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The Quick and the Dead: Alain Badiou and the Split Speeds of Transformation

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In *Being and Event*, Alain Badiou links his theory of the event to the thesis that “there is some newness in being.” (Badiou 2005a: 209) And, in a recently published interview, entitled “Can Change be Thought?,” he declares that all of his philosophical endeavors are ultimately animated by a desire to theorize how it’s possible for novelty to surface within situations. (Bosteels 2002:205) He explains himself thus:

Really, in the end, I have only one question: what is the new in a situation? My unique philosophical question, I would say, is the following: can we think that there is something new in the situation, not outside the situation nor the new somewhere else, but can we really think through novelty and treat it in the situation? The system of philosophical answers that I elaborate, whatever its complexity may be, is subordinated to that question and to no other. Even when there is event, structure, formalism, mathematics, multiplicity, and so on, this is exclusively destined, in my eyes, to think through the new in terms of the situation. (Badiou 2005b: 252)

The most important feature to note in this statement is the constraint Badiou places upon himself in relation to this task of philosophically grasping newness in its strongest sense: The new must be conceived as immanently arising out of specific “situations,” rather than as swooping in from some unspecified transcendent other place in order externally to modify the coordinates of a particular *status quo* reality as an agent of alteration essentially foreign to the given site of change. (Bosteels 2004a: 152) However, certain

of what might be described as Badiou's "aesthetic" preferences in his political vocabulary are in danger of preventing him from taking into consideration possible types of transformation that exemplify precisely the sort of change he claims to be most interested in thinking through—namely, transformations immanently generated from within the internal parameters of a specific situation and/or a given world.

One striking feature of both the aesthetics of Badiou's political discourse as well as this discourse's conceptual-argumentative content is the recurrent emphasis on figures of abrupt discontinuity. Here are just a few examples: An authentic intervention in politics involves a "cut" establishing a separation from communitarian links and relationships (Badiou 1985: 18); any genuine event establishing a political sequence marks a moment of "rupture" in relation to the socio-historical contextual terrain within which this eventual detonation occurs (Badiou 2005c: 7 and Badiou 2004a: 18); political pronouncements "spring up" in spaces left uncounched and uncovered by existing configurations of society or state (Badiou 2005c: 101); singular events of declaration creating the stratified histories of politics each amount to an "eruption" exploding (out of) the continuum of the *status quo* (Badiou 2005c: 117); politics as such requires a decisive "break" with that which exists in the current state of affairs (Badiou 2003a: 126) ... and so on. In his 1998 text on "metapolitics," Badiou speaks of "the suddenly emergent materiality of a universalisable collective." (Badiou 2005c: 146-147) He repeatedly invokes the evocative figures of "rupture" (Badiou 2003b: 63) and "sudden emergence." (Badiou 2003b: 71) In so doing, Badiou endorses a sharp contrast between "repetition" (i.e. the static inertia of what is) and "interruption" (i.e. the kinetic gesture of separating from what is). (Badiou 2004b: 112 and Badiou 2000: 64) Various thinkers engaged with Badiou, including both commentators and critics, have picked up on this thematic thread appearing to entail that the initiation of real political trajectories is to be pinpointed in an irruptive happening that emerges with a surprising, shocking, and stunning degree of rapidity. (Lazarus 1996: 50,102,152 and Lecercle 1999:8) Similarly, the same set of motifs operates throughout Sylvain Lazarus' *Anthropologie du nom*, in which Lazarus (a theoretical and political ally of Badiou) describes the event of politics as a "caesura" (Lazarus 1996: 20) and "irruption" (Lazarus 1996: 156); he maintains that, politically speaking, "The subjective is not continuous. It arises suddenly, then ceases to be." (Lazarus 1996: 59)

Despite the general thrust of these images and metaphors portraying true change as shining new light on the world through brief, intermittent flashes blinking on-and-off in an unconditioned, unpredictable fashion, Badiou, in the 1998 essay "Of an

Obscure Disaster,” articulates a crucial qualification to be kept in mind apropos the issues at stake in this discussion. He clarifies that:

...an abrupt and complete change in a situation does not at all mean that the grace of an event has happened to it... In the serenity of the concept, let's say that everything that changes is not an event, and that surprise, velocity, disorder, may only be simulacra of the event, not its promise of truth. (Badiou 2003c: 61)

Or, as he succinctly puts it in his *Ethics*, “not every ‘novelty’ is an event.” (Badiou 2001: 72) So, it would seem to be safe simply to say that, although every event has the power to lead to changes exhibiting “surprise, velocity, disorder,” not everything that exhibits these features qualifies as an event. Furthermore, Badiou’s above caveat indicates that both events and their simulacra can and do involve change. Hence, the question to pose now is: What general account of change is to be found in Badiouian philosophy?

Such an account sits at the center of some of Badiou’s most recent work. In the interview “Beyond Formalisation,” conducted in 2002, Badiou delineates four distinct categories of change:

...I distinguish between four types of change: modifications (which are consistent with the existing transcendental regime), weak singularities (or novelties with no strong existential consequences), strong singularities (which imply an important existential change but whose consequences remain measurable) and, finally, events (strong singularities whose consequences are virtually infinite). (Badiou 2003a: 132)

This fourfold typology of transformation, succinctly sketched in the course of a rapidly moving conversation, clearly foreshadows the much more detailed and sustained treatment of this topic four years later in “Book V” (entitled “The Four Forms of Change”) of *Logiques des mondes*. Therein, as visually encapsulated and summarized by a helpful graph, (Badiou 2006a: 395) Badiou begins with the general category of “becoming” (*devenir*), which initially is sub-divided into “modification,” *qua* becoming without real change, and “site,” *qua* a locus/place with the potential to give rise to real change. The category of site is then further sub-divided into “deed/occurrence” (noting that the term “*fait*” can be translated either way - it could even be rendered in English as “act”), *qua* site lacking a maximal degree of existential intensity in a given situation/world, and “singularity,” *qua* site endowed with a maximal degree of existential intensity in a given situation/world. Finally, the category of singularity is itself sub-divided into “weak singularity,” *qua* maximally existent singularity whose ensuing

situational/worldly consequences aren't maximal (although such a singularity, while not [yet] an effective change in the authentic sense of eventual transformation, retains the possibility of eventually becoming stronger (Badiou 2006a: 415-416)), and "event," *qua* maximally existent singularity whose ensuing situational/worldly consequences are indeed maximal. Simply put, an event doesn't just happen within a world as one occurrence among others in this world's history. Rather, an event changes a world so radically that, at one and the same time, an old world is destroyed and a new one is assembled in the clearing opened up by the demolition of what was. (Badiou 2006a: 400, 417- 418, 601)

Obviously, the greatest contrast exists between, on the one hand, modification (as simple becoming comfortably and compatibly going with the flow of the run of things as regulated by an already-existent "state-of-the-situation" or "transcendental regime" ordering a particular "world" (Badiou 2006a:379)), and, on the other hand, event (as a genuine transformation of what exists dictated by the unforeseen and unanticipated upsurge of an "x" that, before the event, didn't exist for the situation's state or the world's transcendental regime, while, after the event, the implications of this upsurge are so potent and powerful as to force the situation or world to be razed and rebuilt as a place wherein the previously inexistent is accorded the most intense degree of existence—with Badiou claiming that the strongest existential-transcendental consequence is to make what was before an invisible inexistent be the most visible of existents (Badiou 2006a: 397-398, 416, 600-601). Highlighting this stark contrast between modification and event, the title of the first section of "Book V" of *Logiques des mondes* is "Simple Becoming and True Change." This axis of tension between "simple becoming" (i.e. modification) and "true change" (i.e. event) is an enduring theoretical motif in Badiou's work, a motif present in some of his earliest writings. As regards the problem of philosophically grasping change, the novel, innovative contribution of *Logiques des mondes* consists primarily in the nuance added to the Badiouian account of processes of transformation by his admission that there are intermediary forms of change between modifications and events. (Badiou 2006a: 389, 393)

