

The Possibility of the Possibility of Something New: The Subject and Fidelity to the Event in Love and Politics

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Abstract. Our chapter interrogates the conditions that give rise to the possibility of the Event and proposes a Lacanian-Badiouian perspective to think through conditions for the truth procedures of love and politics. First, we situate the Event, Possibility and Truth in both Badiou and Lacan, which brings forward conceptual tensions between truth and knowledge as presented in the psychoanalytic act. We propose with Badiou and Lacan that the emergence of possibility follows a logic that ruptures compulsive repetition and whose effect is precisely the Event which results in knowledge of a *savoir faire*, of transmissible quality, that grant re-inscription (a new writing of the necessary) and/or a partial inscription of the impossible. The notion of love as beyond narcissism, allows us to discuss how to reimagine politics anew, including approaching it through the problem of ecology.

Keywords: Badiou; Lacan; Fidelity to the Event; Love; Possibility.

[es] La Posibilidad de lo Nuevo: El sujeto y la fidelidad al acontecimiento en el amor y la política

Resumen. Nuestro capítulo interroga las condiciones que dan lugar a la posibilidad del Acontecimiento y propone una perspectiva lacaniano-badiouiana para pensar las condiciones de los procedimientos de verdad del amor y la política. En primer lugar, situamos el Acontecimiento, la Posibilidad y la Verdad tanto en Badiou como en Lacan, lo que pone de manifiesto las tensiones conceptuales entre verdad y conocimiento tal y como se presentan en el acto psicoanalítico. Proponemos con Badiou y Lacan que la emergencia de la posibilidad sigue una lógica que rompe la repetición compulsiva y cuyo efecto es precisamente el Acontecimiento que resulta en un saber hacer, de calidad transmisible, que otorga una reinscripción (una nueva escritura de lo necesario) y/o una inscripción parcial de lo imposible. La noción de amor como más allá del narcisismo, nos permite discutir cómo reimaginar de nuevo la política, incluso abordándola a través del problema de la ecología.

Palabras clave: Badiou; Lacan; la fidelidad al acontecimiento; amor; posibilidad.

Sumario. 1. Introduction. 2. The Event, Possibility and Truth in Badiou and Lacan. 3. Emergent Subjectivities in Badiou and Lacan. 4. On Love Beyond Narcissism: What's Love Got To Do With It? 5. Reimagining Politics, Affirming Desires. 6. Badiou and the Question of Ecology. 7. Bibliography.

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1. Introduction

Philosopher Alain Badiou has constructed a wholly unique framing of the Event and its possible consequences in the domain of truth procedures that he identifies as politics, love, science and art. This article will focus on politics and love and the emergent Subject that comes to be as a result of fidelity to the Event. The Event is something that traverses the impossible. Badiou's ethics of truths has a relation to psychoanalysis and emerg-

es in relation to the logic of Jacques Lacan's theory of the psychoanalytic act, which renders the act as that which transforms the real through the symbolic injunction to not give up on your desire, a condition that Lacan calls an *erotica*. To traverse the impossible is to open up the possibility of the possibility of something new. The emergent new is also a consequence of love: "a sign that one is changing discourses"³.

Our article interrogates what conditions give rise to the possibility of the Event and proposes a Lacanian-Ba-

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³ J. Lacan, *The seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XX: Encore* (J. Miller, Ed., & B. Fink, Trans.), Norton (Original work published 1972-73/1999), p. 16.

diouian perspective to think through conditions for the truth procedures of love and politics. First, we situate the Event, Possibility and Truth in both Badiou and Lacan, which brings forward conceptual tensions between truth and knowledge as presented in the psychoanalytic act. We propose with Badiou and Lacan that the emergence of possibility follows a logic that rupture compulsive repetition and whose effect is precisely the Event which results in knowledge of a *savoir faire*, of transmissible quality, that grant re-inscription (a new writing of the necessary) and/or a partial inscription of the impossible. The notion of love as beyond narcissism, allows us to discuss how to reimagine politics anew, including approaching it through the problem of ecology.

Writing collaboratively, one of us as a scholar of Badiou's work and the other as a Lacanian scholar and psychoanalyst, we hope to parse through some of Lacan's influence on Badiou and other areas where there are departures. In this chapter we will discuss how the radical contingency of the Event works against the backdrop of the stubborn apparatus of language, whose main task is to keep repeating *ad infinitum*, what Freud called compulsive repetition.

Badiou deems Lacan as an anti-philosopher, alongside Wittgenstein and Nietzsche, but the psychoanalyst brings forth an immanence that exceeds "the primacy of meaning over truth -the anti-philosophical axiomatic"⁴. Both Badiou and Lacan go beyond the hermeneutics of meaning to indicate, as the analytic act shows, the impasses of truth, which is constituted by the impossibility of solving the *absence* of sense of human sexuality and the sexual non-relation. That is why, in particular, Badiou's unique definition of politics and of love as well as his concept of fidelity will be discussed, in relation to Lacan's psychoanalytic teaching. The historical crises of the present and the particular planetary moment continue to raise issues of what properly constitutes the political. We will examine Badiou's unique approach to the ecological question as an example in the field of politics.

By discussing the emergence of new subjectivities through fidelity to the Event, we aim to unveil the interconnection of their theories and their implications for understanding the complexities of present challenges. We intend to entangle their overlapping work and relevance to contemporary philosophical and psychoanalytic debates.

2. The Event, Possibility and Truth in Badiou and Lacan

How and when can a possibility be introduced in the current state of affairs? Late capitalism has been deemed as "capitalist realism"⁵ as if no future can be thought outside of this regime of catastrophic consequences. With Lacan and his discourse mathemes we learn that the material and the psychic real are determined by the way language takes over the speaking subject, repeat-

ing the same structures that hinder subjective and social life⁶. Badiou calls this the repetition of a finite tradition, a "natural organization of society...self-repeating... solely because of the overwhelming drive of their own nature"⁷.

