emphasizes the relationships between objects. This is also called category theory that provides an alternative framework for understanding mathematical structures and relationships where the inevitability-thesis, the thesis that set theory is the only foundation for mathematics, is challenged. This approach implies that mathematics can have multiple foundations, each suited to specific areas of study, which effectively dismantles the conventional idea that set theory is the unique, natural foundation of mathematics.

Another important point in Mac Lane's approach is with regard to his concept of the process of axiomatization as a crucial step in mathematical formalization. Axiomatization[3] can be described, according to Mac Lane, as the process of specifying a set of axioms, or basic assumptions, that define a mathematical theory, without bothering about what the objects in the theory 'really are' (MacLane, 1986). The procedure is that we define a set of rules (axioms) that describe how things behave. We use these rules to build a mathematical theory. We don't need to worry about what the objects in the theory 'really are', that is, we just focus on how they behave according to the rules. The classic example of axiomatization is Euclid's axioms for geometry. Euclid started with axioms, such that it is possible to draw a straight line from any point to any other point, and it is possible to extend a finite straight line continuously in both directions. From these

[3] See Mac Lane, *Form and Function*(chapter1) for the detailed discussion of axiomatization.

axioms, Euclid was able to derive many geometric theorems, such as the Pythagorean theorem. It means, axioms are used to build a rigorous and systematic theory of geometry.

Mac Lane's point is that mathematical structures do not necessarily depend on set-theoretic definitions but can be understood through axiomatic systems tailored to their specific properties. He supports axiomatic procedures in mathematics but challenges the idea that set theory is the only necessary foundation. While Badiou relies on ZFC set theory to conceptualize 'being qua being' through its axiomatic rigor, Mac Lane argues that mathematical structures can be formalized just as effectively through alternative axiomatic systems, such as category theory. This argument suggests that foundations of mathematics should be flexible and adaptable to different mathematical contexts, rather than rigidly tied to set theory. Obviously, the idea of flexibility and adaptability of mathematical foundations that Mac Lane suggests challenges Badiou's claim that set theory has an exclusive ontological status. In the light of this, it could be argued that Badiou's choice of set theory as having a foundational role is a contingent philosophical choice rather than a necessity. There is some amount of arbitrariness in this choice and Badiou does not adequately justify why set theory should be treated as the privileged discourse of ontology rather than the other alternative paradigms.

It is clear from what we have discussed so far that Badiou's use of set theory as the foundation of ontology is problematic. Specifically, there are at least four notions that put pressure on Badiou's use of set theory; One, the historical contingency of ZFC, two, the existence of alternative mathematical paradigms or

plurality of mathematical paradigms, three, the notion of the multiple foundations of mathematics, and four, the philosophical assumptions underlying set theory and its limitations within mathematical practice. All these indicate that Badiou's project involves an arbitrary selection rather than a universal necessity. More importantly, the foundational debates in mathematics show that set theory has never been an uncontested framework, even within its own domain. If its status as a foundation for mathematics is itself not very sound, then Badiou's project of treating it as a foundation for ontology is even more problematic.

5.1.3 The Problematic Status of the Void

In the first chapter of this thesis, we have shown how Badiou's ontology centers on the concept of the void, which he identifies with the null set or empty set, Ø. He asserts that the void serves as the groundless ground of being-an indeterminate nothingness from which all structured multiplicities arise. However, this reliance on formal mathematics raises significant philosophical challenges. One central issue is whether the empty set, as defined in Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory with the Axiom of Choice (ZFC), truly represents an indeterminate void or whether it functions as a determinate foundational entity. If the latter, Badiou's claim to escape foundationalism is questionable. Additionally, the methodology of mathematical formalism differs fundamentally from philosophical inquiry, raising concerns about whether set theory is a suitable framework for ontology.

In formal set theory, the empty set is not a pure void; it is a specified or defined entity within the mathematical system. It exists as an object within ZFC, regulated by axioms and definitional constraints. It is uniquely specified by the

axiom of extensionality, which states that sets are determined by their elements. Since the empty set has no elements, it is uniquely characterized within ZFC. This means that the empty set is not a vague or indeterminate 'void' but rather the first explicitly defined entity within the mathematical structure. Its existence follows from the axioms, making it an integral part of the ontological framework of ZFC.

Moreover, the empty set is used as a foundational element for constructing other sets. Through operations such as union, power set formation, and the successor function in von Neumann ordinals, the entire number system and mathematical structures are built from this initial entity (Jech, 2003).

For example, we can systematically build new sets starting from it:

1. The empty set: $\emptyset = \{\}$
2. A set containing the empty set: $\{\emptyset\} = \{\{\}\}$
3. A set containing both the empty set and the previous set: $\{\emptyset, \{\emptyset\}\} = \{\{\}, \{\{\}\}\}$

This process extends to the construction of natural numbers and more complex mathematical structures, showing that the empty set has a defined and generative role. Instead of being something radically indeterminate, it serves as an ordered foundation. This structured role of the empty set in mathematics does not sit comfortably with Badiou's notion of the void as something radically indeterminate and beyond conceptual capture. That is, there is a basic contradiction between the mathematical notion of empty set and Badiou's formulation that the void is beyond

determination. If the void is already an element of the ontological structure, it is not truly indeterminate; rather, it is merely the initial determinate entity within the system. This also indicates a tension in Badiou's formulation: Can Badiou claim that his formulation is free from foundationalism, or is it the case that he shifts the foundational element to the empty set?