In an interview broadcast on French radio in April 2006 to mark the publication of *Logiques des mondes*, Badiou, when asked about his relationship to Deleuze - the latter allegedly is enthralled by a Bergsonian variety of vitalist becoming which amounts to, in Badiou's language, nothing more than mere modification - maintains that the question of continuity versus discontinuity, of a philosophical choice between models favoring

images of transformation as fluid dynamics of uninterrupted movement (i.e. gradual becoming) or as staccato rhythms of abrupt shifts (i.e. punctuated change), is an absolutely central thematic in contemporary philosophy (Badiou 2006b: unpaginated) (perhaps this choice could be said to be “axiomatic” in Badiou’s sense - namely, the decision to bet on one or the other model is an un-derivable, un-deducible ground for any and every philosophical system today). In this radio interview, he again confirms, during a discussion of the various categories of change outlined in *Logiques des mondes*, that his focus is on figures of rupture, going so far as to affirm the occurrence of instances of “radical discontinuity” (Badiou 2006b: unpaginated) (i.e. events). Indeed, “Book V” of *Logiques des mondes* departs from the assertion that “real change,” as a happening that isn’t authorized either by the mathematical-ontological order of “being *qua* being” (*l’être en tant qu’être*) or by the logical system of transcendental structures regulating the play of appearances within situations in a given world, (Badiou 2006a: 380) necessarily includes the imposition of discontinuity upon a world. (Badiou 2006a: 377) For Badiou, faced with the challenge of conceptualizing change, “It is necessary to think discontinuity *as such*, as that which nothing reabsorbs into any creative univocity, however indistinct, or chaotic, the concept of it would be.” (Badiou 2006a: 382) But, what would be involved in this thinking of “discontinuity *as such*?” And, what are its implications specifically for thinking through politics, especially in terms of questions concerning the conditions and consequences of processes of socio-political transformation? Answering these important queries requires outlining Badiou’s inter-linked philosophical constructions of history and temporality.

In the 1982 volume *Théorie du sujet*, Badiou issues a declaration whose foundational status and various ramifications he has adhered to ever since: “history does not exist.” (Badiou 1982: 110 and Badiou 2006a: 531) Broadly speaking, this means (invoking Badiou’s later identification of the four “generic procedures” producing the truths handled by philosophy (Badiou 1999:35)) that the sequences of humanity’s amorous, artistic, political, and scientific activities do not unfold in the all-encompassing medium of a neutral, homogenous, and single historical time, the chronological continuum of a unified temporal One-All. What alternative vision of historical temporality does Badiou propose? By tying his account of real change to events, Badiou is prompted to argue that, as he nicely summarizes this particular point from *Being and Event* during an interview, (Badiou 2005a: 210) “Every event constitutes its own time. Consequently, every truth also involves the constitution of a time. So, there are *times*, not one time.” (Badiou 1994: 118) As he puts it more recently, “An event establishes a

singular time... the event outlines in the situation—in the ‘there is’—both a before and an after. A time starts to exist.” (Badiou 2005d: 61) Peter Hallward christens this “the beginning of a new time.” (Hallward, 2003:158) Similarly, “history” is non-existent precisely because what exists instead are histories-in-the-plural, namely, multiple strata of temporalized truth-trajectories (in the realms of love, art, politics, and science) that cannot be compared and integrated with each other on the basis of reference to an overarching historical totality as a standard yardstick of mutual measurement. Badiou fragments both history and time into a heterogeneous jumble of incomparable, autonomous sequences. (Hallward, 2003: 157 and Strathausen 2005: 279) For him, truths-that-have-appeared form a non-temporal (“temporal” being understood here as an enveloping homogenous chronology) meta-history (as the succession of singular flashes in which eternal truths burst forth into the temporal defiles of banal, hum-drum historical becoming (Badiou 2006a: 532)).

Despite Badiou’s general systematic consistency on these issues (as with his rigorous handling of other issues too), subtle differences in his various wordings of these points regarding history and time signal the lurking presence of serious theoretical difficulties. In his 1998 text *Metapolitics*, he insists that, “singularity... has no relation as such to historical time, for it constitutes its own time through and through.” (Badiou 2005c: 117) In other words, evental singularities utterly break with history’s temporalities; these tears in the fabric of historical time suddenly rip into this fabric in an abrupt, discontinuous manner. However, in *Logiques des mondes*, Badiou words this line of thought somewhat differently—“the event extracts from one time the possibility of another time.” (Badiou 2006a: 407) The latter formulation clearly is more consistent with the previously mentioned constraint Badiou places on any theory of change (articulated in the interview “Can Change be Thought?”): Such a theory must succeed at envisioning processes of transformation as immanently arising from a given situation, rather than being imposed upon “what is” from a mysterious external Elsewhere. As per the latter formulation from *Logiques des mondes*, evental time emerges out of (and then separates itself off from) other historical-temporal currents (this could be described as an immanent genesis of the thereafter-transcendent *qua* subsequently independent in relation to its evental site as a situational point of origin). And yet, Badiou’s other above-cited insistence that one must think “discontinuity *as such*” appears to pull him away from stressing the immanence to broader stretches of historical time of the event’s engendering of another time, perhaps based on the worry that this would amount to a concession to the “cult of genealogies” (Badiou 2006a: 531) (i.e. historicist orientations

in post-modernism that compulsively re-inscribe all occurring phenomena back within overdetermining streams of historical continuity) resulting in the inability to think genuine newness per se due to the implicit denial that utter and complete ruptures with what comes before are possible.

But, obviously, Badiou could embed aspects of evental times within larger temporal cross-sections of a given historical period without thereby positing, as he wishes to avoid doing, a single, monolithic history or time, a stifling historical-temporal closure within which it's impossible to affirm that there is or can be anything new under the proverbial sun. Along these same lines, it's well worth remembering Schelling's 1809 warning, apropos Spinoza's substance metaphysics, that identifying all attributes and modes to be part-and-parcel of substance is not, regardless of whatever one might think, to succeed at reducing these attributes and modes to the status of mere epiphenomenal residues of a unified substantial substratum. (Schelling 1936: 16-17) What's important in this Schellingian stipulation for Badiouian philosophy is the notion that, as Schelling himself puts it in his *Freiheitschrift*:

...dependence does not exclude autonomy or even freedom.
 Dependence does not determine the nature of the dependent, and merely declares that the dependent entity, whatever else it may be, can only be as a consequence of that upon which it is dependent; it does not declare what this dependent entity is or is not. (Schelling 1936: 18)

Schelling's statements, if taken seriously by Badiouian philosophy, would permit proposing, without fear of this proposal pushing one into conceding there being the One-All of an ultimate historical-genealogical consistency *qua* temporal continuity, that specifically evental times immanently arise within and out of broader, longer currents of non-evental times (as will soon be seen, Hallward's crafting of a distinction between the "specified" and the "specific" similarly permits Badiou the option of admitting that something could be related to a situation or world without, for all that, being entirely determined and dominated by such relations). Although evental time is produced on the basis of the materials of non-evental time, the former nonetheless achieves a self-defining, auto-constituting autonomy that distances and separates it from the preceding background of temporal currents from which it branched off as what might initially have appeared to be a tributary.

The issues and problems at stake in the preceding discussion can be rendered clearer and more concrete through turning attention to the reverberations in Badiou's political thought of these ways of conceiving history and time. As early as *Peut-on*

penser la politique?, Badiou proposes that one of the main tasks of authentic politics in his sense is the “re-punctuation of the *chronique*” (Badiou 1985: 69); it should be noted that “*la chronique*” could be rendered in English as either “the chronic” and/or “the chronicle,” with Badiou likely intending to condense both of these meanings (that is to say, the events of political interventions interrupt, displace, and reorganize the chronic constancy of chronicles *à la* continuous, linear socio-historical narratives—echoing this point, Lazarus describes this re-punctuation as a “de-historicization” essential to any and every real political gesture, with history here understood as the homogenizing chronologies of extant socio-political narratives (Lazarus 1996: 48). Badiou goes on to describe this re-punctuating as a distribution of “other accents” and an isolation of “other sequences” (Badiou 1985: 69) (i.e. truth-trajectories irreducible to and incompatible with the current state-of-the-situation’s stories about its political history - Lazarus, without directly citing Badiou, links this Badiouian assertion about the political re-punctuation of, so to speak, the chronic-logical to the thesis that time itself only exists as a dispersed, heterogeneous multiplicity of constructed and constructible times (Lazarus 1996: 141-142)).