In light of this repetitive curse, how can the possibility of something altogether new be positively asserted? And how does love have anything to do with it? To approach this daunting question, we first will discuss the notion of the possible, alongside the Lacanian concept of the act, which Badiou defines as "the «pass» of knowledge"⁸, which is on the side of impossibility rather than impotence. Then, we will contextualize how love appears as an effect of the act to subvert the structure and the constraining repetition of tradition.

Alain Badiou's philosophy is rooted in the transformative power of Events that overthrow established norms and structures of the world, propelling potentialities into the realm of necessity. These Events initiate what Badiou terms "truth procedures" that can occur in various domains, such as politics, love, science and art. Badiou's notion of possibility is intrinsically tied to fidelity to the Event. By committing to the consequences of these transformative occurrences, new avenues of understanding and political mobilization reshape the relationship between potentiality and actuality. For Badiou, truths are seized, and signify the move from logic to ontology. The particular singularity of a truth becomes universalizable.

Truth in Lacan refers to at least two connotations. In a Freudian fashion, the Lacanian truth is the sexual cause of a subject, support of the symptom, revealed in dreams, daydreaming and parapraxes and also linked to social discourse. In a Heideggerian fashion, the Lacanian truth is akin to *Aletheia*, as truth appears while hiding and thus can only be half-said (mit-dit)⁹. The later Lacan of the 1970's, without opposing this early perspective, assumes truth as a sort of historical linguistic branding of the body and its erotogenic zones that produce singular and repetitive ways of enjoyment. Through the concept of *lalangue*, Lacan refers to a certain embodied musicality acquired from "the somatic echoes of the said"¹⁰. *Lalangue* is truth, imprinted early on our bodies that both mortifies and vitalizes through the unconscious effects of language insisting on the subject's flesh.

The truth of *lalangue* in Lacan is linked to an invocatory drive that insists on repeating a code which the subject is summoned to listen to and respond with enjoyment. This is the phenomenon that Lacan rendered as *jouissance*, taken from Freud's beyond pleasure principle, and which refers to an enigmatic pleasure that because of its morbidity the subject struggles to recognize

⁴ A. Badiou, *Lacan, Antiphilosophy 3* (K. Reinhard & S. Spitzer, Trans.). New York, Columbia University Press, 2018, p. 75.

⁵ M. Fisher, "The privatisation of stress", *Soundings*, 48, pp. 123-133, 2011.

⁶ J. Lacan, *The seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XVII: The other side of psychoanalysis* (R. Grigg, Trans.), Norton, 2007 (Original work published 1969-70).

⁷ A. Badiou, *Immanence of Truths*, London, Bloomsbury Press, 2022, p. 123.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 20.

¹⁰ J. Lacan, (1974-1975) *The seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XXII: RSI* (C. Gallagher, Trans.). http://www.lacanireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/RSI-Complete-With-Diagrams.pdf_session_18.11.1975

it as such. There is a radical submission to the truth of *jouissance*, as in the *j'ouï sense* (I hear a sense). Such produced *jouissance* however does not have much of a sense indeed, as it relates to the impossibility of understanding the subject's sexuality, and furthermore to write the impossibility of the sexual non-relation, that is to say, that a subject is alone in their sexual enjoyment.

The analytical act aims to upset the insistence of a given truth and reconstitute it through the act, for which Badiou indicates that in Lacan there is a "destitution of truth in favour of knowledge"¹¹. Truth is reconstituted through the production of a singular knowledge about the truth that had marked the subject's body. Within the branded way of enjoying, constraints imposed to the subject by lineage and culture, the subject generates a liberating knowledge as *savoir faire* rather than *connaissance*¹². Knowledge as *savoir faire* is the form of knowledge operative in psychoanalysis, rather than *connaissance*, which refers to meaning, representation or cumulative information. Through the analytic act the subject emerges while finding an ability to confront the Other's *jouissance* within themselves, which allow the subject to elucidate a know-how to deal with the painful enjoyment that lacks lexicon, which Lacan relates to episteme or "transmissible knowledge"¹³. Such knowledge of the subject's sexuality is knotted by the *sinthome*, a specific form of singular knowledge that permits the subject's nomination beyond the symptom. Such a mechanism is always an effect of an act. Psychoanalysis produces subjects through the act, subjectivity is the effect of an Evental nature.

To understand the possibility of the Event, Jacques Lacan's modal logic adds further dimensions. Following the logical categories posed by Aristotle, Lacan proposes the necessary, the impossible, the possible and the contingent¹⁴. The *necessary* refers to that which "doesn't stop being written" (*ne cesse pas de s'écrire*)¹⁵ and thus is linked to the repetition at the core of language that supports discourse. The *impossible* refers to that which "does not stop not being written" (*ne cesse pas de ne pas s'écrire*)¹⁶. The field of impossibility refers to our inability to write the human sexual non-relation, which is impossible by the fact that a couple could never be One, but rather two, one plus one. The *possible* is a disruption that opens space for "the creation of a possibility of a truth procedure"¹⁷ and that reveals "a possibility that was invisible or even unthinkable"¹⁸. Possibility is of fragile nature, it is there to be grasped by a desirous subject, who an erotic act indeed that requires an audacious subject to act on their desire beyond fear and doubt.

