

COURAGE BEFORE THE EVENT: THE FORCE OF AFFECTS

ADRIAN JOHNSTON*

In his early Maoist reflections on politics and ideology from the 1970s, Alain Badiou decisively denounces the tendency of many French theorists of the period to portray statist power as a monolithic colossus overshadowing the relatively weak, feeble masses, disparate and dispersed crowds whose sole option for defanged rebellion is the “intimate revolt” of desiring away in the dark corners and recesses of their depoliticized libidinal economies.¹ He vehemently asserts that Marxism requires seeing things the other way around: Statist power is inherently fragile and reactionary in the face of the masses² (an assertion echoing key statements from Mao’s infamous “little red book,” such as “We must never be cowed by the bluster of reactionaries”³ and “We should rid our ranks of all impotent thinking. All views that overestimate the strength of the enemy and underestimate the strength of the people are wrong”⁴). Instead of positing the ideological and material domination of the alliance between capital and state as the point of departure for political analyses, a proper Marxist, according to Badiou, must begin with an opposed axiom: “*it is resistance which is the secret of domination.*”⁵ A few years later, in *Theory of the Subject*, he explicitly links this line of thought with Mao’s dictum that one must have confidence in the masses.⁶ In this vein, Badiou maintains

* Department of Philosophy, University of New Mexico at Albuquerque, NM 87138, USA.

¹ Alain Badiou, “The Flux and the Party: In the Margins of Anti-Oedipus” (trans. Laura Balladur and Simon Krysl), *Polygraph*, no. 15/16, 2004, p. 76, 78, 79–80, 84.

² Alain Badiou and François Balmès, *De l'idéologie*, Paris: François Maspero, 1976, p. 47, 48–49, 50–51, 53–54.

³ Mao Tse-Tung, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (ed. Stuart R. Schram), New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1967, p. 45.

⁴ Mao, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, p. 46.

⁵ Badiou and Balmès, p. 50.

⁶ Alain Badiou, *Théorie du sujet*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982, p. 345.

that, “In the matter of Marxist politics and the class subject, the one manner of giving up is to lose confidence.”⁷ He then proceeds to the statement that, “The essence of confidence is having confidence in confidence.”⁸ For Jacques Lacan, there is no Other of the Other, truth of the truth, or act of the act.⁹ However, an essential feature of Lacanian desire is its reflexive character. As Lacan puts it in the seventh seminar of 1959-1960, “desire [...] is always desire in the second degree, desire of desire”¹⁰ (along these lines, Badiou speaks of the “pure desire”¹¹ moving a subject-of-an-event as “the desire of a desire,”¹² the subjective willing of the willful pursuit of the implications of an event-revealed truth). Put differently, Lacan’s 1959 proposition regarding the modes of desire peculiar to the subjectivity of speaking beings alleges that there is only desire of desire (of desire...). Badiou says something similar about confidence. On the basis of this, one could contend that theoretical confidence in “communist” *qua* generic-egalitarian political projects must be re-doubled and reinforced by a corresponding practical confidence surging forth out of the intermingled sources of will and affect.¹³

In his 1988 *magnum opus* *Being and Event*, Badiou, as is well known, uses the word “state” in two overlapping senses: on the one hand, the ontological-phenomenological conception of the state as the representational architecture of a state-of-the-situation (or, in the language of *Logics of Worlds*, the transcendental regime of a world), and, on the other hand, the state according to the common, everyday understanding of the word as referring to the institutional apparatuses of government endowed with a sufficiently recognized quota of sovereignty. At the beginning of “Meditation Eight” of *Being and Event*, a meditation devoted to the delineation of this concept of the state at the level of his set theoretic ontology, Badiou claims:

The apparent solidity of the world of presentation is merely a result

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 341.

⁹ Jacques Lacan, “Discours à l’École freudienne de Paris,” *Autres écrits* (ed. Jacques-Alain Miller), Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001, p. 265.

¹⁰ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959–1960* (ed. Jacques-Alain Miller; trans. Dennis Porter), New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992, p. 14.

¹¹ Alain Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (trans. Alberto Toscano), Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005, p. 135.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 136.