The thread of these remarks from 1985 is picked up again in the 2005 study *Le siècle*, in which Badiou goes so far as to describe time itself as a political construction; and, he complains that, today, there is no real thinking of time. (Badiou 2005e: 151-152) The roughly contemporaneous second installment of *Circonstances* further develops this weaving together of the political and the temporal. Therein, Badiou claims that, “there is no common measure, no common chronology, between power on one side and truths on the other—truths as creation.” (Badiou 2005b: 13) A few pages later, insisting again upon this gap by invoking “the distance between thought and power, the distance between the State and truths,” he assigns to philosophy the task of measuring this distance and knowing whether or not the chasm dividing the history of statist power from the history of events giving rise to real political truths can be bridged. (Badiou 2005b: 16) In fulfilling the role of assessor and potential sealer of this rift (with this rift being a particular instance of the foundational parallax split between stasis and kinesis arguably posited by Badiou at the level of his overarching theory of change), philosophy supposedly assists in changing existence itself. (Badiou 2005b: 17) However, all of this raises a set of troubling questions: If there is an abyss of incommensurability separating history-power-state from politics-thought-truth - this abyss reflects the in-eliminable time-lag that Badiou repeatedly insists leaves the dynamic movements of political events and their subjects always and necessarily out-of-synch with the sluggish inertia of an

inherently conservative and essentially homogenous *status quo* (Badiou 2005c: 105 and Badiou 2005e: 155) - then what does it mean to charge philosophy with the mandate of crossing this boundary line of division so as to negotiate a link between otherwise foreign territories? How, if at all, can this apparently absolute split be sutured?

The strangeness of Badiou's position here is promptly signaled on the page of *Circonstances*, 2 immediately following his claim that philosophy transforms political situations by bridging the gap between history-power-state and politics-thought-truth. He contends that philosophy concerns itself with "paradoxical relations" that are "relations which are not relations" (Badiou 2005b: 18) (maybe these could be conceived of, in vaguely Schellingian parlance, as instances of transcendence-in-immanence). Along related and relevant lines, in *Le siècle*, he refers to another paradox, one at the heart of his mode of conceptualizing temporality - "Time... is an inaccessible mix of agitation and sterility; it is the paradox of a stagnant feverishness." (Badiou 2005e: 152) Is there (as will subsequently be asserted here) a subtle *rapport* between these two paradoxical structures (i.e. non-relational relations and the blending of stasis with kinesis)? This precise juncture marks the point of entry into a tangled thicket of difficulties. Moreover, this is a point where various thinkers' critical-interpretive paths diverge - for instance, the paths of two particularly articulate experts on Badiouian philosophy: Bruno Bosteels and Peter Hallward.

Bosteels departs from the conviction that Badiou's 1988 "mathematical turn" in *Being and Event*, rather than functioning as a sudden shift in a totally new and different direction, is a continuous and consequent extension of his earlier work as culminating in the 1982 philosophical treatise *Théorie du sujet*. (Bosteels 2004a: 150-151 and Bosteels 2005: 578) He argues that the "and" in the title of Badiou's *magnum opus* indicates that, instead of inflexibly partitioning the trans-ontological realm of the event from the ontological domain of being *qua* being, Badiou is interested in formally articulating the paradoxical conjunction-in-disjunction, the tension-ridden relation-that-is-not-a-relation, operative between being and event (Bosteels 2004a: 153-154); for Bosteels, the title of Badiou's 1988 tome shouldn't be heard as announcing yet another rigid dualism to be added to the long list of philosophy's dichotomies accumulated over the course of its history. (Bosteels 2004a: 103)

Hallward, by contrast, views *Being and Event* as a fault line demarcating a pronounced distinction between early and late periods in Badiou's thought. He contends that "his books up to and including *Théorie du sujet* (1982), the summa of his early work, have become partially obsolete by his own subsequent criteria," (Hallward 2003: 29) and

he denies that these pre-1988 writings can be read as a “hesitant, embryonic version of a subsequently finished product.” (Hallward 2003: 30) In terms of the knot (and knottiness) of the positioning of politics and temporality with respect to each other in Badiouian philosophy, Hallward, *contra* the implications of the position defended by Bosteels, maintains that the post-1988 Badiou, with his emphases on event-prompted subtraction and separation, is pushed into promoting “a politics of the ‘flash,’ a politics grounded in the revolutionary but ephemeral moment in which a serial inertia can be suspended with only minimal recourse to an institutional stability of any kind.” (Hallward 2003: 43) What Hallward is picking up on here is Badiou’s frequently reiterated characterization of events as fleeting moments of extraordinarily rare dysfunctionality - for Badiou, an event, including a political event, amounts to a dysfunctioning of the representational state-of-the-situation and/or the transcendental regime of a world (Badiou 1985: 77, Badiou 2005c: 72, Badiou 2003a: 131 and Badiou 2006a: 408)—surfacing within the run of things ever-so-briefly. Throughout *Logiques des mondes*, for example, Badiou repeatedly emphasizes that the temporality of the event (as issuing forth from the evental site) consists of an instantaneous appearing-and-then-disappearing, a “brusque,” “evanescent,” and self-consuming conflagration that immolates itself into non-being as soon as it strikes the surface of being. (Badiou 2006a: 389, 391, 399, 413))

Badiou and Bosteels would both respond to Hallward’s comments on Badiou’s “flash politics” by contrasting the abrupt, irruptive temporality of the instantaneity of the event with the protracted, enduring labor, engaged in by a militant subject-of-the-event, of both drawing out the consequent truths following from this event as well as faithfully “forcing” the situation and its state to change by inscribing these truths back into the textured being of the world. According to Badiou, whereas the time of the event is an immeasurably fast coming-and-going, the unique time this specific event creates in its wake, a time forged through the fidelity of this event’s subject(s), can be (and often is) an extended, sustained period or path spanning lengthy stretches of the becoming of chronological-historical time, (Badiou 2006a: 389 and Badiou 1990: 23) a post-evental time tied to the enduring, eternal “trace” left behind by the vanished event (Badiou 2006a: 399), as early as 1976, Badiou characterizes revolutionary political sequences as long, extenuated processes always capable of being interrupted (Badiou 1976: 75).

Such is the reply of Badiou, Bosteels, (Bosteels 2002: 198-199 and Bosteels 2005: 603) and certain others (for instance, Carsten Strathausen (Strathausen 2005: 279) to lines of criticism departing from the apparent link between the rapid-fire

temporality of events and a politics unable to think its relation to the nitty-gritty, brass-tacks details of historical and social realities forming the supposed referents of any and every concrete, material mode of recognizably political *praxis*. In this vein, Alberto Toscano, after lucidly outlining the reasons why certain readers perceive Badiou as being in danger of depoliticizing politics through his emphasis on purification-through-separation (i.e., the distancing of politics-thought-truth from history-power-state), (Toscano 2004: 202) dismisses this perception as erroneous—given the post-evental labors of forcing engaged in by subjects-of-events, which involve rolling up one’s sleeves and grappling with the details of how to change determinate situations and worlds, Badiou’s politics is certainly not hopelessly abstract and ethereal. (Toscano 2004: 210-211) In more general philosophical terms, Bosteels likewise stresses that the post-evental process of a subject-of-an-event forcing its surrounding situation and/or world to be transformed through its faithful work of extracting and exploring the reality-altering implications of the event—in so doing, subjects force being to respond to and be reshaped by events—shows how Badiou is indeed interested in the dialectical interaction between, at the broadest of levels, the ontological and the trans-ontological. (Bosteels 2002: 206-207) Bosteels’ remarks also (arguably) insinuate that the Badiouian philosophical conception of temporality is not as starkly split between the different speeds of ontological stasis and trans-ontological kinesis as it might seem to be at first glance, (similarly, regarding the topics of fidelity and love, Badiou, in *Being and Event*, speaks of “the dialectic of being and event” and its “temporal orientation” (Badiou 2005a: 232)).