The rupture that possibility constitutes opens up opportunities for a partial inscription of that which can't be written (the impossible) and/or a re-inscription, which is

a new form of the already written (the necessary). That is how the analytic act creates possibilities as the analyst intervenes to disrupt preordained significations. Finally, the *contingent* refers to the decidability of an Event, rendered by Badiou as an already underway "truth procedure"¹⁹ which generates an unsuspected and transmissible knowledge that assigns a different value to truth. This mechanism either partially halts what "does not stop being written" or creates a new writing of the necessary. The subject finds a new truth and generates new knowledge through the analytic act and the contingent gives rise to what Badiou calls unsuspected knowledge, which changes the epistemic locus from what was once a supposition attached to the analyst, as the transferential mechanism works within the logic of the subject that is supposed to know, to the subject's auspicious new know-how. This is the subject's newly found *response ability*²⁰ and moreover is transmissible. For Badiou, his broader materialist philosophical intervention is meant to destroy the transcendent immanence of Aristotle and Kant.

The contingent introduces unpredictability and chance, disrupting conventional trajectories. In this context, possibility is not merely an outcome of the probable, but rather a rupture of expected outcomes. This aligns with Badiou's concept of Events as transformative occurrences that open unforeseen possibilities and necessitate commitment to their consequences.

The Event is prefigured in the psychoanalytic act, so retroactively bends both the symbolic structure of discourse and the real relations that it has produced. An analysis is a delicate process, an enduring task within the analytic dispositive that focuses on generating subjective possibilities that disrupt the rigid compulsive repetition. By engaging the analysand in free association, the analyst conducts a process that inquires the valences of the fantasmatic but real truths that sustain the symptom. When the Evental disruption occurs, either with fierce violence or exquisite subtleness, a subject crosses a threshold, boldly grasps a possibility, emerging itself as a result of having upset the stubborn apparatus of language, consequently renewing truth with a new knowledge.

For Badiou, truth is not some limited form of judgment, but it is a materially constructed labour – part of a process of creation – both an act and a process. Truth must be submitted to thought as a process rather than simply be a judgment. Truth is a relationship to happening. Truth, appearing in its newness, fundamentally interrupts repetition. The organization of the consequences of an Event are part of a finite verification towards an infinite truth. The truth is a process of measuring what our times are capable of and creating the roadmap of the impossible to the possible, or, at the very least, a new boundary and locus between them. Something definitively shifts at the level of being that transforms a Being into a Subject. As Bruno Bosteels writes, for Badiou,

¹¹ A. Badiou, *Philosophy and Event*, (with Fabian Tarby), trans. Louise Burchill, London, Polity, 2013, p. 23.

¹² J. Lacan, *The seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XVII, op. cit.*, p. 21.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 22.

¹⁴ J. Lacan, *The seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XX, op. cit.*, p. 59.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 94.

¹⁶ *Idem*.

¹⁷ A. Badiou, *Philosophy and Event, op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

²⁰ H. Fernandez-Alvarez, Mapping the discursive spaces of trauma and healing in mental health: The institutional unconscious, 2022, Doctoral thesis SFU. <https://summit.sfu.ca/item/35729>

“truth is first of all a process or a labour, rather than an act of revelation or a propositional attribute...the practice of philosophy...amount[s] to thinking the truths of one’s time, truths that have occurred before the arrival of the philosopher on the scene of the event”²¹.

Badiou defines philosophy as inextricably linked to truth:

that singular discipline of thought has [as] its departure point the conviction that there are truths. From there, it is led towards an imperative, a vision of life... that which grants them a genuine life and orients their existence, is the participation within these truths...it starts off from life...and ends up at life²².

But Badiou finds Lacan’s anti-philosophy precisely at the hinge of truth and knowledge, as truth is that which is an absence of sexual meaning, as Badiou explains here:

Lacanian antiphilosophy is not, then, a new version of an existential act that reveals sense to us –regardless of whether the sense is silent or sayable– and establishes its radical primacy over the limited and abstract space of truth. It is the act’s keeping at bay the simple confrontation of sense and truth, in favor of the space of ab-sense or ab-sex-sense, which can only be tested in terms of knowledge²³.

For Badiou, it is better to have a disaster than a lack of Being, similar to what in analysis is better to have unconscious disruptions (errors, dreams, even crisis) than stagnation of meaning, even if the subject defends against it. Even when the subject prefers not to experience a rupture, a disruption is a condition for the logical possibility to emerge. When the possibility of the rupture appears, the subject can re-signify the necessary and/or introduce a new writing.

When we are seized by an Event, something of the real in our subjective situation is irrevocably disrupted. For Badiou, the movement from Being to Subject happens as a result of an Event in science, politics, art and love. Badiou’s idea of truth is influenced by Lacan in the sense that it comes after the Event.

As Badiou’s theory of the event is based on the structural and logical model of the analytic act, it excludes any a priori formulaic or programmatic prescription of meaning or strategy, as such, the act can only be known in the perfect future tense, “it will have been”. Nonetheless, that retroactive quality of the act/event asserts simultaneously a transmissible knowledge of a certain impasse that took place in the act.

Possibility can be present at every moment, the analyst patiently waits to signal equivocation and polyphony in what the subject says. In clinical practice a person’s speech itself constitutes a possibility, at certain turns of their saying, for example, when someone within transference has a slip of a tongue and turns the

word success into *sexcess*, allowing a glance into the potentiality of their desire. Or someone might find in the analyst’s responses a way of accessing an affect of inexplicable nature that potentially might constitute an inaugural moment of knowledge. But the procedure of analysis cannot be replicated in the socio-political field because there is a differentiation of both dispositive and scale. Psychoanalysis, on the one hand, is different from the political field, in that it offers a setting of inquiry within a calculated, although always uncertain, procedure, what Lacan called the direction of the treatment. On the other hand, psychoanalysis works in the scale of the one subject, not of the collectivity, even when the clinical practice gives indications of how the *zeitgeist* produces certain types of subjectivities.