¹³ Adrian Johnston, “‘Let a thousand flowers bloom!’: Some Brief Remarks on and Responses to Žižek’s ‘Badiou: Notes from an Ongoing Debate,’” *International Journal of Žižek Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2007.

of the action of structure, even if *nothing* is outside such a result. It is necessary to prohibit that catastrophe of presentation which would be its encounter with its own void, the presentational occurrence of inconsistency as such, or the ruin of the One.¹⁴

Careful attention should be paid to the fact that Badiou qualifies the “solidity” of the state-of-the-situation (i.e., the “world of presentation” resulting from “the action of structure”) as merely “apparent.” The full implications of this qualification for politics subsequently become clearer in the concluding chapter of his 1998 book *Metapolitics* (a chapter entitled “Politics as Truth Procedure”). Therein, he develops the implications for politics of *Being and Event*’s eighth meditation, arguing that a genuine political event causes the previously mysterious, spectral, and (most importantly) immeasurable excess of state power suddenly to become something with a precise and known measure¹⁵:

The real characteristic of the political event and the truth procedure that it sets off is that a political event fixes the errancy and assigns a measure to the superpower of the State. It fixes the power of the State. Consequently, the political event interrupts the subjective errancy of the power of the State. It configures the state of the situation. It gives it a figure; it configures its power; it measures it.¹⁶

He continues:

Empirically, this means that whenever there is a genuinely political event, the State reveals itself. It reveals its excess of power, its repressive dimension. But it also reveals a measure for the usually invisible excess. For it is essential to the normal functioning of the State that its power remains measureless, errant, unassignable. The political event puts an end to all this by assigning a visible measure to the excessive power of the State.¹⁷

This power’s unknown, phantom-like virtuality is compelled to trans-

¹⁴ Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (trans. Oliver Feltham), London: Continuum, 2005, p. 93.

¹⁵ Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003, p. 96–97, 225.

¹⁶ Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics* (trans. Jason Barker), London: Verso, 2005, p. 145.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

form itself, in response to the challenge posed by a revolutionary event, into a concretely expressed counter-exertion. In so doing, it loses something in the eyes of those subjected to it.¹⁸ Paradoxically, power's passage from potentiality to actuality – the actuality of its exercise is often taken as the essential proof of power's potency – results in the diminution of this power itself (not due to an expenditure of a finite quantity of force usually held in reserve, but because the scope and limits of power are made to emerge into the light of publicly visible day – the famous photograph of the lone protester facing the column of Red Army tanks taken during the Tiananmen Square happening in China epitomizes this effect whereby state power is strangely diminished at the very moment it displays itself in all its raw, ferocious strength). Destructive, enraged outbursts of undiluted brutality are, as Mao himself observes in 1942,¹⁹ often symptomatic manifestations of an underlying impotence on the verge of being revealed, desperate last resorts to protect an insubstantial Symbolic authority (beneath which lies nothing more than the physically violent means of blatant suppression). In Lacanian terms, the Badiouian political event reduces the state apparatus from a Symbolic authority to an Imaginary rival, from a quasi-omnipotent mediating medium to a less-than-omnipotent external adversary. Resonating with these reflections here, Giorgio Agamben remarks that, “The troublemaker is precisely the one who tries to force sovereign power to translate itself into actuality.”²⁰

Truly effective state power is thus always and necessarily a shadowy, potential sort of power.²¹ For instance, it's worth observing that an institution common to authoritarian regimes is the secret police (who abduct people clandestinely in the middle of the night, who torture dissidents and subversives behind closed doors, who carry out executions of the regime's opponents in hidden locations). This can't really be due to shame or guilt on the part of the tyrannical rulers (such tyrants are, with justification, frequently presumed to be sociopathically devoid of conscience); nor can it be ascribed to the desire to “maintain appearances,” to conceal the brutal nature of the regime (the public is, in nearly every case, aware of the dictatorial status of their given state authority – and, moreover, such a government wants the governed to be acutely aware of its willingness savagely to quash resistance to it). Rather, the phenomenon of the secret police as an institutional feature of autocratic state power reflects an understanding that the direct and visible

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Mao, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, p. 44–45.

²⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen), Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, p. 47.

²¹ Badiou, *Metapolitics*, p. 144.

display of power in all its violent actuality somehow detracts from the intimidating allure of authority as a fearsome myth, as a force known about only at the level of rumor and speculation (after all, people's imaginations are capable of concocting the most horrific of scenarios, so leaving them to their own imaginations is indeed a clever strategy). This institution is, in fact, an ingenious way actually to exercise power while, nonetheless, preserving the mysterious immeasurability associated with power-as-potentiality. The devil one doesn't know is feared much more than the known devil. The overt actualization of power lessens this fear supporting the recognition of the Symbolic dimension of the state's authority. Keeping the workings of this power covert preserves this fear – and, in turn, this fear both preserves the recognition of Symbolic authority as well as deters the issuance of challenges that might call its bluff. What sort of courage has the chance to dispel this fear, this state terror?