The position represented by Hallward (and espoused by several others too), grounded on the contention that *Being and Event* inaugurates a turning away from structures of relationality and toward models of “subtraction” (figured as breaks, cuts, discontinuities, ruptures, withdrawals, etc.), (Johnston 2003: unpaginated) moves in a very different direction from that taken by Bosteels. Through the later Badiou’s insistence that all truths (including political ones) and their corresponding subjects subtract themselves as absolutely separate from the network of relations constituting what exists within a given situation, (Hallward 2003:50, 250) Hallward sees the post-1988 Badiou as rendering himself unable to explain or dictate any “real world” politics:

This *dé liaison* underlies both the extraordinary ambition of Badiou’s philosophy, its unflinching determination, and its own peculiar difficulty—the difficulty it has in describing *any* possible relation between truth and knowledge, any dialectic linking subject and

object. Rather than seek to transform relations, to convert oppressive relations into liberating relations, Badiou seeks subtraction from the relational *tout court*. So long as it works within the element of this subtraction, Badiou's philosophy forever risks its restriction to the empty realm of prescription pure and simple. (Hallward 2003: xxxiii)

Or, as he puts it later (after questioning whether Badiou is capable of keeping the continuous stream of historico-statist "global trends" separate from the aleatory discontinuity of disruptive events, that is, categorically refusing to acknowledge and examine the latter's relation to the former (Hallward 2003:241)):

It is as if Badiou's recent work positively embraces a version of what Hegel dubbed the unhappy consciousness—the stoical affirmation of a worthy ideal or subjective principle, but as divorced from any substantial relation to the material organization of the situation. (Hallward 2003:241-242)

Other critics share Hallward's concern that, at the political level, the price to be paid for subtractive purity, for the affirmation of the distance taken from the given order of things by the event-subject-truth axis, is a metapolitics purified to the point of being a politics-without-politics. Daniel Bensaïd, in an essay whose very title ("Alain Badiou and the Miracle of the Event") expresses the suspicion that Badiou's anti-relational stance inevitably results in a sort of quasi-religious mystical obscurantism, warns that, "A new danger threatens: that of a philosophy haunted by the sacralization of the evental miracle." (Bensaïd 2004: 97) Both Bensaïd (agreeing with Hallward's critique of the absolutism involved in Badiou's post-1988 subtractive approach (Bensaïd 2004:105)) and Oliver Marchart wonder whether, in the political realm, this approach amounts to a justification for haughtily refusing to dirty one's hands with the bargains and compromises unavoidable in the practice of *Realpolitik*. (Bensaïd 2004: 102-103 and Marchart 2005: 119-120) It seems that, in Badiouian political thought, serene subjective detachment in the satisfying self-enclosure of an auto-justifying evental truth-trajectory is preferred to immersion in and engagement with the pre-existent ensemble of, as it were, facts on the ground.

Looking at the pronounced division within the reception of Badiou's philosophy epitomized by the gap separating, for instance, Bosteels and Hallward, how is it possible that this philosophy, priding itself on its rigorous clarity and alleged resistance *qua* system to a fuzzy nebula of disseminated interpretive translations, could give rise to such drastically divergent understandings? The claim to be defended here is that the

division between these positions actually reflects the cleaving of time in two by the event into the pre-evental “before” and the post-evental “after.” More specifically, the Bosteels-type emphasis on the relating of being and event highlights an essential feature of post-evental time (just as Toscano’s defense of the concreteness of Badiouian politics is based exclusively on references to Badiou’s discussions of the fidelity of organized inquiries into the consequences of events after-the-fact of their occurrence). By contrast, the Hallward-type focus on anti-relational subtraction reveals an integral aspect of Badiou’s explanations of (or, it might be said, refusals to explain) the pre-evental temporal background. As Hallward notes, Badiou’s “philosophy effectively proscribes thought from considering the *production* of an event” (Hallward 2003: 371) (and this because Badiou fears that such considerations ultimately end up erasing the evental newness of irruptive events by treating them as outgrowths of prior trends, thus supposedly re-inscribing them back within preceding historical-temporal continuums). In short, Bosteels and Hallward are both right. Put more precisely, although Bosteels is quite correct that the temporally abrupt evental flash catalyzes a thereafter enduring and protracted labor of a subject’s faithful and militant forcing of the event’s truth(s) back into the being of a world with its situations (i.e. a sustained new time), Hallward is equally correct in maintaining that, regardless of whether being and event are drawn into relational structures following an event (something Hallward questions), the moment of this evental flash itself is deliberately treated as inexplicable and without identifiable pre-conditions paving the way for its happening.

The most telling criticisms issued by Hallward, Bensaïd, and Marchart are the ones that zero-in on problems for Badiou’s philosophy specifically at the pre-evental level. (Johnston 2003) Bensaïd speculates that, in the absence of an account of pre-conditions for events, Badiou, an avowed atheist, risks lapsing into a form of religiosity. (Bensaïd 2004: 98,101) Likewise, Marchart, reminding readers that Badiou denies the presence of any pre-evental subject (Marchart 2005: 114) (insofar as Badiou insists that subjects come into being through naming and subsequently subjecting themselves to events), accuses Badiouian thought of resurrecting a not-so-secular conception of grace. (Marchart 2005: 116-117) In the conclusion of *Logiques des mondes* (entitled “What is it to live?”), Badiou admits to relying on a certain notion of grace (Badiou 2006a: 534); but, he protests, this is a thoroughly non-miraculous version of this notion, (Badiou 2006a: 536) one seamlessly incorporated as part of a philosophy informed by an atheistic materialism (a “laicized grace,” (Badiou) as he puts it elsewhere). Regarding Badiou’s politics, Hallward sees the post-1988 Badiou as hamstrung by a rigid

dichotomy between “state-driven operations of inclusion or classification, and truth-driven operations of separation or subtraction.” (Hallward 2003: 274) Similarly, Marchart accurately observes that the lack of concreteness in Badiouian subtractive politics, as allegedly purified to the point of becoming depoliticized in an essential manner, results from his avoidance of relating split levels (Marchart 2005: 125)—such as (to put it in Žižekian parlance) the parallax gap between, on the one hand, the gently ambling run of things at the ordinary quotidian level (i.e. stasis), and, on the other hand, the violently disruptive lightening strike of the extraordinarily rare event (i.e., kinesis).

In an article charting, with impeccable scholarship, the theoretical and terminological undercurrents flowing from Badiou’s youthful Maoism (informed by a variety of dialectical thinking) up through his contemporary philosophical concerns, Bosteels aims directly to refute the sorts of criticisms leveled against Badiou by Hallward and Bensaïd. He again insists that the Badiouian distinction between being and event isn’t as absolutely non/anti-dialectical as these criticisms make it out to be, (Bosteels 2005: 615, 617) and he asks the critics to concede, if nothing else, that Badiou’s later work involves a “struggle” to avoid treating evental processes as other-worldly by divorcing them from the details of specific situations. (Bosteels 2005: 607, 608) Bosteels’ superlative contributions to the growing literature on Badiou’s philosophy convincingly demonstrate and defend the thesis that concepts such as “inquiry” and “forcing” (both being post-evental projects carried out by subjects-of-events) represent, in the post-1988 Badiouian framework, continuations of his pre-1988 commitments to thinking through certain forms of dialectical relations essential to dynamics of transformation internal to particular circumstances. Nonetheless, in light of the most challenging objections raised by Hallward, Bensaïd, and Marchart, the problems arising from Badiou’s principled refusal to tie together being and event at the pre-evental level persist despite the ample evidence Bosteels provides in making his case that the post-evental fallout of an event consists in the inter-penetration of being and other-than-being. Summing up his perspective on what renders Badiouian philosophy special, Bosteels states that, “what from my point of view singularizes the thought of Badiou is not only the ontological delimitation of the event as a lightening-flash cut or punctual encounter with the real, but rather the event’s logical and topological inscription in accordance with the labor of different subjective figures in the living flesh of any given situation.” (Bosteels 2002: 262) Indeed, Badiou’s focus on the concept of event is not just centered on the motif of the abrupt cut, but also on the long-term project of working to force one’s circumstances to respond to the occurrence of certain breaks or interruptions in the

default order of things. However, even if only inadvertently, Bosteels' wording here concedes that events are sudden ruptures in the fabric of being which get related to the ontological solely in the aftermath of the inexplicable emergence of the evental. In fact, the only way for Badiou to dodge the deadliest bullets of the Hallward-Bensaïd-Marchart critique is to find a means somehow to bridge the chasm between the divided times of statist history and the meta-history of evental occurrences - not so much within post-evental time, but, rather, within both pre-evental time as well as the moment of the event itself. The remainder of this discussion of Badiou's political thought will be devoted to showing certain means available for this bridging that draw on resources to be found within Badiouian philosophy itself. This is intended as an immanent critique of the philosophical foundations of Badiou's politics.