The tension can be stated as follows. Badiou claims that his formulation escapes foundationalism. The basis of this claim is his rejection of the external or absolute principles as the basis of being. However, he shifts the foundational element to the empty set, claiming that it is radically indeterminate, the groundless ground of being. The implication here is that there is a foundational principle that still exists within his system. This amounts to saying that he redefines foundationalism, not just rejecting it altogether. Either he has to argue that the void is absolute nothingness, which contradicts the set-theoretical notion of empty set, or he has to accept that he redefines it in accordance with set theory where the empty set has a structured role. If the empty set serves as the starting point, his ontology may still rely on foundational logic. If the empty set functions as a structured starting point, his ontology redefines foundationalism within a formal system.

5.1.4 The Conflation of Epistemology with Ontology

Conflating epistemology with ontology is a fundamental, but problematic, move in Badiou's philosophy. It could be argued that this move is a strategic one in Badiou, as his project implies an unsettling of the conventional ways in which the question of being and knowing has been dealt with. But, to our mind, this move results in some tensions at the very fundamental level of his theorizing. These

tensions are linked to the difficulties in dealing with the problems, specifically the problems of subjectivity and objectivity, universality and particularity, absolutism and relativism. Let us have a close look at Badiou's move of conflating the concepts of knowledge and being and see how it is reflected in the central themes of his philosophy: the void, event, and truth.

Ontology, for him, is not just about describing what exists. It is also about the conditions of knowledge and truth. Being and knowledge are inextricably linked, as our understanding of what exists is always already informed or conditioned by the epistemological commitments. That means, truth is not just about knowing facts, but it is also a matter of commitment. It is not that one is simply committed to the facts. Badiou would say one is committed to an event, and thus truth is revealed through the event. Then, what would be the status of the event? As we have discussed earlier, an event is a sudden, unexpected happening that changes everything. As Badiou asserts, an event is not just an objective occurrence, but also a subjective experience that requires individual commitment and interpretation. It is both an ontological occurrence, something that actually happened in the world, and an epistemological occurrence indicating shift in our understanding of the world. Our understanding of truth is deeply connected to the specific circumstances of the event. The event also changes our understanding of being.

Consider Badiou's own example of the French revolution as an event. It occurred in the world, and also marks a shift in our understanding of the world. The revolution reveals a fundamental truth about human equality and freedom. It changes our understanding of being, revealing that social hierarchies are not natural.

Obviously, Badiou's concept of the event blurs the lines between epistemology and ontology. There is an obvious epistemological circularity here. To say that our understanding of the event is always already informed by your epistemological commitments is to admit that we cannot be sure that our understanding is not simply a product of those commitments.

This circularity is the result of the blurring of the boundary between epistemology and ontology. This blurring makes it difficult to separate our understanding of truth from our understanding of being. The truth revealed by the event is tied to the specific circumstances of that event. This raises the questions about whether truth is universal or particular. In the above example, the French revolution’s ideals, such as liberty, equality, fraternity, are presented as universal truths, applicable to all humans. However, the revolution's ideals are based on a particular epistemological framework that consists of enlightenment values, rationalism and so on. The revolution’s context was specific to 18th century France, with its unique history, culture and social structures. The ideals were shaped by the particular experiences and perspectives of the French people, which might not be directly applicable to other contexts. This illustrates the tension between universality and particularity. On the one hand, the revolution’s ideals are presented as universal, applicable to all humans, and on the other hand, the revolution's context and the particular experiences of the French people shape the meaning and application of those ideals. What Badiou tries to do is to maintain the universality of truth while acknowledging the particularity of the event. But, justifying universal truth claims when they are always situated in particular contexts remains problematic.

Acknowledging particular differences while pursuing universal truth also remains problematic.

As we have seen in the above example, the revolution's ideals imply an ontological commitment, that is, a commitment to the existence of universal human rights, dignity, and equality. Analytically speaking, there are two different factors here: the epistemological claims and the ontological implication. The revolution's ideals are the epistemological claims. The existence of universal rights is the ontological implication. The difficulty arises when we fail to distinguish clearly between the epistemological claims and the ontological implications, that is, how we know the revolution's ideals and what is actually the case of universal human rights. The epistemological claim is conflated with the ontological implications and makes it difficult to critically evaluate the epistemological claim independently of the ontological implication.