What is needed here with such terrible urgency is a Leninist-type bravery buttressing the confidence to bet on change before it comes about, to wager on yet-to-occur possible trajectories of transformation that likely appear, from within the constraints of the present world, to be highly unlikely long-shots. This betting on act/event-level transformations, this gambling when the chips seem to be down licensed by the conviction that the big Other isn't, so to speak, really so big after all, is a version of what this author elsewhere has depicted as a pre-evental form of forcing.²² Whereas Badiou restricts the procedure of forcing (*forçage*) to being a post-evental process²³ – events first must mysteriously arise, and only thereafter are there subjects who can engage in procedures of forcing that aim to inscribe the implications of events into situations – this intervention here, in line with its interest in pondering the conditions of possibility for act/event-level change (and this *contra* Badiou's prohibition of contemplating the pre-conditions for events²⁴), believes that it's both valid and crucial to conceive of pre-evental varieties of forcing.

The exposition of the concept of forcing offered in "Part VIII" of *Being*

²² Adrian Johnston, "The Quick and the Dead: Alain Badiou and the Split Speeds of Transformation," *International Journal of Žižek Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2007. Cf. also Adrian Johnston, "From the Spectacular Act to the Vanishing Act: Badiou, Žižek, and the Politics of Lacanian Theory," *Did Somebody Say Ideology?: Slavoj Žižek in a Post-Ideological Universe* (ed. Fabio Vighi and Heiko Feldner), Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007.

²³ Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 206, 209. Cf. Alain Badiou, "L'entretien de Bruxelles," *Les Temps Modernes*, no. 526, 1990, p. 9. Alain Badiou, *Logiques des mondes: L'être et l'événement*, 2, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2006, p. 399.

²⁴ Hallward, *Badiou*, p. 371.

and *Event* focuses on the temporal mode of the future anterior (this focus on the time-tense of the “will have been” occurs elsewhere too²⁵ – including, in Badiou’s 1985 text *Can Politics be Thought?*, a depiction of political interventions as wagers [i.e., bets or gambles] wagered on the basis of a calculation regarding an incalculable future, a future that just might retroactively vindicate such calculated interventions²⁶). Temporality is indeed a key component of the Badiouian concept of *forçage*,²⁷ with Badiou, apropos politics, insisting that, “the future anterior is the real political time.”²⁸ The militant subject-of-an-event engaged in the faithful labor of forcing operates as if the present situation, with its corresponding state and encyclopedia, were already completely reworked from the standpoint of the event’s truth. In other words, such forcing subjects act under the assumption that it will have been the case that evental truths, presently indiscernible and undecidable as to their veridicality in the here-and-now situation’s encyclopedic knowledge-regime, eventually turn out to be exhaustively verified as veridical.²⁹ Badiou explains:

[...] *every subject generates nominations*. Empirically, this point is manifest. What is most explicitly attached to the proper names which designate a subjectivization is an arsenal of words which make up the deployed matrix of faithful marking-out. Think of “faith,” “charity,” “sacrifice,” “salvation” (Saint Paul); or of “party,” “revolution,” “politics” (Lenin); or of “sets,” “ordinals,” “cardinals” (Cantor), and of everything which then articulates, stratifies and ramifies these terms. What is the exact function of these terms? Do they solely designate elements presented in the situation? They would then be redundant with regard to the established language of the situation. Besides, one can distinguish an ideological enclosure from the generic procedure of a truth insofar as the terms of the former, via displacements devoid of any signification, do no more than substitute for those already declared appropriate by the

²⁵ Alain Badiou, “On a Finally Objectless Subject” (trans. Bruce Fink), *Who Comes After the Subject?* (ed. Peter Connor and Jean-Luc Nancy), New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 31. Cf. Alain Badiou, “*La vérité: forçage et innommable*,” *Conditions*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1992, p. 206–207.

²⁶ Alain Badiou, *Peut-on penser la politique?*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1985, p. 107.

²⁷ Jason Barker, *Alain Badiou: A Critical Introduction*, London: Pluto Press, 2002, p. 109.

²⁸ Badiou, *Peut-on penser la politique?*, p. 107.