Oddly enough, despite his sweeping ban on positing conditions or precursors for events, Badiou himself occasionally appears to defy this same ban. In his 1998 *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, he remarks, "we can say that every event admits of a figural preparation, that it always possesses a pre-evental *figure*." (Badiou 2005d: 120) So, it would seem reasonable to propose, on the basis of this remark, that, although an event seemingly explodes onto a situational scene in an apparently *ex nihilo* fashion, there are certain (perhaps hidden and invisible) primers or triggers (i.e. "figures" in the above Badiouian sense) clandestinely participating in setting off this explosion. Such a hypothetical proposition is indeed necessary if Badiou is to adhere to his own requirement that change be accounted for as an immanently emergent transformation arising from within the worldly situation itself. And, addressing the inter-linked topics of evental temporality and historicity in *Logiques des mondes*, he describes how, "truths, beyond History, braid their discontinuities along the strand of a subtle structural alloy of anticipations and retroactions." (Badiou 2006a: 40) Perhaps the "anticipations" of which he speaks here are the strictly post-evental hypotheses of a situation-yet-to-come *qua* transformed by the truth-implications of an event, hypotheses posited by the subject-of-the-event in its activity of *forçage* (Badiou 2005a: 400, 403, 406, 407-408). But, what if there are figures anticipating the event prior to its happening, that is, pre-evental figures capable of being put to work (whether knowingly or unknowingly) by individuals interested in clearing the ground of the *status quo* in preparation for the advent of something new?

The 2005 text *Le siècle* contains Badiou's oft-cited discussion of "the passion of the real." Therein, Badiou contends that the twentieth century was animated by a desire to strip away and obliterate various veils of illusion supposedly concealing the hard

kernel of an “x” beyond the superficial dance of semblances; this century was obsessed with projects for brutally short-circuiting the separation between the ideal and the real through immanently realizing, in the guise of heavens-brought-down-to-earth, visions previously viewed as utopian. (Badiou 2005e: 82-83, 84-85, 89) During this discussion, Badiou draws a distinction between a politics of destruction driven by this passion of the real and a politics of subtraction (as the alternative project endorsed by Badiou’s political thought). He describes the latter as striving to “measure” an “ineluctable negativity,” rather than as furiously trying to seize, while in the grip of “the convulsive charms of terror” after having been seduced by the passion of the real, some sort of purity through mobilizing forces of annihilation (moreover, he claims here that the advance over 1982’s *Théorie du sujet* achieved by 1988’s *Being and Event* is the shift from a politics of destruction to one of subtraction). (Badiou 2005e: 85, 98) Further specifying in this context what his political approach involves, Badiou states that “the subtractive path” involves “exhibiting as a real point not the destruction of reality but the minimal difference”; this “miniscule difference” is tied to the real of a “vanishing term” buried within reality (Badiou 2005e: 98). Along related lines, in the contemporaneous third installment of *Circonstances*, he declares that, “one cannot find the symbol of the universal in the situation except in inventing what nobody has yet seen or said.” (Badiou 2005f: 82) Insofar as Badiou is committed to the thesis that universality emerges out of particularity, that eternal trans-world truths are born within specific temporalized worlds and become universal through thereafter (potentially) addressing everyone in being open to all, (Badiou 2006a: 534-535 and Badiou 2006b: unpaginated) the upshot of the preceding claims would seem to be that a subtractive politics searches within its situation for the fleeting pre-evental figures of little differences that perhaps shelter the promise of eventually making a big eventual difference. But, is the task of subtractive politics to discern and extract such differences as already-present, pre-existent elements of a given situation or, rather, to invent them *à la* symbolic creations as-yet unseen and unheard? Isn’t there a certain tension here between, on the one hand, conceiving of situations as containing within themselves pre-evental figures/symbols heralding the possibility of truly eventual change (indicating that the state-of-the-situation can be internally subverted using resources drawn from its own pre-existent spaces), and, on the other hand, speaking of the need utterly and completely to break with this situational state through creating entirely new figures/symbols up to the task of founding a genuinely universal politics for all (indicating that the state-of-the-situation must be assailed from a position not already to be found within its spaces)?

The ambiguities and difficulties plaguing Badiou's politics, as illustrated above, can be resolved through a two-part solution. The first part is drawn from Hallward's proposal (in his 2003 study of Badiou) that a distinction needs to be drawn between the "specified" versus the "specific." (Hallward 2003: 274-275) What does this mean? Both the specific and the specified, as Hallward defines them, are relationally configured components of a world and its situations. Neither term, in Badiou's system, would be a point purified by subtraction (in the way that the event-subject-truth axis is withdrawn from the network of relations constituting a situational-worldly reality, a reality opposed to a real separate from any such mediating relational network). So, how then is the specific to be distinguished from the specified? The specified would be something that is thoroughly shaped and governed by its inner-worldly situation as stuck in a tangled web of relationships wholly binding it to its context and circumstances. The specific, by contrast, would be something that, while being related to the milieu of its situational world, nonetheless isn't entirely constrained by its insertion into this milieu; in other words, that which is specific is a constituent of a situation/world, and yet, at the same time, isn't entirely reducible to an exhaustively overdetermined epiphenomena generated by its surrounding situation/world. As noted, Hallward views Badiouian philosophy after *Being and Event* as imprisoning itself within the politically disempowering confines of a false dilemma between overdetermining statist absorption (i.e. the relational) versus liberating anti-statist extraction (i.e. subtraction as anti-relational), a false dilemma leaving one stranded in a "pure *déliason*" that is, politically speaking, "unduly abstract" (as Hallward puts it in the closing lines of his book (Hallward 2003: 322)). His key contention here in this effort to contest what he sees as Badiou's unjustified refusal to ponder seriously a distinction such as that between the specified and the specific is that, with the idea of the specific, things already included within worlds and their situations can be linked to other entities and functions of this mediating matrix of relational structures without, for all that, losing the capacity productively to resist the established order—and, just maybe, fundamentally transform the state-of-the-situation from within in a thoroughly immanent movement of transformation. (Johnston 2003)

Added to Hallward's differentiation between the specific and the specified, the second part of this two-part solution to Badiou's political problems pushes off from a set of comments made by Terry Eagleton in the opening paragraph of his review of Badiou's *Ethics*. Eagleton states:

There is a paradox in the idea of transformation. If a transformation

is deep-seated enough, it might also transform the very criteria by which we could identify it, thus making it unintelligible to us. But if it is intelligible, it might be because the transformation was not radical enough. If we can talk about the change then it is not full-blooded enough; but if it is full-blooded enough, it threatens to fall outside our comprehension. Change must presuppose continuity—a subject to whom the alteration occurs—if we are not to be left merely with two incommensurable states; but how can such continuity be compatible with revolutionary upheaval? (Eagleton 2003: 246)

Eagleton's suggestive description of this "paradox in the idea of transformation" gestures at theoretical alternatives whose serious consideration entails some significant ramifications for Badiou's account of change. In particular, Eagleton's speculations about a "revolutionary upheaval" so drastic that it retroactively renders its own past (including its conditions and catalysts) difficult-if-not-impossible for subsequent attempts at understanding to grasp adequately lead to some startling possibilities, possibilities that might help to resolve, in conjunction with select portions of Badiou's own philosophical apparatus, certain difficulties plaguing Badiouian political thought. Within the context of the present discussion, the most important line of speculation opened up by Eagleton in the passage above is the theoretical notion, a notion that can be inscribed back into the internal parameters of Badiou's philosophical system, of processes of transformation that transform, among other things, the very change-category status of the places and forces involved in these processes themselves.

In "Book V" of *Logiques des mondes*, in which Badiou focuses on dynamics of transformation, he insists that truly evental shifts are so dramatic as to change the very world within which these ruptures in the socio-historical continuum surface. More specifically, Badiou stipulates that the changes wrought by an event and its subject-sustained aftermath include changing the world's "transcendental regime" (i.e., the framework, always tied to a particular world, determining the distribution of assigned degrees of existence to appearing entities enveloped by this worldly scaffolding (Badiou 2006a: 618)). That is to say, evental changes re-distribute the assignation of degrees of existence in a world, thereby creating another world through installing a different transcendental regime. (Badiou 2006a: 401) But, apart from this effect, couldn't an event's implications also involve re-drawing the lines of demarcation distinguishing between the four types of change delineated in this same section of *Logiques des mondes*? Recall that these four types (as listed in the interview "Beyond Formalisation") are: modifications, weak singularities, strong singularities, and events proper. What if one of the consequences of an event, in its allowing for and opening onto the creation of

a new post-evental world, is a re-distribution of these categories of change across the elements caught up in this movement of transformation? *Logiques des mondes* is subtitled “*L’être et l’événement, 2*,” meaning that it’s clearly identified as a sequel to *Being and Event*, supplementing the non-relational, mathematical ontology (“being *qua* being” [*l’être en tant qu’être*] as based on set theory) of this latter text with what might be dubbed a relational, logical phenomenology (“being there” [*être-là*] as based on category theory). So, it can be assumed that the theses deployed in *Logiques des mondes* are based upon and largely compatible with the doctrine of the event elaborated in *Being and Event*. As will be demonstrated immediately below, the 1988 philosophical formulation of the theory of the event dictates accepting that one of the consequences of an event is indeed a potential re-distributing of the categories of change across the elements of a situation, a re-distribution that may even affect the change-category status of the very event prompting this shaking up of the world and its situations (at least in the eyes of many living in the event’s temporal shadow).