One of the potential consequences of the above said blurring is a tendency of dogmatism, which could be called an ontological dogmatism. What we mean by this is the tendency of assuming some ontological commitments as absolute and unquestionable. This could limit the scope for critical evaluation and revision of ontological assumptions, precisely for the reason that the conflation limits the possibility to critically evaluate the epistemological claim independently of the ontological implication. An ontological dogmatist might stick to his ontological commitment as unquestionable, dismissing and marginalizing alternative ontological commitments. Suppose one is ontologically committed to the enlightenment ideals assuming them as absolute. This commitment becomes dogmatic because it does not

recognize, or just dismisses, the other worlds where such ideals are inapplicable. Another potential consequence of the erasure of the boundary between epistemology and ontology is that it can also lead to a tendency of relativism, which can be called epistemological relativism. This is a tendency where all knowledge claims are seen as equally valid, since they are all tied to a particular ontology. The result is that notion of objective truth or knowledge would be undermined. This relativism can make it difficult to evaluate competing claims or ontological commitments.

The problems that we have seen in Badiou's attempt of conflating epistemology with ontology make his theorizing of the void extremely problematic. First of all, the set-theoretical notion of empty set to which Badiou links his notion of the void is an epistemic notion, that it is a knowledge claim within mathematics, describing a specific concept or object. It serves as a tool for understanding and describing mathematical structures. In ZFC, the empty set is a formal construct established to provide a basis for more intricate structures, and its existence is neither self-evident nor solely ontological. Badiou links this notion to his concept of void, which is not just epistemic. So, the empty set is not just a mathematical concept for him, as it represents a fundamental aspect of being, the void. The void is an ontological feature of reality, represented by the empty set. It is an inherent feature of being, rather than a product of our knowledge or understanding. But, at the same time, the void represents the limits of our knowledge, highlighting the impossibility of fully grasping or representing being. The void, by definition, is inaccessible to knowledge, as it represents the limits of our understanding. This amounts to saying that the void is neither purely ontological nor epistemological. Or,

it is both. The void blurs the lines between epistemology and ontology, indicating the complexity of the relationship between our understanding and the nature of being itself.

The connection between the event and the void further illustrates the conflation. As Badiou says, the event reveals the void or lack in being. The void, as ontological lack, enables the event to occur, as it creates the possibility for something new and unpredictable to emerge. Consider the example of the French revolution again. The revolution reveals the void in the existing social order, for example, inequality. Suppose that equality is revealed or is brought into being by the event. Then, it does not make much sense to say that inequality existed before the event. Inequality is named by the event. This account of the connection between the event and the void suggests the possibility of two readings: One, the void pre-exists the event, waiting to be revealed; two, the event itself creates the void, or at least, brings it into being as a recognizable, ontological feature. In the first case, the void can be conceived independently of our knowledge or recognition of it. In the second case, the void can be conceived only retroactively, as a result of the event. This means it is not ontological in the strict sense. Its existence and intelligibility is dependent on the event, which reveals and constructs it retroactively.

Interestingly, in Badiou's philosophy, the event itself can be seen as a retroactive construction. The event is named or identified only retroactively, after its occurrence. The event's significance and even its occurrence are constructed retroactively, through the subject's fidelity to the event. The French revolution becomes what it is only through the subject's fidelity to that event. The event is

named retroactively. There is no event before naming. This implies another paradox: the event constructs the void, but the event itself is constructed. The whole reasoning becomes further complicated when we closely look into the status of Badiou's subject. What is the subject, after all? The subject is post-evental. There is no subject before the event. But, paradoxically, the event is post-subjectal, as it is retroactively constructed. The subject emerges after the event, as a result of the fidelity to the event. The event, however, is retroactively constructed by the subject, implying that the event itself is posterior to the subject. This generates a circular problem: the subject is defined by their commitment to an event, but the event itself only becomes meaningful because the subject remains faithful to it. The subject and event are intertwined in a circular relationship, where the subject is post-evental, but the event is post-subjectal. Badiou's concept of the event and the subject can be understood only as involving what can be called a retroactive causality, where the effect (the event) precedes its cause (the subject).

To conclude, the above paradoxes highlight the complex nature of Badiou's philosophy, where the subject, the event and the void are intertwined and mutually constructive. We do not mean to argue that the paradoxes show the weakness of Badiou's reasoning. Such an argument would miss the point of Badiou's project. For example, to argue that the thesis of retroactive causality is paradoxical in the negative sense is to miss the point that the very thesis is intended to disrupt conventional understanding of temporal relationships and causality. The paradoxes, in a positive way, add depth and complexity to Badiou's philosophy, revealing the intricate, recursive relationships between concepts. They can also be seen as

indicating tensions in theorizing that make Badiou's thought challenging to understand and engage with. What we tried in this section was to show how paradoxes arise from Badiou's conflation of epistemology with ontology, which for him, underscores the need for a new understanding of the philosophical concepts.