²⁹ Hallward, *Badiou*, p. 135, 136–137. Cf. also Ray Brassier, “Nihil Unbound: Remarks on Subtractive Ontology and Thinking Capitalism,” *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy* (ed. Peter Hallward), London: Continuum, 2004, p. 54. Andrew Gibson, *Beckett and Badiou: The Pathos of Intermittency*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 60, 84, 136.

situation. In contrast, the names used by a subject – who supports the local configuration of a generic truth – *do not, in general, have a referent in the situation*. Therefore, they do not double the established language. But then what use are they? These are words which do designate terms, but terms which “will have been” presented in a *new* situation: the one which results from the addition to the situation of a truth (an indiscernible) of that situation.³⁰

He continues:

With the resources of the situation, with its multiples, its language, the subject generates names whose referent is in the future anterior: this is what supports belief. Such names “will have been” assigned a referent, or a signification, when the situation will have appeared in which the indiscernible – which is only represented (or included) – is finally presented as a truth in the first situation.³¹

These 1988 delineations of forcing are foreshadowed three years earlier in a two-part article (entitled “Six Properties of Truth”) whose lines of argumentation clearly anticipate certain theses central to *Being and Event*. In 1985, Badiou speaks of “the excessive signifier of what comes to happen,”³² namely, those names (mentioned in the passages from *Being and Event* quoted immediately above) that will have taken on a recognized reference/significance in the hypothesized new situation (with its altered encyclopedia) resulting from event-wrought alterations carried out by those subjects faithfully toiling on behalf of their chosen eventual truth-cause. In this same two-part article, he also links forcing to an anticipated future situation in which those strange signifiers (including an event’s name as well as nominations of certain powerfully pertinent consequences flowing from this event) presently employed by the subject-of-an-event – both an event and its signifiers are indiscernible/undecidable in the here-and-now (and, hence, not recognized as veridical by the *status quo* situation’s encyclopedic knowledge-regime) – become veridical *qua* verified by a new situational encyclopedia (i.e., eventually get assigned acknowledged referents and significations).³³

³⁰ Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 397–398.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 398.

³² Alain Badiou, “*Six propriétés de la vérité II*,” *Ornicar?*, no. 33, April-June 1985, p. 123.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 141. Cf. also Fabien Tarby, *La philosophie d’Alain Badiou*, Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005, p. 116.

In short, as Badiou himself indicates, a subject-of-an-event employs the useful, effective fiction of a world-to-come. More precisely, such a subject, when engaged in forcing, “fictively” treats this world-to-come (i.e., the anticipated new situation as transformed on the basis of a given event and its truth[s]) as if it were already here in the present, as if the time of its future arrival is now. This “as if” serves as a lever or fulcrum for moving the not-yet-fully-transformed world of today toward and into the uncharted terrain of a new tomorrow. Badiou claims:

[...] we can always *anticipate* the idea of a completed generic truth. The generic being of a truth is never presented. A truth is uncompletable. But what we can know, on a formal level, is that a truth will always have taken place as a generic infinity. This allows the possible fictioning of the effects of such a truth having-taken-place. That is, the subject can make the hypothesis of a Universe where this truth, of which the subject is a local point, will have completed its generic totalization. I call the anticipatory hypothesis of the generic being of a truth, a *forcing*. A forcing is the powerful fiction of a *completed* truth. Starting with such a fiction, I can *force* new bits of knowledge, without even *verifying* this knowledge.³⁴

Part of what forcing involves is a confidence buttressed by an investment (perhaps of an affective sort) in the “anticipatory hypothesis” of a novel situation on the horizon, a different *monde-à-venir* (in his recent study of Badiou’s philosophy, Fabien Tarby explicitly links the “it will have been true” mode of hypothesizing shared by all forms of forcing to confidence³⁵). Badiou maintains, in the material from *Being and Event* quoted several paragraphs above, that a signifier forcefully deployed by a subject-of-an-event (i.e., a name tied to an event-truth trajectory) is “what supports belief.” Hence, one of the values of *forçage* is its capacity, as a posited yet-to-come fiction anchoring confident belief in a specific conviction, to inspire courage in subjects, a courage the Badiou of 1982’s *Theory of the Subject* describes as enabling further aleatory steps into the dark unknown (as what isn’t counted and coded by any existent encyclopedic knowledge-regime) of that which is in “excess” of the domain already covered by “law”³⁶ (i.e., by what Badiou will come to call a

³⁴ Alain Badiou, “Philosophy and truth,” *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return of Philosophy* (trans. Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens), London: Continuum, 2003, p. 65.

³⁵ Tarby, *La philosophie d’Alain Badiou*, p. 17–18.