The concept of the evental site as sketched in “Part IV, Meditation Sixteen” of *Being and Event* provides the key link to the account of change elaborated in “Book V” of *Logiques des mondes*. “Meditation Sixteen” of *Being and Event* is the section of this text inaugurating the turn from an ontological concern with being *qua* being as set-theoretically conceived pure multiplicity to the doctrine of the event as “what-is-not-being-qua-being” (Badiou 2005a: 173) (i.e., “Part IV” is the first part of this book dealing with “event” after the first three parts on “being”). Badiou warns that “what-is-not-being-qua-being” shouldn’t be equated with pure non-being, utter nothingness. (Badiou 2005a: 173) Rather, this “other-than-being” is the “place” of the “non-natural,” with Badiou describing this a/anti-naturalness as “abnormal”/“instable” and choosing to identify it as what qualifies as “historical” strictly speaking; it’s here the matter of a difference between the “normal”/“stable” multiplicities of nature versus those multiplicities serving as the “material” of historical processes. (Badiou 2005a: 173-174) Referring to the results of prior meditations in *Being and Event*, Badiou proceeds to define the abnormalities constituting the currents of histories as “singular multiples,” namely, “multiples which belong to the situation without being included in the latter: they are elements but not subsets.” (Badiou 2005a: 174) It’s important to be aware of, in the midst of this detailed survey of an apparently abstract philosophical architecture seemingly unrelated to the concreteness of politics, Badiou’s insistence that, “the inception of a politics... is always located in the absolute singularity of an event.” (Badiou 2005c: 23) Hence, evental sites,

as singular multiples, are the point of origin for any and every event-driven dynamic of political transformation.

Summarizing here a series of core concepts lying at the heart of *Being and Event* much too hastily, Badiou distinguishes between, on the one hand, situations, to which multiples “belong” as “elements” insofar as they are presented as constituents of a given situation, and, on the other hand, states of situations, in which these same situated multiples are “included” as “parts” by being grouped together as sub-sets in the form of representations. In short, the four-fold constellation belonging-element-presentation-situation is distinct from that of inclusion-part-representation-state. (Badiou 2005a: 83-84, 94, 103, 174) The singularity of abnormal multiples thus amounts to there being elements of a sub-multiple part *qua* state-secured representation that are not themselves recognized and “counted” within the presentational-representational structures of the situation in question. From the standpoint of the state-of-the-situation, these elements simply do not exist (i.e., they are inexistent—remembering that, in *Logiques des mondes*, Badiou contends that the world-changing effects of events include raising what was before invisibly inexistent, with respect to a transcendental regime’s distribution of degrees of existence in the situation of the old world, to enjoying a maximal degree of visible existential intensity in the novel transcendental order of a new world). Badiou goes on to equate the singularity of abnormal multiples with what he calls evental sites:

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: 175)

Explaining this turn of phrase invoking the void, he continues:

It becomes clearer why an evental site can be said to be ‘on the edge of the void’ when we remember that from the perspective of the situation this multiple is made up exclusively of non-presented multiples. Just ‘beneath’ this multiple - if we consider the multiples from which it is composed—there is *nothing*, because none of its terms are themselves counted-as-one. A site is therefore the *minimal* effect of structure which can be conceived; it is such that it belongs to the situation, whilst what belongs to it in turn does not. The border effect in which this multiple touches upon the void originates in its consistency (its one-multiple) being composed solely from what, with respect to the situation, in-consists. Within the situation, this multiple is, but *that of which* it is the multiple is not. (Badiou 2005a: 175)

These passages are pregnant with numerous implications apropos both Badiouian philosophy as a whole as well as contemporary philosophy more generally. However, within the comparatively limited scope of this discussion of Badiou's account of change and its political consequences, the crucial detail to be highlighted here is that the void lurking within the evental site, haunting the re/presentational structures of the situation, isn't an absolute void *à la* the non-specific nothingness or negativity of non-being per se.

Instead, the sort of void spoken of by Badiou in the quotations above is a relative non-existence (noting that, in the subsequent investigations of *Logiques des mondes*, Badiou is careful to distinguish between being and existence, (Badiou 2006a: 608) and, therefore, between non-being and non-existence - the un-re/presented elements of the evental site are "inexistent" in the Badiouian phenomeno-logical sense of having being but being deprived of existence in relation to the transcendental logic governing the distribution of existence and non-existence across appearances within a given world). The evental site, as a necessary-but-not-sufficient condition for an event, (Badiou 2005a: 179) shelters elements lacking existential visibility specifically with respect to a particular state-of-the-situation. In a different situation or world, these elements might very well possess the non-void status of being integrated into the networks of a state-regulated situation or world through re/presentation. Badiou himself spells this out, (Badiou 2005a: 178-179) saying, "the concept of an evental site... is neither intrinsic nor absolute. A multiple could quite easily be singular in one situation... yet normal in another situation," and this fact "prohibits us from speaking of a site 'in-itself.' A multiple is a site relative to the situation in which it is presented (counted as one). A multiple is a site solely *in situ*." (Badiou 2005a: 176)

The concept of the evental site returns eighteen years later in the theory of transformations presented in "Book V" of *Logiques des mondes*. Therein, as summarized here earlier, the site is identified as the (potential) locus of real change. This site is capable of giving rise to an existentially non-maximal deed/occurrence (*fait*) or an existentially maximal singularity which can result either in a weak singularity (as lacking existentially maximal consequences) or an event (as a singularity producing existentially maximal consequences). Furthermore, a site is fundamentally different from a place of mere modification as becoming-without-real-change. "Sub-section 1" of "Section I" of "Book V" is entitled "Subversion of appearance by being: the site," and the heading of the immediately following "Sub-section 2" is "Ontology of the site." The opening paragraph of "Sub-section 1" states that a site is a reflexive multiple, namely, a

multiplicity that takes itself into account, that introjectively inserts self-representations (such as its own name) as elements of itself as a set. (Badiou 2006a: 383) This recounts a thesis from *Being and Event* bearing upon one of the distinctive features of the trans-ontological event: Whereas the set-theoretic structure of being *qua* being forbids a set from being a member-element of itself, the event, as a kind of “illegal” multiple breaking the laws of *l’être en tant qu’être*, is a set that violates this order of being insofar as this event’s name is one of its own elements belonging to it (Badiou 2005a: 179, 180-181, 184, 189-190) (curiously, Badiou moves from this reflexive self-belonging being, in *Being and Event*, a key feature of the event to it becoming, in *Logiques des mondes*, an aspect of the evental site instead). The opening paragraph of “Sub-section 1” adds that an evental site, as involving its own self-representation, subverts the order of appearances (as organized by the transcendental regulations of a worldly state-of-the-situation) by bringing into the appearing of “being there” those of its own elements that, in relation to the situational state of the world, have being but lack existence (i.e. the site makes the inexistent appear, thus disrupting the previous rules of the game of appearing). (Badiou 2006a: 383) Succinctly put, an evental site is a place wherein a singularity (as a non-re/presented void-point within a statist situation-world) can come to appear. The site bequeaths a degree of existential intensity to that which, prior to the formation of the site and with regard to the re/presentational scaffolding of the state-of-the-situation, is normally deprived of being recognized as existing in its surrounding worldly environs.