5.2 Section 2

5.2.1 Correlationism in Badiou

Badiou's work can be seen as an attempt to translate mathematical formalism, particularly set theory, into a philosophical perspective. It doesn't mean that his primary concern is to simply apply mathematical concepts to philosophy; but rather he develops an ontology that captures the historicity of being, that is, the dynamic, temporal, and situated nature of being, which obviously is not the concern of set theory. This is anchored on his rearticulation of the set-theoretical notion of empty set into the philosophical notion of the void. This move allows him to conceptualize the void as a fundamental aspect of being, rather than simply a mathematical concept. The risk involved here is that of reducing the difference in methodology between mathematics and philosophy. Certainly, mathematics is not concerned with the fundamental nature of existence, at least in the same way philosophy is. It develops formal systems to resolve abstract problems with internal consistency. By treating set theory as a foundational ontology, Badiou appears to assume that mathematics can speak the language of philosophy. This premise is questionable because different disciplines construct and interpret their objects of study differently. For example, the concept of power conceived in physics is fundamentally different from the ways in which it is understood in sociology or

political science. Our point is that the different disciples operate with different conceptual frameworks. Set theory may describe formal structures, but it does not necessarily provide an adequate framework for understanding the nature of being in the philosophical sense. The empty set is a specific object in mathematics that resists getting translated into philosophy. So, what Badiou does is a creative interpretation, which is certainly important for him and also as an insightful move in philosophy.

As the result of this creative interpretation, Badiou moves beyond the scope of conventional set theory, precisely to accommodate the notion of the subject,which is not at all a mathematical concern. This is not just an accommodation of an already available philosophical notion, but a formulation of a new concept of the subject as the foundation of his philosophy. What is the status of this subject? To our view, it makes sense only within the framework of correlationism. Correlationism, a term coined by Quentin Meillassoux, refers to a tendency implied in the philosophical theories, including that of Badiou, of prioritizing the relationship between the subject and object over the object itself, effectively 'correlating' the two.

5.2.2 A note on Quentin Meillassoux

Meillassoux's major work, *After Finitude* (2008), includes a preface by Badiou. It indicates the intellectual connection between these two thinkers and their shared concerns especially with regard to mathematics and ontology. However, Meillassoux strongly critiques Badiou's philosophy, particularly his views on ontology, the event, and his reliance on mathematics as the foundation of being. This critique reflects Meillassoux's larger philosophical goal of addressing the problems of correlationism. Meillassoux's work challenges the correlationist tendency in

contemporary philosophy and argues for the necessity of thinking about reality independent of human cognition. He criticizes philosophies that rely on subjective mediation to establish truth, arguing that such frameworks fail to account for the absolute nature of being.

To understand Meillassoux's critique, it is important to clarify correlationism, a central concept in his philosophy. Correlationism refers to the idea that we can only ever know the correlation between thought and being, rather than access being as it is independently of human perception or cognition. He says, "Correlationism consists in disqualifying the claim that it is possible to consider the realms of subjectivity and objectivity independently of one another. Not only does it become necessary to insist that we never grasp an object in itself, in isolation from its relation to the subject, but it also becomes necessary to maintain that we can never grasp a subject that would not always-already be related to an object" (Meillassoux, 2008, p.13)

Meillassoux criticizes correlationism because it implies that we cannot know the absolute nature of reality as it is, without involving human perception. He argues that most modern philosophy, including Badiou's, remains trapped within this framework. More importantly, Meillassoux critiques mathematical ontology by questioning its capacity to truly account for the absolute. He argues that Badiou's reliance on mathematics ties his ontology to human conceptual frameworks, thus failing to escape the anthropocentric limits of philosophy. This means that Badiou's system still operates within a form of correlationism-the idea that reality is always already tied to human thought

Badiou's use of mathematics, particularly set theory, seeks to describe being as a whole. However, Meillassoux critiques this reliance on mathematics by emphasizing that mathematics, though seemingly universal, is still a human-constructed system. While mathematics appears objective, it remains a conceptual framework developed by humans to interpret reality. For Meillassoux, this means that Badiou's ontology, which relies on mathematics, reflects human thought rather than accessing reality as it exists independently. Meillassoux challenges correlationism directly by reasserting the possibility of accessing an absolute reality that is not contingent upon human thought. To illustrate this, he introduces the concept of the "ancestral realm", which refers to a hypothetical realm of being that exists independently of human existence. "I will call 'ancestral' any reality anterior to the emergence of the human species - or even anterior to every recognized form of life on earth." (Meillassoux, 2008, p.21).

This realm is thought to be independent of human perception, cognition, or any other form of correlation with the subject. Meillassoux wants us to consider an example to illustrate the ancestral hypothesis. Imagine a fossilized dinosaur bone found in a geological formation. The bone is estimated to be 100 million years old, dating back to the Cretaceous period. According to the ancestral hypothesis, the event that led to the formulation of the fossilized bone occurred independently of human existence. The dinosaur lived, died, and was fossilized according to the deterministic laws that governed the behavior of matter and energy during that era. The ancestral hypothesis challenges correlationist thought, which posits that human access is always mediated by a correlation between the subject and object.

The ancestral realm operates according to its own laws and principles, rather than shaped by human perception and understanding. It is characterized by unpredictability, as its events and processes are not governed by the same laws and patterns that we observe in the correlated world. The events and processes are not necessary, but rather contingent and subject to change. He uses the term hyper-chaos[4] to describe the nature of the ancestral realm. This term can be understood in contrast to the ordinary sense of the notion of chaos. Chaos is the state of disorder. As Meillassoux understands, it refers to the state of randomness and unpredictability, but still governed by laws and patterns. Chaos, in this sense, is a regime of complexity and disorder, but one that can be studied through mathematical models and scientific inquiry. Hyper-chaos, on the other hand, refers to a state of radical unpredictability and randomness, where even the laws and patterns governing chaos are themselves subject to change and unpredictability. This is a state where anything can happen, and there are no underlying laws or patterns to rely on. Hyper-chaos blurs the distinction between order and disorder, as it operates according to its own unpredictable logic. This hyper-chaotic nature challenges traditional notions of causality, the relationship between order and disorder, as the ancestral realm blurs this distinction.