³⁶ Badiou, *Théorie du sujet*, p. 310.

state-regulated re/presentational situation and/or a transcendently-structured world). Peter Hallward describes this Badiouian courage as “the courage to wager on Pascal’s model,”³⁷ namely, an affective fortitude enabling the subject-of-an-event to make choices whose calculability and outcomes aren’t given in advance by the existent re/presentational order of the state-of-the-situation.

In this spirit, the conclusion of *Logics of Worlds* closes with an enthusiastic affirmation of heroism³⁸ (with Badiou responding to those who, for whatever reasons, purse their lips with disapproving discomfort at his impassioned invocations of courageous militancy in the service of universal truths³⁹). Although, in line with a certain philosophical traditionalism coloring his corpus, Badiou seemingly is not a thinker for whom emotions or feelings are very important – if anything, one might suspect that these forces would be relegated to the denigrated status of crude, vulgar psychological elements of an all-too-human animality to be broken with in and through eventual subjectification – affects are (as Lacan might phrase it) not without their place in his thought. As early as *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou appeals to specific affects as integrally involved in the dynamics of true transformations. And, starting in his 1993 pamphlet on ethics, the post-1988 Badiou continues to affirm the value of certain affective currents in the subjective sustenance of eventual truth-trajectories.

One of the central tenets of Badiou’s *Ethics* is the proposition that the fundamental ethical maxim of any and every “ethics of truths” (with “truth” defined in a Badiouian fashion as a post-evental production) is the injunction, bearing upon subjects-of-events, to “Keep going!,” to “Continue!,” along their aleatory paths of inquiring and forcing.⁴⁰ What’s more, as indicated earlier, walking these uncertainly situated paths requires a measure of courage, a confidence (and, as per *Theory of the Subject*, a confidence in this confidence – or, as Badiou puts it in his *Ethics*, “being faithful to a fidelity”⁴¹) reinforced by

³⁷ Hallward, *Badiou*, p. 38.

³⁸ Badiou, *Logiques des mondes*, p. 536–537.

³⁹ Alain Badiou, “On Evil: An Interview with Alain Badiou (with Christoph Cox and Molly Whalen),” *Cabinet*, no. 5, Winter 2001–2002, www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/5/alainbadiou.php. Cf. Alain Badiou, “The Contemporary Figure of the Soldier in Politics and Poetry” (University of California at Los Angeles, January 2007), <http://www.lacan.com/badsold.htm>.

⁴⁰ Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (trans. Peter Hallward), London: Verso, 2001, p. 44, 47, 50, 90–91. Cf. Alain Badiou, *Circonstances, I: Kosovo, 11 septembre, Chirac/Le Pen*, Paris: Éditions Léo Scheer, 2003, p. 11. Cf. Gibson, *Beckett and Badiou*, p. 72–73, 97.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

the signifier-names speculatively deployed in connection with the anticipatory hypotheses hazarded by forcing. However, there is an obvious question to ask at this juncture, a question posed earlier here and one which Badiou himself poses in a chapter on Beckett in the *Handbook of Inaesthetics*:

Where does the courage of effort come from? I think this is a very important question, because it is in general the question of knowing where the courage of holding to any procedure of truth comes from. The question is ultimately the following: Where does the courage of truth come from?⁴²

On the same page in which he raises this query regarding the origin of subjective fortitude in the face of the uncertain unknowns unfurling dizzyingly beyond the closed, comfortable confines of the predictable state-secured situation, Badiou responds by declaring that, “The courage of the continuation of effort is drawn from words themselves.”⁴³ But, as seen, these aren’t any old words – these are the signifier-names eagerly and impatiently heralding a new world-to-come, proudly and assertively announcing, through the mouths of faithful subjects, a not-yet-present situation as though it were already present in the here-and-now. Elsewhere, in another piece on Beckett, Badiou knots together forcing, naming, and courage. He states that, “to find the name of what happens demands an invention within language, a poetic forcing.”⁴⁴ In a sense, all processes of forcing involve poetry *qua* the creation of new words, phrases, and ways of using language so as both to baptize a past event not generally recognized by the conventional linguistic-symbolic codes of one’s situation (codes encoded in the form of an encyclopedia and situational state) as well as to announce a future situation-yet-to-come hypothesized and anticipated in the present. Immediately after invoking this notion of “poetic forcing,” Badiou speaks of the language that names “what happens” (i.e., the past event and its forced future-anterior, top-to-bottom transformation of the world) as a source generating courage.⁴⁵ This tortured, “ill said” prose of subjects-of-events, a poorly situated and widely unrecognized prose torn out of select pages of the situational encyclopedia and forged into something new for the purposes of unlicensed forcing, provides

⁴² Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, p. 106.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Alain Badiou, “What Happens” (trans. Alberto Toscano; rev. Nina Power), *On Beckett* (ed. Nina Power and Alberto Toscano), Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2003, p. 114.