“Sub-section 2” on the “Ontology of the site” concludes with several specifications concerning the evental site. Badiou describes how the site, being a transgression of the “laws of being” achieved by a “reflexive violence” (i.e., a set-theoretically prohibited configuration of self-belonging), is a fleeting occurrence incapable of maintaining itself in the face of being’s pressing foreclosure of such violations of its constraining dictates. (Badiou 2006a: 388-389) Hence, temporally speaking, the evental site disappears as soon as it appears, immediately vanishing after flashing across the surface of what is. “Sub-section 2” then ends by listing three properties of the ontology of the site:

- 1) A site is a reflexive multiplicity that belongs to itself and hence transgresses the laws of being.
- 2) A site is the instantaneous revelation of a void that haunts the [other] multiplicities, a revelation by the transitory cancellation that the site operates through the gap between being and being-there.

3) A site is an ontological figure of the instant: it does not appear except to disappear/dissipate. (Badiou 2006a: 389)

Taking all of the above into account, Badiou's twin 1988 and 2006 elaborations concerning the inter-connected concepts of event and evental site result in the following: Processes of real change are set in motion by the sudden, unforeseen disclosure, from within the immanent confines of the worldly situation, of something that, for this situated state, is nothing (i.e., a something that "in-exists" insofar as its being isn't acknowledged as being there by the circumscribing transcendental regime bringing into existence and structuring the appearances of a world). As Badiou makes consistently clear in both 1988 and 2006, the, as it were, event-ness of the evental site and/or event is a relative property, a change-category status (as in the four categories of change identified by Badiou) dependent upon the pre-existent configuration of a worldly state-of-the-situation. This is a real whose real-ness is indexed with respect to a given particular reality.

So, how does this long detour through Badiou's two *magnum opera* set up the formulation of the previously-promised-but-not-yet-delivered two-part solution (a solution mobilizing Hallward's distinction between the specific and the specified as well as Eagleton's speculations about radical change) to his political difficulties? Having slowly proceeded through the preceding work of laying the conceptual bricks of the path leading up to this present moment, the spelling out of the pay-offs of this labor can now be elaborated with comparative rapidity. As show above, if evental sites and the voids they harbor, as the points of singularity out of which events emerge, are what they are strictly in relation to the (pre-)arrangement of the situational-worldly milieu in which they're embedded—as Badiou admits, the very same multiples that are evental *qua* abnormally singular in one situation or world could easily be non-evental in another setting—then it necessarily follows, from a post-evental perspective, that fundamentally changing the situation or world might also significantly alter the distribution of the four categories of change across the field of multiples caught up in the transition from one situation/world to another.

But, more importantly, from a pre-evental perspective, it might very well be worth granting, particularly in relation to politics, that there are, at a minimum, at least two layers of distribution for the types of transformation delineated by Badiou: the state's (understood both as administrative governmental apparatus and in Badiou's broader sense as state-of-the-situation (Hallward 2003: 96)) classification of the change-category status of the multiples of its situation versus other schemas for change-category

classification of the same matrix of multiples (such as those schemas deployed by militants working against the state, trying to fulminate in advance, during pre-evental time, an evental rupture with the *status quo*). Ultimately, what is being proposed at this juncture is a novel, renewed notion of ideology formulated precisely on the basis of Badiou's post-1988 work (keeping in mind that one of his early texts, from 1976, is entitled "On Ideology"). In trying to control the speeds of transformation, to manage and regulate the cadence of change, statist ideology, defined here as involving the pre-evental distribution of change-category classifications across the multiples at play in the world of appearances, can and does adopt the dual strategy of: one, making mere modifications appear to promise evental newness (a tactic that comes to the fore in the ideology of late-capitalism, whose noisily marketed "perpetual revolution" is really just an instance of the cliché "the more things change, the more they stay the same"—or, as Badiou puts it, "capitalism itself is the obsession of novelty and the perpetual renovation of forms" (Badiou 2004: 104)); two, making the sites sheltering potentially explosive evental upheavals appear to be, at a minimum, unremarkable features of the banal, everyday landscape, and, at most, nothing more than temporary, correctable glitches in the functioning of the established system.

Badiou talks about post-evental denials of the event: For those who don't constitute themselves as subjects-of-the-event-in-question, this happening doesn't appear to them as evental per se *qua* that in whose aftermath nothing can be the same again. (Badiou 2005a: 207 and Hallward 2003:128) Instead, as in the examples Badiou offers of the perspectives situated within the Roman Empire on the figure of the resurrected Jesus Christ (Badiou 2003b:14-15,43,57) and historian François Furet's rendition of the French Revolution, (Badiou 2006a: 65-66, 67) those who aren't subjects faithful to a given event tend to view this occurrence, not as a pronounced rupture instituting a sharp break between a "before" and an "after," but as a ruffle or wrinkle remaining seamlessly woven into the fabric of an overarching historical-temporal continuity. However, given his staunch refusal to reflect upon the possibility of prior conditions for events, he doesn't talk about pre-evental denials (issued from the stance of statist ideology) of specific intra-situational, inner-worldly nodes being evental sites harboring the potential to give rise to events. Badiou's politics would gain in clarity and precision from conceding that the ideology of the worldly state, through a sort of bluff or masquerade, disguises its non-integrated weakest points, its Achilles' heels, as fully integrated cogs and components of its allegedly harmonious functioning—rather than as loci containing the potential to throw monkey wrenches in its gears and thereby generate

evental dysfunctions of this regime, a regime that is never so deeply entrenched as it would like to appear to be in the eyes of its subjects. Temporally speaking, statist ideology sometimes depicts the gradual/static as punctuated/kinetic and *vice versa*.

As quoted earlier, Badiou describes his own brand of subtractive politics as involving, instead of an all-demolishing destructiveness driven by the passion of the real, a conscientious scrutinizing of situations in search of paradoxical relations-that-are-not-relations, which now sounds a lot like Hallward's concept of the specific-that-is-not-specified. Combining this latter concept with the Eagleton-inspired hypothesis that movements of transformation can and do (retroactively) transform the very change-category status of the sites and trajectories involved in these movements themselves, the following claim can be advanced: Prior to the subject-recognized occurrence of an event, individuals practicing a certain variety of subtractive politics are quite justified in hoping to find, through a careful examination of their situation, figures and sites that are both specific-but-not-specified (Hallward) as well as capable of shifting from appearing to be not-quite-evental loci in the eyes of pre-evental present anticipation to becoming powerful disruptions in post-evental future hindsight (Eagleton). In other words, subtractive politics could productively be thought of as deploying a pre-evental subjective inquiry or investigation in search of points within the transcendental regime of a world where, to a careful critical gaze not entirely taken in by the bluffs of statist ideology, the (to use Badiou's language verbatim) vanishing term of a minimal/miniscule difference (here construed as the difference between the change-category statuses simultaneously assigned to a single intra-situational multiple both by the ideology of the state and, in opposition, by another, non-statist framework) can be discerned. This differentially categorized term could then be said to be the situation-immanent material basis for a (re-) invention of currently unseen and unheard figures/symbols that, from inside the parameters of a particular world, have the capacity to broadcast a potentially universal address.

In the interview "Beyond Formalisation," Badiou draws a political distinction between "axioms" and "directives" (*mots d'ordre*). An axiom is an absolutely foundational declaration fixing a point of departure for the activities of the subjects of politics, a proclamation establishing an Archimedean point around which practical programs will pivot; a directive is the application of an axiom to the concrete constellation of a given situation, an extension of an axiom's implications into the reality-infrastructure of a world. (Badiou 2003a: 122) Directives are the political putting-to-work of axioms. Perhaps in order to reassure those with concerns that his subtractive politics remains hopelessly

and ineffectively abstract, Badiou insists on the over-riding importance of translating axioms into directives. (Badiou 2003a: 124-125) And yet, it seems, at least in his published books, that Badiou himself refrains from spending much time engaging in this labor of translation. Maybe this is a symptom of, as the saying goes, the perfect having perhaps become the enemy of the good. And, this “becoming the enemy of the good” would be due to Badiou’s quick dismissal of apparently gradualist measures of seemingly minor political adjustments and reforms (i.e. not-quite-evental gestures) in the spheres of legislation and socio-economics while awaiting the quasi-divine intervention of the system-shattering evental rupture ushering in an uncompromisingly “perfect” revolution. But, the preceding analyses call into question whether he can be entirely confident and sure that what appears to be gradual or minor really is so, or, rather, simply seems this way solely under the shadow of statist ideology’s assignation of change-category statuses.