Meiillassoux uses mathematics to support his ancestral hypothesis. He uses the Cantorian set theory to argue that mathematics can think of the ancestral realm,

[4] See Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (Chapter 3), for a detailed discussion on the concept of ' hyper chaos'. "Our absolute, in effect, is nothing other than an extreme form of chaos, a hyper-Chaos, for which nothing is or would seem to be, impossible, not even the unthinkable. This absolute lies at the furthest remove from the absolutization we sought: the one that would allow mathematical science to describe the in-itself." (Meillassoux, 2008,p. 105)

which exists independently of human thought. Specifically, he draws on Cantor's work on infinite sets[5], which challenged the traditional notions of infinity. Meillassoux argues that it provides a mathematical framework for thinking about the actual infinity of the ancestral realm. Mathematical statements about infinite sets can describe the ancestral realm without relying on human correlation. This move of Meillassoux is different from Badiou's project, where mathematics is used to describe reality per se. Rather, Meillassoux's claim is that certain mathematical properties and relations can be applied to the ancestral realm, independently of human thought. For example, consider a mathematical statement: 'the ratio of the Earth's mass to its radius has remained constant over the past 4.5 billion years'. This statement is mathematical in nature, as it describes a mathematical property, that is, the ratio of mass to radius that can be applied to the ancestral realm. Meillassoux's point is that mathematical statements like this one can be true independently of human thought and perception, providing a way to think about the ancestral realm in a way that is not limited by human correlation.

It is clear from the above that Meillassoux's hypothesis reaffirms a realist perspective, which posits that the world exists independently of human existence and perception. But, the realism that is reaffirmed here is of a speculative nature. Speculative, because it posits the existence of the ancestral realm that exists

[5] Infinity has historically been perceived as an abstract, indivisible concept, often associated with the idea of something boundless or limitless. In classical thought, infinity was treated more as a philosophical notion than a mathematical one. Georg Cantor revolutionized the understanding of infinity by demonstrating that infinite sets can have different sizes, contradicting the classical view that infinity is a single, absolute concept. He showed that while the set of natural numbers (N) and the set of rational numbers (Q) are both countably infinite, the set of real numbers (R) is uncountably infinite-a larger type of infinity-through his diagonal argument. This challenged the traditional belief that infinity is a uniform, indivisible totality, fundamentally reshaping mathematical and philosophical conceptions of the infinite.

independently of human correlation. This postulation has to be speculative, as it goes beyond our current understanding of the relationship between human existence and the world. The hypothesis assumes that deterministic laws, which govern the behavior of matter and energy, operated in the same way before human existence as they do today. This assumption is speculative, as we cannot observe or verify the operation of these laws in the pre-human era. For Meillassoux, true access to the absolute would require such a framework that does not rely on human-centric concepts, including mathematics. Mathematics remains a human tool for interpreting reality, not a reflection of reality itself. Badiou's mathematical framework, Meillassoux argues, does not grant access to an absolute reality beyond human frameworks.

Ultimately, Meillassoux's speculative realism challenges Badiou's framework by proposing a different understanding of the absolute-one grounded in the inherent contingency of existence rather than the structured ontology of mathematics. This alternative perspective not only critiques Badiou's system but also broadens the scope of philosophical inquiry by moving beyond human-centered frameworks. Meillassoux's emphasis on contingency opens up new ways of thinking about reality, making his critique a significant contribution to contemporary debates in continental philosophy. By addressing the limitations of correlationism, he provides a fresh approach that asserts the independence of the absolute from human frameworks while offering a compelling reimagining of the nature of existence

To further understand the implications of correlationism in Badiou's philosophy, consider his concept of the event. For Badiou, an event is a radical

rupture that redefines reality, but it becomes meaningful only through subjective recognition and fidelity. For instance, the French revolution becomes an event because individuals recognize and commit to its transformative truth. Meillassoux critiques this by arguing that such an approach inherently ties the concept of an event to human participation, leaving it within the bounds of correlationism. An event does not possess any intrinsic ontological importance; it gains significance solely through the acknowledgement of a subject who perceives it as such. If an event necessitates a subject for its recognition, then it is only accessible within the parameters of human cognition. Meillassoux contrasts this with his focus on the arche-fossil, which as we have seen earlier, provides evidence of a reality existing long before human thought. By highlighting the arche-fossil, Meillassoux challenges the necessity of human mediation in accessing reality, suggesting that the absolute can be understood without relying on subjective frameworks. Badiou's event, rooted in human involvement, thus illustrates a form of correlationism that Meillassoux seeks to transcend.