In light of this differentiation however, the fact that “the unconscious is structured like a language”²⁴ indicates that the upsetting of the structure of language follows the same logical principles in both the scales of the subject and the socio-political scale. In the latter, possibility sleeps at every corner, in the repeated discontent of a group of workers or in the joyful intensity of a group of teenagers looking for an idea to add meaning to their lives. But the event awakens only when the possibility is grasped and its fate is defined by that which became contingent, because it is in this last logical notion that possibility becomes, their values get decided as a consequence of turning the possibility into an act. That is why Lacan worked on this logic to articulate the need of moving contingency to necessity to create a suspension to which love is attached.

3. Emergent Subjectivities in Badiou and Lacan

The emergent subjectivities that arise from fidelity to transformative events carry profound implications. Badiou’s call for an event’s consequences transcends individual transformations, extending its reach to societal structures and dynamics and many other revolutionary potencies. As individuals engage in truth procedures, the collective’s potential disruptive impact reverberates through society, challenging hegemonic norms and power structures to overtake them completely through fundamental ruptures.

The subject for Lacan is the subject of desire who asserts a different way of doing with the enjoyment he/she has been programmed to repeat. Lacan defines the subject as determined by the materiality of a signifier because “a signifier is that which represents the subject for another signifier”²⁵. In this symbolic dimension, speech is split between the statement (*énoncé*) –the grammatical “I” that shows the signifier that represents the subject–, and the enunciation (*énonciation*) which is the unconscious “I” that indeed produces a subject who emerges because of the speech act²⁶. Psychoanalysis works with the Cartesian subject that doubts and asserts

²¹ B. Bosteels, *Alain Badiou: Key Concepts*, Ed. A.J. Bartlett and Jason Clemens, Durham, Acumen Publishing, 2010, p. 143.

²² A. Badiou, *Philosophy and Event*, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 81.

²⁴ J. Lacan, *The seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII: The ethics of psychoanalysis* (J. A. Miller, Ed., & D. Porter, Trans.), Norton, 1992 (Original work published 1959–60), p. 20.

²⁵ J. Lacan, *The seminar of Jacques Lacan*, 1964/1998, p. 207.

²⁶ J. Lacan, *Ecrits* (B. Fink, Trans.), 2006, pp. 677 y 730.

itself through reason, yet psychoanalysis also subverts such a subject with a transmissible method that recovers unconscious knowledge.

A subject of the unconscious stands on the side of desire, not on the side of self-objectifying jouissance, which entails submission to the oppressive preconditions of the Other's linguistic code. The subject of desire emerges within the psychoanalytic act to commit to the truth of that which has been written for him, yet her/his act directs this insistent truth towards desire, rather than the programmed enjoyment, that is to say directs the drive towards life rather than towards death.

Badiou's notion of affirmative dialectics introduces a novel shift in contemporary dialectical politics that carve out a space differentiated from Hegel, Marx and Adorno's Negative Dialectics²⁷. By beginning with an affirmative construction as part of maintaining fidelity to transformative events, he challenges the negative subjectivity that often characterizes progressive politics. This approach calls for envisioning new possibilities that transcend reactive subjectivities, opening the door to radical transformative potential. The process of imagining, affirming and committing to these possibilities nurtures the emergence of new subjectivities characterized by their fidelities. For Badiou, there must be an affirmation of the positive before the negation. It is not that negation does not exist, but that we must construct with less negation than before. Negation should come to be as "the consequences of the birth of the new subjectivity, and not the other way around; it is not the new subjectivity that is the consequence of the negation"²⁸.

As Badiou writes in the *Communist Hypothesis*:

When the world is violently enchanted by the absolute conditions of a paradox of being, the whole of the domain of appearing, threatened with the local destruction of a customary evaluation, must come again to constitute a different distribution of what exists and what does not... under the eruption being exerts on its own appearing, nothing in the world can come to pass except the possibility –mingling existence and destruction– of another world²⁹.

This *other world* necessitates to be conquered by love, by politics, by art, by science. But it cannot be sutured to each of these procedures or it becomes a disaster for philosophy.

4. On Love Beyond Narcissism: What's Love Got To Do With It?

Love, or so Badiou explains, is an emergence of an Event, the emergence of the "scene of the two"³⁰, rather than one. In Lacan, although a theory of love is absent, he approaches this topic to clarify the analytic operation required in the phenomenon of transference, which

aims to transform the position of the subject with regards to love. Lacan retakes Plato's Symposium to indicate the two figures of love: the one who demands love passionately, the *eromenos* (the beloved) and the other who sustain the loving labour, the *erastes* (the lover). The beloved is identical to the want-to-be loved, as each of us want to be loved always for whatever we do. Such demand is incommensurable and obstinate, overwhelming for the other and frustrating for whomever expresses it. That is why the procedure of analysis aims to transform the analysand's position on love: from *eromenos* to *erastes*.

What type of love is possible in society? Love, says Badiou, "begins where politics ends"³¹. This statement is crucial for us to understand how the scene of the two of love operates within collectivity. If love emerges after the contingent has grabbed the possibility and made it a necessity, how can we make a possibility turn into love in the socio-political context?

Badiou, too, delves into the realm of love as a truth procedure. He defines love as an Event, a transformative encounter that shatters routines and brings forth a novel understanding of transformative subjectivity. Love, for Badiou, is not the superficial, capitalist romanticism often depicted in popular culture. Instead, it emerges as fidelity to an Event, a commitment to exploring the contours of a new possibility. The fidelity to the event of love refers to the radical commitment someone has to engage in this truth procedure, and support the contingency to make it a necessity, to fight obstinately against separation.