⁴⁵ Badiou, “What Happens,” p. 114–115.

“the courage to continue.”⁴⁶ So, it would seem that the event of nomination comes first (a nomination that names both an appeared-and-disappeared prior event as well as a hypothetical situation/world *à venir* thoroughly transformed by this named prior event and its consequent implications), followed by the possibility of a subsequent subjective courage leaning on these names and what they anticipate.⁴⁷

In *Logics of Worlds*, further evidence surfaces of Badiou tending (at least temporally) to prioritize names over affects in the process of forcing. Therein, he characterizes courage as a capacity to face “points.”⁴⁸ One of the conceptual coordinates added to Badiouian philosophy by this 2006 sequel to *Being and Event* is this notion of the point. In several contexts, Badiou, avowedly influenced in his youth by both Sartre (proponent of a philosophy of freedom celebrating the powers of subjectivity as an autonomous negativity) and Althusser (advocate of a structuralist Marxism denigrating Sartrean-style subjectivity as an ideological illusion secreted by trans-individual socio-historical mechanisms), confesses that one of his deepest-seated philosophical ambitions has always been and continues to be to succeed at combining these two seemingly antithetical influences as indispensable parts of a single philosophical orientation.⁴⁹ According to *Logics of Worlds*, some worlds (although not all worlds), as onto-logical situations (i.e., domains/regions within which appearances appear in line with the particular governing framework of a given corresponding “transcendental regime”), contain within themselves points *qua* nodes which, when confronted, force an either/or choice between mutually-exclusive alternatives (some other worlds, designated as “atonal,” lack points – these flat, grey reality-systems are devoid of immanently embedded internal catalysts for choices not already covered by these same systems⁵⁰). The concept of the point is one example of Badiou’s efforts to think both senses of the term “subject” (i.e., as simultaneously Sartrean-style autonomous negativity and Althusserian-style structural subjection). In fact, Badiou explicitly mentions Sartre (“the theoretician of absolute liberty”) by name in the portion of *Logics of Worlds* dealing with points (asserting there

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁴⁷ Fabien Tarby, *Matérialismes d’aujourd’hui: De Deleuze à Badiou*, Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005, p. 107–108.

⁴⁸ Badiou, *Logiques des mondes*, p. 96.

⁴⁹ Alain Badiou, *Beckett: L’incroyable désir*, Paris: Hachette, 1995, p. 7. Cf. also : Alain Badiou, “Can Change be Thought?: A Dialogue with Alain Badiou (with Bruno Bosteels),” *Alain Badiou: Philosophy and Its Conditions* (ed. Gabriel Riera), Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005, p. 242.

⁵⁰ Badiou, *Logiques des mondes*, p. 442–443, 601, 612.

that Sartre's plays involve a "theater of points" in their staging of scenarios in which "the infinite complexity of nuances" and "apparent chaos of the world" collapse into instances of pure one-or-the-other choices).⁵¹ In a manner akin to his description of evental sites as rare intra-situational loci, Badiou proceeds to contrast the normal run of things in quotidian reality with those exceptional circumstances or occurrences irrupting in the form of intra-worldly points – "the world of ordinary action is not the world of Ideas, of 'yes or no,' of affirmations or of points. It is the variation of occasions, multiform impurity."⁵² A point functions so as to concentrate and condense this "multiform impurity" (i.e., the varying degrees of existence and plethora of appearances distributed across a world by its structuring transcendental regime) into two sole possibilities; it polarizes a worldly Many into a dualistic Two.⁵³ As Badiou articulates it, "a point is essentially a binary dramatization of the nuances of appearance."⁵⁴ He goes on to add that, "to decide is always to filter the infinite through the Two."⁵⁵ Moreover, Badiou remarks that everyone is familiar with points from their life experience in the form of inescapable decisions and pressing dilemmas⁵⁶ (i.e., what the young Maoist Badiou straightforwardly describes as "simple, but fundamental, choices"⁵⁷).