We now consider Badiou's concept of truth precisely to see how Meillassoux's critique is applicable to it. For Badiou, truths emerge through the subjective fidelity to events. From the perspective of Meillassoux, this view affirms the role of the subject in the construction of truth. Even if Badiou's ontology appears to transcend the correlationist paradigm, his dependence on the subject's function in truth construction implies the contrary. In other words, Badiou assumes that the subject's fidelity is essential for preserving an event's ontological significance, and thus implicitly conforms to the correlationist notion that truth is contingent upon

human interaction. Meillassoux argues that this approach continues to prioritize the human perspective, thus failing to fully escape anthropocentrism. He contrasts this with his speculative realism, which posits an absolute reality indifferent to human thought or involvement. For example, while Badiou might view the Big Bang as an event understood through scientific developments, Meillassoux would emphasize the Big Bang as an absolute occurrence that exists regardless of human interpretation.

Another perspective of Badiou, which Meillassoux identifies as containing the elements of correlationism, is the perspective of decisionism. As we have seen earlier, within the set-theoretic ontological framework of Badiou, the being is composed of multiple, inconsistent sets. It means that Badiou's ontology is committed to multiplicity and inconsistency. But, at the same time, the subject plays a vital role in configuring and giving meaning to the multiple. This is where decisionism comes in. The subject's decision and fidelity determines which configurations of being are meaningful to a particular situation. Within Badiou's framework, the subject is assigned with the task of selecting and organizing sets based on their relevance. The subject's agency is essential in penetrating the inconsistent multiple, creating a new consistency, and configuring the situation in a meaningful way. Decisionism, in this sense, involves a degree of voluntarism. In other words, the decisionist element in Badiou suggests that the event is ultimately undecidable; its occurrence and significance can only be decided by a subjective intervention. If the subject is necessary for deciding which aspects of being are significant, then Badiou's ontology cannot claim to be fully independent of human cognition. The very act of determining the relevance of a set is a subjective

intervention that conditions access to truth. This contradicts Badiou's broader claim that ontology should be understood in terms of impersonal mathematical structures. In this sense, his attempt to develop a purely objective ontology is internally challenged by his reliance on the subject's decision-making process.

Decisionism is linked to Badiou's neglect of the role of historical transformation in shaping reality, according to Meillassoux. Let us try to examine this point a little closer. One of the most considerable limitations of mathematical ontology is its incapability to sufficiently account for the historicity of being. If being is structured mathematically, historical change must be understood in terms of formal operations; but historical reality is marked by ruptures and transformations that do not easily conform to mathematical structures. To overcome this impasse Badiou uses theory of event and subject. We may say that it is through the recognition of the limitations of his mathematical ontology that Badiou introduces the concept of the event to account for the emergence of new truths. He anchors this concept on the notion of the 'void' in set theory, arguing that the void serves as a site for radical transformation. However, this move does not fully resolve the underlying issue. If the event requires subjective fidelity, then it remains dependent on human recognition. This dependence on the subject reintroduces the correlationist problem: if truth only emerges through subjective engagement, then it is not truly independent of human cognition. While this accounts for radical change, it neglects the gradual, cumulative aspects of historical transformation.

Meillassoux argues that Badiou's focus on the correlation of the event and the subject's fidelity overlooks the materialist and naturalist aspect of reality. This

results in neglecting the ways in which historical transformation is shaped by factors like technology, economy, and environment. Badiou's theory emphasizes the structural aspects of reality, but Meillassoux believes it does not adequately account for the diachronic process, i.e., the gradual, long term transformations that shape reality over time. Badiou's failure to address the role of historical transformation in shaping reality is connected to his ontology that remains entangled with the very correlationist assumptions it seeks to overcome.

5.3. Correlative Subjectivism

Meillassoux's critique of Badiou is important in many respects. As we understand from the above account, there are two concerns implied in his critique. One is identifying the tendency of correlationism in Badiou, and the other concern is to suggest an alternative ontological framework that is based on a speculative realism. It could be argued that these are two different concerns, and that one can admit or agree with Meillassoux's arguments criticizing Badiou's use of mathematics without committing his speculative realism. His ancestral hypothesis provides an alternative ontological framework which is disputable on many grounds. We do not attempt to examine either this hypothesis or his general metaphysical perspective that is anchored on speculative realism here; as such an attempt is external to the scope of this study.

Correlationist tendency of Badiou is objectionable not necessarily because of its neglect of any objective account of reality, but because it contradicts his own project of developing a non-correlationist, non-subjectivist ontology on the basis of set theory. This, to our view, is due to his prioritizing of the subjective realm. It

does not in any way mean that there is subjectivism in Badiou in the strict sense of the term. His is more of the nature of what can be called a correlative subjectivism. Correlative subjectivism can be described as a tendency prioritizing the subject's experience, interpretation, which results in reducing the world to the subject's correlated experience, effectively subjectivising reality. It is obviously related to correlationism. But, the difference is that the tendency of correlative subjectivism implies the emphasis is more on the subjective aspect of the correlation. Badiou's theory exhibits this tendency as it prioritizes the subject's experience, fidelity, or interpretation over the objective features of the event or being.