Badiou situates crucial concepts to understand this truth procedure, love as that which is infinite rather than finite, that which opens a set rather than closes it, and one that works towards difference. Moreover, Badiou also indicates how desire is essential in love, different from friendship or fondness.

To explain the differences between love and politics, Badiou summarizes it in this way:

Politics goes, then, from diversity to the same, whereas love consists, on the contrary, in constructing a difference that is accepted as a unique path. Politics goes from difference to the same, love introduces difference into the same³².

This seems to connect well with Lacan's exploration of love, which must transcend mere narcissism and superficial infatuation; it goes beyond the Freudian threshold of love as narcissism. Although Lacan recognizes the Imaginary nature of love –narcissistic infatuation that traps oneself in the other as a desired object– the love Lacan proposes is aimed at the *being in the Other*, not as object (sexual intercourse and the enjoyment of the Other), God (transcendence), or absolute being (ontology), but as love between subjects, which tries to inscribe something of the impossible traumatic sexual non-relation by means of a certain "courage with respect to this fatal destiny [of its own impossibility]"³³.

²⁷ A. Badiou, "Affirmative Dialectics: From Logic to Anthropology", *International Journal of Badiou Studies* 2.1, 4. 2013.

²⁸ *Idem*.

²⁹ A. Badiou. *The Communist Hypothesis*, trans. David Macey and Steve Corcoran, London, Verso, 2010, p. 227.

³⁰ A. Badiou, *Philosophy and Event*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

³¹ *Idem*.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 41.

³³ J. Lacan, *The seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XX*, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

Lacan's focus on the symbolic dimension of love emphasizes its emergence as a consequence of emptying an image that imprisoned the subject within a prescriptive enjoyment. For Lacan genuine love entails recognizing the other as a subject rather than an object of desire, which tramples the ego's capture and engenders difference. Love, for both Lacan and Badiou works within the process of sexualization, of the unwritable definition of what radically means to be a man or to be a woman, fostering a relationship that navigates the tension between the desire for unity and the recognition of difference. The recognition of another subject in love also involves ambivalence and demands acknowledging the complex interplay of love and hate, or what Lacan called *Hainamouration*³⁴. The Lacanian concept of love is also a propitious response, a know-how to do with lack and impossibility.

But love can only be found and not sought. The dialectic of the clinic shows how such an event, virtually desired by each analysand, occurs contingently as a consequence of letting the fantasmatic image of oneself emptied, and positioning outside the rigid constrictions of the apparatus of language that has insisted with a certain truth. When love emerges it opens the subject to vulnerability because there's no certainty but doubt about whether it will remain, whether the other or oneself will be able to be faithful to the joyful encounter of love. Love is so precious in part because of its threat of ending, the fear of losing it.

The horizon of love then is commanded by the subject's desire and nourished by the drive and consists in a fidelity to the consequences of the perilous and dehiscent amorous event - desire for love's sake.

5. Reimagining Politics, Affirming Desires

In his public address following the 2015 attacks in Paris, Badiou argues about the dangers posed by unadulterated trauma and affect. Trauma by definition is a hole in the symbolic order that prevents symbolization, it hits the body with intensities. Badiou discusses what he calls the domination of the sensible and the reinforcing of identitarian drives. He draws a distinction between the logic of justice and the logic of vengeance³⁵.

The political project of transcending reactive subjectivities is what is at stake today given the multiple crises of the world. The link between nihilism and contemporary fascism is clear. Badiou talks about three main forms of subjectivity: 1) the capitalist West, 2) the desire for the West 3) Nihilism. Within psychoanalysis, our zeitgeist has produced certain subjectivities that manifest in the clinic. Since the time of Lacan's teaching, subjectivities are marked by a decline in the symbolic function of the Name-of-the-Father, and this has been

named in different ways, such as Freud's actual neurosis³⁶, ordinary psychosis³⁷, or through the symbolically challenged presentations of psychosomatic disorders and addictions. In a rough generalization, the current presentations of subjectivity, an effect of the embodiment of late capitalism, reflect the inability of the subject to rely on symbolic means to regulate enjoyment, thus producing increasingly atomized and autoerotic ways to regulate anxiety and suffering, rather than by forming social bonds.

How can these subjective symptoms of the present be overthrown within a sociopolitical project? For Badiou, the realization of a political project ought to be shaped by an affirmative dialectics, it involves something like a new logic³⁸. He cites negativity as one of the root causes of the failure of progressive politics. The process of negation is often the primary part of the dialectical process. Badiou's proposition to disrupt the relation between affirmative and negative dialectics is novel. For this to happen, an Event is necessary. The possibility of the possibility of something new and maintaining fidelity to its consequences is how a new subject comes to be. The affirmation of this new subjectivity is the first move. Badiou calls this affirmation and division, rather than a dialectical process beginning with negation.

Affirmative dialectic differs substantially in Lacan. In analysis, the dialectical process works under the negativity in the first place, because the unconscious and the real are elements of fantasmatic nature yet with material effects. The real and the unconscious appears in principle as negativity. However, the analytic process sustains back and forth affirmations and negations. When the subject affirms the truths that have thus far enslaved them, the analyst introduces a negation, which hopes to create a new truth thanks to a reversal dialectic, as Lacan instantiates with Freud's case of Dora³⁹. In other instances, when the subject negates their value, their possibilities or new horizons, the analyst intervenes to create an open space for the subject to affirm themselves. But it is the subject who must affirm themselves, as no one else can do it for them. In the clinic and a level of the subject, the event or subjective act emerges out of doubt and anxiety and often, but not always, emerges in a rupture that is of a potential conflicting nature due to the fact that something negative emerged, something that opposes the ego, the image of self and the hegemonic enjoyment. Nonetheless, the event/act is where the subject, unbeknownst perhaps to themselves, appears and establishes a decision on the specific value of truth, it reconstitutes truth via an event that is always discursive and social.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 146.