At the post-evental level, Badiou speaks of the immeasurability of the truth-consequences of an event -“You have to understand that there is something in the becoming of a truth that exceeds the strict possibilities of the human mind. There is something in truth that is beyond our immediate capacities.” (Badiou 2005g: 41) There are an infinite (i.e. non-finite as non-calculable/denumerable) number of potentially forcible ramifications for countless situations/worlds past, present, and future flowing from a particular event. (Badiou 1991: 29-30, Johnston 2005: 101, 105 and Johnston 2006: unpaginated) In an interview with Hallward forming the appendix of Hallward’s translation of his *Ethics* (and interview entitled “Politics and Philosophy”), Badiou admits that, “At a certain moment, the set of actors of a generic procedure, of a truth-procedure, are clearly ignorant, unknowing, of what it is. This is an essential point.” (Badiou) But, shifting temporal perspective from a post-evental to a pre-evental position, what about the pre-evental actors acting in a situation/world? What if, like the subjects of a post-evental truth-trajectory, they too don’t really know exactly what they’re doing or quite where they’re going? What if, under the influence of statist ideology, they anticipate that a particular gesture will effectuate a system-preserving modification only to find out, after-the-fact of this gesture, that their intervention unexpectedly hastened (rather than delayed) the demise of this very system? For both better and worse, there is an inherent incalculability to the factors involved in setting the pace of the cadence of socio-political change.

There remains an as-yet-unexplored implication in Eagleton’s above-cited remarks apropos Badiou: From within the confines of a new post-evental situation/world,

with its re-assignment of the types of transformation to the constituents of its reality (including the components relevant to how this situation/world constructs its own history), it seems possible that individuals, in the wake of an event-prompted upheaval, might very well fail to recognize the prior evental triggers responsible for catalyzing the creation of the very world in which they live. Past events may no longer appear as events to the backwards glances of those situated in the post-evental reality. Of course, Badiou's response to this suggestion, located in "Meditation Twenty" of *Being and Event* ("The Intervention: Illegal choice of a name of the event, logic of the two, temporal foundation"), would be that every event must happen twice - more precisely, there is no event as such without the "intervention" of at least one individual naming the event as an event, thereby becoming a subject-of-the-event responsible for, through militant fidelity, preserving the event at the level of a temporally elongated post-evental labor of forcing the event's truth-consequences back into the being of a world as configured by a state-of-the-situation. (Badiou 2005a: 206, 209) If there's no initial event without both the second event of this first event being named as an event per se and a subsequent subject sustaining this event through its post-evental endeavors—the initial event in itself surges forth and then disappears, continuing to exist if and only insofar as it leaves behind a nominal trace forged through a second event of a subjective intervention naming this vanished happening (Badiou 1990:9) - then Badiou excludes the possibility of there being a past event which vanishes as an event proper after-the-fact of it having changed the situation/world to such an extent that a redistribution of change-category statuses retroactively revokes this same event's evental status. But, this Badiouian response notwithstanding, even if there cannot be a totally vanishing event (i.e., an evental cause which is obfuscated as evental by its ensuing effects) as an event per se in Badiou's strict technical sense (since all events, according to Badiou, must leave behind traces as names and bodies supporting ensuing truth-trajectories), isn't it philosophically and politically crucial to contemplate the possibility and ramifications of there being radical breaks and discontinuities that might, in part due to their own reverberations unfolding off into the future, become invisible to those living in realities founded on such eclipsed points of origin - with these points as instances of a real retroactively foreclosed from reality (*à la* Lacan's notion of the Real, in his eleventh seminar, as an *après-coup* "lost cause" (Lacan 1977:128))?

Apart from containing the philosophical grounds for Badiou's exclusion of the possibility of a vanishing event, "Meditation Twenty" of *Being and Event* also directly addresses the temporality of events. Badiou claims that, "the theory of intervention

forms the kernel of any theory of time. Time... is intervention itself, thought as the gap between two events. The essential historicity of intervention does not refer to time as a measurable milieu.” (Badiou 2005a: 210) He proceeds to add that; “Time is here... the requirement of the Two; for there to be an event, one must be able to situate oneself within the consequences of another.” (Badiou 2005a: 210) The intervention of naming, as the post-event event retroactively rendering the first event an event proper (hence the association of event-ness with what Badiou calls “the Two”), brings into play at least two temporal dimensions: one, the time in-between the first event’s instantaneous coming-and-going and the second event’s naming of this disappeared occurrence (i.e., time “as the gap between two events”); and, two, the new time, broken off from the chrono-logic of common state/world time (i.e., “time as a measurable milieu” *qua* the medium of homogenous linear historical temporality), as a unique post-evental temporality constituting itself in the aftermath of the two events out of which it arose (thus, there’s a specific time-of-an-event, just as there’s a particular subject-of-an-event).

In the second volume of *Circonstances*, Badiou sings the praises of a “discipline of the real” (Badiou 2004a: 48) (as implicitly opposed to the violent destructiveness of the passion of the real diagnosed as a symptom of the twentieth century in *Le siècle*). In good Platonic fashion, he takes mathematical thought as an exemplary instance of what he means here (and as an example to be followed by other, non-mathematical practices of thinking): *Contra* the common, vulgar assumption that discipline automatically entails a rigidity precluding the possibility of creativity, Badiou insightfully observes that the activity of mathematics exhibits how a specific sort of discipline (i.e. the subtractive contraction-into-itself of mathematical thinking, its withdrawal from the world, necessary for carrying out its internal deductive procedures leading to novel results) “is identical to total liberty, to absolute creation” (Badiou 2004a: 48) (a point Lacan also makes with reference to Cantor in his fourteenth seminar of 1966-1967 (Lacan 1967:unpaginated)). He proposes that, in this respect, politics should emulate mathematics. (Badiou 2004a: 48-49) Similarly, near the end of “Meditation Twenty” of *Being and Event*, Badiou defines “fidelity” (i.e., a post-evental subject’s faithfulness to an event and the consequent extension of its implications) as “a *discipline* of time,” an “organized control of time.” (Badiou 2005a:211) The militant subject-of-the-event must employ a variety of discipline custom-tailored to the task of deploying the truth-consequences of the event in relation to which it’s a subject. Without such discipline, nothing new can be created in the world, since, in the absence of a subjective organization of procedures constructed in response

to the event, the event itself is left to evaporate without a trace back into situation-relative nothingness.

Once again, Badiou's focus is on the post-evental dimension of time. However, in line with the preceding arguments, there is also an urgent need for a pre-evental discipline of time. This other sort of temporal discipline would be neither the undisciplined impatience of hurriedly doing anything and everything to enact some ill-defined, poorly conceived notion of making things different nor the quietist patience of either resigning oneself to the current state of affairs drifting along interminably and/or awaiting the unpredictable arrival of a not-to-be-actively-precipitated "x" sparking genuine change (Badiou's philosophy sometimes seems to be in danger of licensing a version of this latter mode of quietism (Johnston 2006)). Those subjected to today's frenetic socio-economic forms of late-capitalism are constantly at risk of succumbing to various versions of what one could refer to loosely as "attention deficit disorder," that is, a frantic, thoughtless jumping from present to ever-new present. At the political level, such capitalist impatience must be countered with the discipline of what could be designated as a specifically communist patience (designated thus in line with Badiou's assertion that all authentic modes of politics are "communist" in the broad sense of being both emancipatory as well as "generic" *qua* radically egalitarian and non-identitarian (Badiou 1999:108, Badiou 2003c: 61-62 and Badiou 2005c: 93-94)) - not the quietist patience condemned above, but, instead, the calm contemplation of the details of situations, states, and worlds with an eye to the discerning of ideologically veiled weak points in the structural architecture of the statist system. Given the theoretical validity of assuming that these camouflaged Achilles' heels (as hidden evental sites) can and do exist in one's worldly context, one should be patiently hopeful that one's apparently minor gestures, carried out under the guidance of a pre-evental surveillance of the situation in search of its concealed kernels of real transformation, might come to unleash major repercussions for the state-of-the-situation and/or transcendental regime of the world. In other words, it's reasonable to anticipate that seemingly circumscribed and constrained regional projects, if carefully targeted under the guidance of the proper sort of ideology critique, might actually result in fundamental reality-altering reverberations (perhaps there is indeed some salvageable political merit in the hackneyed bumper-sticker injunction to "think globally, act locally"). In temporal terms, this is to place hope in the non-miraculous possibility that the abrupt, punctuating shifts inaugurating new times could immanently emerge out of the subterranean internal flows of currently

unfurling histories. This is a new sort of disciplined patience, one that optimistically wagers on futures bound up with the inherent incalculability of interventions.

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