As we have discussed in the previous chapter, Badiou's subject is neither a pre-existing essence as in the traditional philosophical approaches, nor is it a mere construct as in constructivist approaches. It is neither a phenomenological subject of experience nor an effect of discourse or structure. We term this notion of the subject as correlative, because it emerges from the correlation between thought and reality, between experience and the structure. It suggests that the subject is not a static entity, but rather a dynamic and relational process. In this sense, Badiou's position can be called a subjectivism without the subject, i.e., the subject as substance. Rather, it is a processual subjectivism, because it conceives the subject as a process in relation to the event. In view of the importance of the event in Badiou's formulation, the correlative subjectivism can also be called evental subjectivism. The crux of the idea is that the subject emerges through fidelity to the event, which is a process that unfolds over time. That is, the processual aspect highlights the subject's relation to the event. The focus is more on the subject's becoming rather

than being, and this processual focus underlines the subject's constant transformation and self-reinvention. Subjectivism is dynamic here as it articulates the subject's dynamic and emergent nature, as well as its perpetual transformation and self-renewal.

We shall conclude this discussion by briefly specifying how Badiou's theory of the event relies on a correlative understanding of the subject, and how this correlative subjectivism limits or constrain Badiou's philosophy, especially his concept of truth. Regarding the first point, four aspects of his theory of the event may be highlighted. Firstly, it could be argued on the basis of our analysis in the previous chapter that Badiou conceives the subject as a process of subjectivation that emerges in response to an event. This process is correlative, meaning that the subject comes into being in relation to the event. Secondly, The subject's encounter with the event is correlative, as the subject's very existence is tied to its relation to the event. Thirdly, take Badiou's concept of fidelity as the process by which the subject remains faithful to the event. This fidelity is correlative, as the subject's identity and existence are bound up with its commitment to the event. Fourthly, the event is characterized by its indiscernibility, meaning that it lacks a pre-defined identity and cannot be discerned within the existing frameworks of knowledge. The subject's relation to the event is correlative, as the subject's own indiscernibility is revealed in its encounter with the event. In short, Badiou's theory of the event relies on a correlative understanding of the subject, where the subject's existence, identity and function are inextricably linked to the event. It implies a relational or interactive

understanding of subjectivity, stressing the importance of encounter, fidelity, and interaction with the event and its consequences.

With regard to the question of constraints that the correlative subjectist tendency imposes on Badiou's thought, it can be argued that the element of relativism inherently limits the very idea of mathematical ontology. We have already discussed the element of relativism in Badiou's notion of truth. It is true that Badiou does not propose a relativist theory of truth in the strict sense. However, there is an idea of subjective mediation in his philosophy that prohibits any unmediated access to being or reality. It introduces perspectivism, the conception of truth as dependent on perspectives, which may lead to the plurality of competing perspectives and truths. The result is the erotion of the universality and objectivity of set-theoretical structures. Mathematical ontology aims to provide a neutral framework for understanding being, but, however, the correlative subjectivist tendency problematizes the neutrality of this ontology.

To conclude, Badiou's reinterpretation of the set theoretical notion of empty set is a crucial move to incorporate the notion of the subject, which he understands as a situated, engaged being, into his ontology. This incorporation is crucial for him precisely because what he wanted to develop is an ontological framework that captures the historicity of being. But, by incorporating the subject through the reinterpretation of the empty set, Badiou's ontology becomes vulnerable to some major criticisms; that, he introduces an external, non-mathematical element into his ontology, which defeats, or at least complicates, his initial goal of anchoring his ontology solely on mathematical structures; his theorizing exhibits the tendency of

prioritizing the subject over the mathematical structures that were supposed to be the foundation of his ontology; and, his concept of the event, rather than offering a break from correlationism, reintroduces subjective mediation as a necessary condition for truth.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This dissertation has undertaken an analytical exposition and a critical evaluation of Alain Badiou's mathematical ontology, with a particular focus on the tensions inherent in linking mathematics to the historical and dynamic nature of being. The last chapter embodies the results of the analysis and the critical evaluation that we have undertaken in the other four chapters of the dissertation. In effect, this chapter is the concluding part of the research. That is, we have presented our own evaluations and also explored various criticisms leveled against Badiou by some important thinkers and scholars in the first four chapters, and the last chapter is based on these discussions. Particularly, in the last part of chapter two, we have critically evaluated the justifiability of the conflation of the mathematics notion of the empty set or null set with the philosophical notion of the void. In the third chapter, our evaluative attempt was focused on various criticisms on the question of universality and Badiou's conception of truth procedures, and the relation that Badiou establishes between set theory and the event. Last part of the fourth chapter was focused on the critical evaluation of Badiou's notion of subject and truth, where we discussed some important criticisms and also have conducted a detailed analysis of his concept of truth comparing and contrasting it with the various contemporary philosophical responses, phenomenological, hermeneutic, poststructuralist, to the problem of universality and relativism. These discussions led us to identifying the tensions in Badiou's theorizing, and more importantly to the critical perspective that

we evolved in the second part of the final chapter regarding the correlative subjectivist tendency in Badiou's philosophy.