³⁵ Originally delivered as a public talk at *La Commune Theatre*, Aubervilliers, on November 23, 2015. Cf. A. Badiou, *Our Wound is Not So Recent: Thinking the Paris Killings of 2015*, London, Polity Press, 2016.

³⁶ P. Verhaeghe, *On being normal and other disorders: A manual for clinical psychodiagnostics* (S. Jottkandt, Trans.), Karnac, 2004, p. 290; P. Verhaeghe, & S. Vanheule, "Actual neurosis and PTSD: The impact of the Other", *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 22(4), 2005, pp. 493-507, p. 493.

³⁷ J.A. Miller, "Ordinary psychosis revisited", *Psychoanalytical Notebooks*, no 19., 2008, p. 146.

³⁸ Cf. this article by A. Badiou: <https://badioustudies.files.wordpress.com/2016/11/alain-badiou-affirmative-dialectics-from-logic-to-anthropology-pp-1-13.pdf>, also, his lecture of the same name: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wczfXVYbxg>

³⁹ J. Lacan, *Ecrits*, op. cit., p. 176.

An act nominates a subject through an acquired certainty: “all human activity opens out onto certainty ... certainty’s reference point is essentially action”⁴⁰. Such assertion or affirmation is not the starting point but rather the consequence, as opposed to Badiou’s articulation of affirmative dialectics.

Lacan proposes three logical moments crucial to understanding the temporality of the act that engenders a subject: the *instant of the glance*, the *time for comprehending*, and the *moment to conclude*⁴¹. Lacan affords us a logical consideration to contextualize what trajectory is necessary to reach a conclusion. The *instant of the glance* is a fulguration of time, a moment of an instantaneous acknowledgement of evidence). The *time for comprehending*, corresponds to moments of meditation, intuition, the creation of a causal hypothesis and of doubt, and the *moment to conclude* refers to a self-assertion, in which the subject makes a judgment that ends in an action that moves towards a conclusion, even if the consequences can’t be known.

These logical times are useful in thinking about the procedure that reaches the conclusion of subjective assertion, and Lacan indicate two preconditions: *first*, the subject must *act* by overcoming infinite doubts, trusting in the verifications that they could afford to emerge as a subject, retroactively signifying the previous two temporalities, “perhaps incorrectly, perhaps correctly”⁴². And *second*, in their acts, the subject never acts *ex nihilo*, because even if the acts and the consequences are carried out by the subject alone, “no one can get there but by means of the others”⁴³.

Badiou’s affirmative logic is rightfully different and this is because the heuristic strategies differ in both scales, subject and socio-political involved often divergent approaches. Badiou explains:

I think the problem today is to find a way of reversing the classical dialectical logic inside itself so that the affirmation, or the positive proposition, comes before the negation instead of after it. In some sense, my attempt is to find a dialectical framework where something or the future comes before the negative present. I’m not suggesting the suppression of the relation between affirmation and negation—certainly revolt and class struggle remain essential—and I’m not suggesting a pacifistic direction or anything like that⁴⁴.

Affirming dialectics within the political field is crucial, because starting from the wound, from the traumatic can serve mostly as a reinforcement of the same. Affirmation, however, invariably poses the problem of how this necessary affirmation can preserve its subjectivity and not get assimilated into group mentality, the

imaginary sameness that exerts a powerful pull in the human subject.

Subjectively speaking, the act is a form of nomination, different from the failed attempts, such as acting out or *passage à l’acte*. Acting out, is a demonstration and a pledge to the Other that occurs in “wild transference”⁴⁵, and thus requires interpretation. *Passage à l’acte* refers to an action in which the subject identifies absolutely with object a, and in great embarrassment lets themselves be dropped, outing their subjectivity. A desirous act is the only way in which subjectivity appears and sustains themselves because it produces a Subject who discovers in the act something of the Real, the impossible universal truth of the drive: death and eros.

The Evental act is opaque to the subject, who emerges from it and only signifies retroactively. Through a desirous act, the Subject and their community retroactively signify a structural shift. But both scales of the subject and the sociopolitical require a level of transference to inscribe the event⁴⁶, since only among others deemed able to hold some knowledge can the dialectization of the negative or non-identity become possible.

Re-inscription and inscription are both contingencies immanently connected to the Event. Re-inscription is mostly of a Symbolic order but impacts the Real *qua* structure, while inscription refers to something of the Real, *qua* impossible, that lets the subject write a letter missed or lost so far⁴⁷. At the Subject level, re-inscription is the individual’s pronouncement of the truth of the language that inhabits them, whose signification up to now has caused oppression for themselves or others. In re-inscription, the Subject decides on the direction of the signification that has represented them and retroactively loses something: the phallic image that sustains the signification of lack and excess. In re-inscription, the analyst has perhaps called out the signifier’s polyphony, disturbing the signifier enciphered in the subject’s body through their lineage and their social milieu that has so far represented them. Yet it is not the analyst who makes any pronouncements on behalf of the subject; the subject must respond with an assumption of the truth of that which *does not cease being written* to reposition themselves in the social by an ethical authorization of themselves.

In contrast to re-inscription, inscription emerges from the Real when the letter is grasped by the Subject, who was able to make a signifier or an act from it. The letter needs to be written because it stands alone, meaninglessly, is merely littoral between the seashore of knowledge, on one side, and the sea of the truth of jouissance, on the other.

Inscription and re-inscription need to be heard by a community, a collectivity able to maintain fidelity to the Event⁴⁸. When a political Event undresses a negative truth, only a resolute body politic can choose to get organized around it. To build out an affirmative political project, we cannot begin from the place of lack as it will be too deter-

⁴⁰ J. Lacan, *The seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book X: Anxiety* (J. A. Miller, Ed., & A. R. Price, Trans.), Polity, 2014 (Original work published 1962–63), p. 77.

⁴¹ J. Lacan, *Ecrits*, op. cit., p. 167.

⁴² *Ibidem*, 172.

⁴³ *Idem*.

⁴⁴ A. Badiou, “Affirmative Dialectics”, <https://badioustudies.files.wordpress.com/2016/11/alain-badiou-affirmative-dialectics-from-logic-to-anthropology-pp-1-13.pdf>, 3.

⁴⁵ J. Lacan, *The seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book X*, op. cit., p. 125.

⁴⁶ H. Fernandez-Alvarez, *Mapping the discursive spaces...*, op. cit., p. 331.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, 327.

⁴⁸ A. Badiou, *Philosophy and Event*, op. cit., p. 13.

mined by the trauma and the wound. Different from the analytic setting, the act cannot start from the traumatic wound that absorbs everything, but rather, emerges in the logical modality that allows a collectivity to enthusiastically affirm a dialectized desire.

Badiou draws a distinction between true democracy and false democracy –particularly, false democracy and its relationship to the state in the common ideology. For Badiou, the prevailing order of state democracy stifles genuine transformative potential for it determines what is possible. By succumbing to the general orientation towards order, complacency forecloses the possibility of alternative futures connected to equality. The Evental rupture is that which allows for a new subjectivity and the possibility of the possibility of something new.

Genuine novelty arises from periodic eruptions, which are rare, to challenge the prevailing laws and order. It is only through a subject's fidelity to the Event can a subjective possibility come into being and consequences of its truths be revealed. By imagining new possibilities and retaining fidelity to the Event, transformative possibilities emerge through intense commitments.

The current wave of neo-authoritarianism is the reactionary response to an Old World dying and reinforces what Badiou calls the pantomime of parliamentary democracy. Modi, Trump, Erdogan, Macron, Meloni, Netanyahu, Putin and so on - the list gets longer. The State itself is under crisis because it cannot maintain the patina of order that it once did.

To think beyond the nation-state is both a demand and a responsibility to make universal a set of rights not beholden to a particular place or the accident of birth.

What is the political in Lacan that Badiou highlights and surfaces? Psychoanalysis reveals a paradoxical element with regards to the act in the political realm: it lightens the intertwinement with others, conceived of as alienating, and poses the risks of servitude and repression when engaged in group mentality. Yet, it also shows that we are radically co-produced in *extimacy* with others, a concept that refers to an "intimate exteriority"⁴⁹ at the core of human subjectivity and that interconnects the loci of subject and Other, entwined in a Moebius band-like topology. Therefore our image, enjoyment, desire and love always involve others and there is a constant tension between alienation and separation to advance any concerted act of political efficacy to improve the lived experience of the many.

For Badiou, true democracy emerges from fidelity to the Event and the creation of an outside. This commitment to transformation invites us to reimagine relationships, equality, power structures, the limitations of the state in the political field of vision in ways that open up true political possibility.

6. Badiou and the Question of Ecology

Central to Badiou's philosophy on ecology is his interrogation of the repetition of the capitalist system and its various forms of destruction. For Badiou, ecology is not the first problem, but the consequences of the primary problem of

capitalist development and human domination over other humans. Badiou identifies this capitalist and colonial orientation as a relentless drive for accumulation that destroys everything in its path. Just as the repetition of the capitalist system stifles genuine novelty and transformative potential, centering equality in any political project is crucial to solving any ecological impasse. The systemic repetitions of the capitalist world as it is, functioning within the dialectic of tradition and change, must be fundamentally disrupted. The existential challenge of the ecological question is embedded within the Subject itself, as it involves reevaluating the fundamental relationship between humanity and the natural world, but must be adjudicated within the human animal itself as the primary driver of the crisis. In this sense, we must come back to Plato's foundation question –what is it to live? We must ask this question to move beyond the repetitions of the common ideology of the world as it is and what potentially exists outside it.

Badiou's philosophical approach emphasizes the internal organization of the subject and the return to a new repetition built from an affirmative dialectic. Central to his investigation is the dialectical relationship between courage and anxiety. The repetition of the natural world is a change on the side of tradition.

For Badiou, the concept of the trace is important in terms of what it authorizes in the realm of consequences. Examining the potential for politics to be thought within Badiou's framework, the distinction between an Event and its simulacra becomes crucial. Post-evental fidelity is what upholds truths, or any semblance of an orientation towards justice and equality.

The Event represents a point where the normal laws of the world are suspended, leading to the emergence of new possibilities. An Event is situated at the boundary between different parts of a situation, defying easy categorization or recognition.

Badiou's exploration of political events centers on the boundary between the state and subjective situation of individuals. He argues that the power of the state derives from its attempt to formalize the lives of the people with their true lives. Political events, in Badiou's categorization, arise when people assert their right to a life beyond the comprehension of the state's formalization. This assertion involves affirming a conception of life that resists reduction to existing norms and paradigms.

Badiou's approach to ecology offers a philosophical framework for critically interrogate the domination of human over human in the capitalist world as it is, the question embedded inside the ecological problem today. The ecological problem is not technological or merely scientific, but is a problem of the human collective where the possibility of an outside will be determined by collective action.