The hypothesis guiding this research was that attempting to link mathematics to the historical and the dynamic nature of being would reveal deep-rooted tensions, stemming from the inherent complexities of reconciling the abstract, formal structure of mathematics with the fluid, contextual, and ontologically complex nature of being. Through a detailed examination of Badiou's project, this research has identified the far-reaching implications of his ontology, as well as the underlying tensions that threaten to undermine its coherence. Despite the limitations and contradictions of Badiou's project, this research acknowledges the significance of his attempt to link mathematics and ontology. Badiou's work has opened up new avenues for philosophical inquiry into the nature of being, mathematics, and the human condition. His emphasis on the ontological significance of mathematical concepts, such as set theory and the void, has challenged traditional notions of being and existence. Furthermore, Badiou's concept of the 'event' has provided a powerful framework for thinking about radical change, novelty, and the unpredictable nature of human existence.

Badiou's mathematical ontology is undoubtedly a revolutionary intervention in the history of philosophy, especially in the history of ontology. Perhaps, the most profound and the most provocative statement about ontology in recent philosophy is Heideggerian assertion that the history of philosophy is the history of forgetting of

Being[1] (Heidegger,1996,).By suggesting that the history of philosophy has been characterized by a forgetting of Being, Heidegger points to a fundamental neglect at the heart of Western philosophy. This forgetting is not simply a matter of oversight, but rather a symptom of a deeper issue, namely, the tendency to prioritize beings (*Seiendes*) and their properties over Being (*Sein*) itself. He believes that this forgetting of Being has led to a crisis in Western thought, and a renewed focus on the question of Being is needed to revitalize philosophy. The question of Being, for him, is the fundamental question of our time, one that underlies all other philosophical and existential inquiries. This perspective of Heidegger marks a turning point in philosophy as it has sparked intense debate, reflection, and re-evaluation of the philosophical tradition, influencing generations of philosophers including Badiou.

This Heideggerian turn, to our mind, provides the starting point of Badiou's research. His *Being and Event* is, in a significant sense, a response to the *Being and Time*. By re-examining the relationship between being and mathematics, Badiou's work aims to re-activate the question of being, and to provide a new framework for thinking about the nature of existence and reality. Badiou constructs this new framework precisely to overcome the Heideggerian way of treating ontology or any project of phenomenological ontology that involves correlationism. But, despite his attempts to overcome the correlationist framework, his own philosophy, as we tried to argue in the light of Quentin Meillassoux's reading of Badiou, ultimately relies on a form of correlationism. Badiou's reliance on the concept of void, subject's fidelity

[1] . See Heidegger, M. (1996). *Being and Time* (J. Stambaugh, Trans.). State University of New York Press. (Part 1: *The Necessity, Structure, and Priority of the Question of Being*,)

to the event, and the role of the subject in configuring the ontological situation, ultimately reintroduces a correlationist framework that has a subjectivist orientation. In other words, despite Badiou's efforts to escape the phenomenological framework, his own philosophy falls prey to a form of correlationism, where the subject's relationship to the being plays a central role in shaping our understanding of ontology.

The findings of this research suggest that Badiou's mathematical ontology, despite its ambition and scope, fails ultimately to provide an adequate account to reconcile the mathematical and ontological frameworks. However, Badiou's work remains a crucial touchstone for future research. There are attempts in the contemporary intellectual world, proposing more robust and non-correlationist ontology on the basis of alternative mathematical frameworks, such as category theory, non-standard analysis, topos theory and so on. Some philosophers, like Graham Harman, argue that non-correlationist ontologies can be developed through other means, such as speculative realism, which seeks to develop a realist ontology that rejects correlationism without relying on mathematics. Some researchers engage with recent developments in object-oriented philosophy, also associated with Graham Harman, focusing on the relations of objects and their properties, without necessarily relying on mathematical structures. Another direction of research is the one closely related to the process-oriented ontologies, inspired by philosophers like Alfred North Whitehead, that focus on becoming, relation, and event, rather than anchoring on mathematical structures. Some researchers, inspired by Merleau-Ponty, try to develop ontologies that priorize embodied experience and perception, without

relying on mathematical framework. Researchers adopting this phenomenological perspective, may not worry much about correlationism, as it perhaps assumes ontology is possible only as phenomenology. As a matter of fact, we have neither explored nor suggested any of these ways as alternatives. Our concern was just to study and explore the tensions of Badiou's linking of set theory and ontology, not to suggest any alternatives. Our critique of Badiou's correlationism does not in any way suggest that a genuine ontology should be free from correlationism. Our critical analysis was only meant to expose how the correlationist and the subject-oriented tendencies inherently problematize Badiou's system which originally promises a non-correlationist ontology.

However, this research has made it clear that the questions and problems at stake in the relationship between mathematics and ontology are far from settled. We assume our critique of Badiou opens up new avenues for inquiry and exploration, highlighting the need for further dialogue between mathematicians and philosophers, and scholars working in humanities. As we move forward, it is our hope that this research will contribute to a renewed conversation between mathematics and ontology, one that is characterized by a spirit of openness. By bringing together new insights and perspectives from multiple fields and disciplines, we may yet uncover new and innovative ways of thinking about the nature of reality, being and existence.

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