Badiou has not written or lectured widely on ecology, but his work on militant political change is highly relevant to the ecological questions we face today. The human animal is dependent on Nature, but Nature does not require the human animal. Badiou calls for the invention of a new modern tradition to think through what is at stake with the question of ecology. Yet, if we approach the planetary crisis with a Lacanian lens, we find strong Marxist echoes

⁴⁹ J. Lacan, *The seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII, op. cit.*, p. 139.

as the massive historical crisis of the present is indeed a consequence of human's surplus *jouissance* which is structurally identical to the mechanism of surplus value. We consume and enjoy without end, until we find desire and a concomitant act that might leave the hole of politics open, as Badiou expressed in his work on Lacan⁵⁰.

Badiou has also answered skeptically to ecological questions as asking the wrong question and misunderstanding what is politically at stake. In an interview with Oliver Feltham, Badiou states:

Let's start by stating that after "rights of man", the rise of the "the rights of Nature" is a contemporary form of the opium of the people. It is an only slightly camouflaged religion: the millenarian terror, concern for everything save the properly political destiny of peoples, new instruments for the control of everyday life, the fear of death of catastrophes... It is a gigantic operation in the depoliticization of subjects... Nature is therefore in no way a norm situated above humanity. We will inevitably make decisions according to the diversity of our interests. Ecology solely concerns me inasmuch as it can be proven that it is an intrinsic dimension of the politics of the emancipation of humanity. For the moment, I do not see such proof⁵¹.

What is needed is a dialectical tradition that consists of both change, but also a new continuity and repetition to move beyond the exhaustions of the present and continue the existence of the collective. It is a struggle, as Badiou articulates, "...to organize inside the subject the struggle against false change, or bad change. And it is to organize in the subject the return to the good repetition, or the good life inside the repetition"⁵². Such repetition, if we follow Lacan, requires that the spaces of lack and loss are left emptied, that philosophy or critique do not plug the hole of politics, precisely to be able to host desire. The subject struggles perpetually with stuffing itself and its environment.

The ethics of psychoanalysis, as proposed by Lacan, consists in a certain acceptance of the generational *ate* (ruin, unhappiness), yet precisely for having broken a fantasy, the subject emerges determined in a desire to confront the reality of the human condition. In such a procedure, the subject generates the knowledge of the domain and level of the experience of absolute disarray⁵³. There is a gap between action and desire: will it be the triumph of death, as in *Me Phynai*, "rather not to be?" Or will it be the radical acceptance of desire, upsetting programs, codes and traditions, assuming the tragicomedy of life, the triumph of life as it flies? The ethical judgment, "have you acted in conformity with the desire that is in you?"

⁵⁰ A. Badiou, *Philosophy and Event*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁵¹ O. Feltham, *Alain Badiou: Live Theory*, London, Continuum, 2008, p. 139.

⁵² A. Badiou, *The Subject of Change: Lessons from the European Graduate School*, ed. Duane Rousselle, New York, Atropos Press, 2013, p. 3. N.B. Author's Note by Alain Badiou: "This text... reflects an oral contribution, with degree of improvisation, and does not correspond to any text... Consequently any use or quotation of this text will have to be accompanied with a precise indication of its origin, so that nobody could think I have either written or proof-read it".

⁵³ J. Lacan, *The seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII: The ethics of psychoanalysis* (J. A. Miller, Ed., & D. Porter, Trans.), Norton, 1992 (Original work published 1959-60), p. 320.

persists more than ever. Lacan teaches that guilt occurs as a result of giving ground relative to one's desire. Can we afford to pay the price for our desire? To satisfy desire one pays with *jouissance*, or so Lacan says, with a pound of flesh. We must empty the fantasmatic object and the erotogenic holes to open to the possibility of the possibility of something new.

Badiou contrasts this idea with a different vision. He argues:

Ultimately life is the wager, made on a body that has entered into appearing, that one will faithfully entrust this body with a new temporality; keeping at a distance the conservative drive (the ill named "life" instinct) as well as the mortifying drive (the death instinct). Life is what gets the better of the drives... Because it prevails over the drives, life engages in the sequential creation of the present, and this creation both constitutes and absorbs a new type of past⁵⁴.

Inside the ecological question is a new conception of death for Badiou. The possibility of death of humankind and living species and the natural world, but also the idea that humans can destroy other species, the natural world and one another.

To think through existential ecological dilemmas that are confounding the present world, Badiou's philosophical schema presents underappreciated frameworks to get at the right questions at stake today. Inspired by Badiou's work, the term *Ecological Metapolitics*, attempts to incorporate existential ecological questions with Badiou's conception of the Event.

The philosophical dialogues and influence of Lacan on Badiou offers intricate frameworks for understanding the dynamics of possibility, the act, love and politics. Their theories illuminate the complexities of contemporary existence materially, inviting us to rethink traditional paradigms and embrace the fidelity to transformative Events that extend beyond the narcissism of individual suffering, shaping emergent subjectivities that function on a political terrain attempting to form truths outside the paradigms of the State. By engaging with Lacan's work, Badiou recovers what is politically operative and potent in Lacan. By engaging with both Badiou and Lacan, we gain insights into the intricate interplay between fidelity to the Event, emergent subjectivities, and the potency for radical change. Truth, equality and politics have a direct relation with one another. The Evental eruption in politics and love allows for promiscuous alliances, new political interventions and the intermingling of new material formations.

In a world shaped by crises, the philosophies of Badiou and Lacan offer lenses through which to interrogate the phenomena of love and politics and their consequences. Their ideas prompt us to reconsider traditional paradigms and envision new subjectivities emerging from fidelity to transformative Events. The commitment to an Event's consequences not only reshapes individual subjectivities but also carries broader implications in terms of the consequence of a love encounter or a political rupture.

⁵⁴ A. Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, trans. Alberto Toscano, London, Bloomsbury, 2019, p. 509.

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