A Badiouian point is not just a node of polarizing concentration/condensation subsisting within a worldly network – the possibilities for either/or binary choices it harbors are possibilities irresolvable within the coordinates of the same worldly network within which it subsists. A point calls for a genuine decision in the strongest sense insofar as the act of choosing in the face of a confronted point cannot appeal automatically to any pre-given laws or rules in the already-there *status quo* situation of the world; habituated mechanical recurrence to established adjudicating procedures and principles fails to provide an authentic measure of the implications and stakes stretching beyond this node within structure, a node within structure where structure no longer exhaustively determines itself. Badiou maintains that subjects-of-events, in encountering and passing through points (i.e., in facing and making decisions when confronted by these either/or forks in the, as it were, road

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 426.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 427.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 438–439, 461, 614.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 459.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Alain Badiou, "Matters of Appearance: An Interview with Alain Badiou (with Lauren Sedofsky)," *Artforum International*, vol. 45, no. 3, November 2006, p. 322.

⁵⁷ Alain Badiou, "*Projet d'intervention d'Alain Badiou au 6^e Congrès du P.S.U.*," *Contribution au problème de la construction d'un parti marxiste-léniniste de type nouveau*, Paris: François Maspero, 1970, p. 38.

to Damascus), construct post-evental “bodies” of truth (with “body” being another conceptual innovation of *Logics of Worlds*) – “guarantee of connection between subjective time and eternity, the choice, if it is energetic and without condition, localizes the subject in the element of truth.”⁵⁸ In line with the general theme of the immanence of the eternal (as evental truths) to time running throughout *Logics of Worlds*,⁵⁹ Badiou ties together two related assertions here: One, decisions taken with respect to points unfold as a diachronic-temporal sequence of particular choices in a world; Two, the event-linked truths-separate-from-knowledge informing and being formed by these decisions, decisions taken without advance coverage or guarantee by a pre-existent worldly order, are timeless *qua* resistant to being situated with respect to the diachronic-temporal matrices of standard versions of historical time. Hence, points, as potential loci in which the out-of-historical-time event-subject-truth axis confronts the chrono-logic of the situated world and its history, conjoin the eternal and the temporal. But, what is a Badiouian body, and how is this concept linked to that of the point?

In the “Dictionary of Concepts” at the back of *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou defines a body in his sense as a “multiple-being that, under condition of an event, carries a subjective formalism and hence makes this subjective formalism appear in a world”⁶⁰ (with “subjective formalism” being defined as “the different combinations by which a body enters into a relation with a present”⁶¹). That is to say, a Badiouian body (as conceptualized in “Book VII” of *Logics of Worlds*, entitled “What is a body?”) is an “agent” operating within a world on behalf of an evental truth.⁶² If a Badiouian subject is a finite, local instance of an infinite, non-local truth,⁶³ then a body is that which concretely materializes within the world the post-evental subject-truth trajectory bisecting this same world. A body bears this trajectory and deploys it in contact with worldly situations.⁶⁴ Badiou describes the body as the “materiality of a subject of truth.”⁶⁵ Obviously, this is a definition of “body” that has no necessary relation with the common meaning of this word (although

⁵⁸ Badiou, *Logiques des mondes*, p. 454.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17–18, 21–22, 42, 46, 76, 593. Cf. also: Badiou, “Matters of Appearance,” p. 249.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 606.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 609.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 473, 475.

⁶³ Badiou, “On a Finally Objectless Subject,” p. 25. Cf. also: Tarby, *La philosophie d’Alain Badiou*, p. 17; Tarby, *Matérialismes d’aujourd’hui*, p. 106.

⁶⁴ Badiou, *Logiques des mondes*, p. 53, 55. Cf. also: Badiou, “Matters of Appearance,” p. 252.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 505.

Badiou might allow that the physical bodies of individuals, insofar as they give themselves over to appropriation by more-than-physical event-subject-truth sequences, can be transubstantiated from bodies as mere organic entities to bodies as material bearers of trans-world truths made immanent to worlds).

Logics of Worlds stipulates that, relative to a given world in which degrees of existence (running from the inexistent as an invisible absence of appearing in a world to the maximally existent as the most intensely visible appearing in a world) are distributed in a certain fashion by that world's transcendental regime, an event revolutionarily renders that which was invisibly inexistent before its happening brilliantly visible as the most palpably existent worldly constituent in the wake of its post-evental aftermath.⁶⁶ In this vein, Badiou claims that, "the elements of a body [...] are those whose identity with the becoming existent of the inexistent are measured by the intensity of their own existence."⁶⁷ He then stipulates that, "a post-evental body is composed of all the elements of a site that invest the totality of their existence in their identity with the trace of the event,"⁶⁸ adding that, "if one employs a military metaphor for it: the body is the ensemble of everything mobilized by the trace of the event"⁶⁹ (and, in his April 2006 radio interview given in connection with the publication of *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou speaks of parties as political bodies, arguing that there is a contemporary crisis affecting these bodies' capacities for action and, hence, testifying to the need for a new, yet-to-be-specified form of political organization⁷⁰). A few pages later, Badiou elaborates further:

A body, in its totality, is that which gathers the terms of a site maximally engaged in a sort of ontological allegiance to the new appearing of an inexistent which makes a trace of the event. That which is tapped and mobilized by the post-evental sublimation of the inexistent is a body. Its coherence is that of the internal compatibility of its elements, guaranteed by their shared ideal subordination to the primordial trace. But the efficacy of a body, oriented toward the consequences (and therefore toward the subjective formalism, which is the art of consequences as

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 397–398, 400, 416, 417–418, 600–601. Cf. also: Alain Badiou, "The Paris Commune: A Political Declaration on Politics," *Polemics* (trans. Steve Corcoran), London: Verso, 2006, p. 286–287; Badiou, "Matters of Appearance," p. 251.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 489.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Alain Badiou, "La logique des mondes: Audio-Lecture – France Culture," <http://www.lacan.com/badiouone.htm>.

the constitution of a new present), plays itself out locally, point by point. The test of a body is always that of an alternative. A point is that which returns the constituents of a body to the challenge of Two.⁷¹

Badiou then proceeds to mention what he terms the “organs” of such a body, these being the sub-component parts of a subject-bearing body fashioned so as to address specific challenges raised by particular points encountered along the way of a truth-trajectory. Organs are “the immanent synthesis of the regional efficacy of a body.”⁷² One could say that a Badiouian body evolves, sprouting new organs and becoming endowed with greater virulent vitality, through aleatory collisions with various points cropping up along its path⁷³ (as the cliché saying goes, that which doesn’t kill it only makes it stronger) – “The efficacy of the subjective becoming of a body is [...] a tributary of the points of a world that it encounters.”⁷⁴

What does this detour through the inter-connected concepts of points and bodies (as formulated in *Logics of Worlds*) have to do with the prior guiding thread of discussion, namely, the apparent prioritization of names over affects in Badiou’s accounts of forcing? The answer resides in “Section 2” of “Book VII” of *Logics of Worlds*, a section simply entitled “Lacan.” Therein, Badiou alleges that the Lacanian notion of corporeality is one according to which the body is ultimately just “the receptacle for the struck blow of the Other”⁷⁵ (i.e., the bodily being of the individual is an existence overwritten by the signifiers of the symbolic order). Affect, according to Badiou’s version of Lacan’s perspective on these matters, is therefore nothing more than a quasi-corporeal registration of “blows” coming from the big Other, an embodied effect of the impressions made on corporeal materiality by signifying being(s)⁷⁶ – “the body is subordinated to the signifier. On this account, it is, for the subject, exposition to the Other; there is no action of the body, but only its investment by structure, and the sign of this investment is affect.”⁷⁷ The Badiouian reading of the Lacanian body obviously brings the latter conception of the corporeal into line with treating the body as a concrete bearer of and material support for an event-subject-truth configuration – “we are able to grant to Lacan that the body is the place of the Other, since for us it

⁷¹ Badiou, *Logiques des mondes*, p. 492.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 493.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 476.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 499.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 500.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

is nothing but the evental becoming-Other of the site which commands the possibility of a body of truth.”⁷⁸ On the next page, Badiou expands upon this link with Lacan:

[...] there is the effect of truth only through incorporation. To what? To the new body that electrifies the struck blow of the trace. If [...] it is precisely through its affect that the human animal recognizes that he participates, as an incorporated body, in some subject of truth, one will say, like Lacan, that “it is as incorporated that structure produces affect” [...] I interconnect without hesitation with Lacan’s construction, which incorporates the natural body as a stigmata of the Other.⁷⁹

Succinctly stated, Badiou, ventriloquizing through Lacan, posits that names (as signifier-like “traces” emitted by the alterity of events) precede affects (as tangible “electrifications” of these evental names effectuated through such marks being registered and assimilated by subject-bearing bodies) – in short, the latter (i.e., affects) are the subsequent effects of the former (i.e., names). Returning to the example of courage, an affect crucial to the strong beliefs and convinced confidence essential to the subjective labor of forcing, the implication here would be that the courage of post-evental subjectivity comes from elsewhere, more specifically, from the signifier-like traces arising out of events.

And yet, despite a tendency to treat affects as after-effects of event-related processes, Badiou, in his *Ethics*, doesn’t exactly maintain that the names mobilized by the forcing procedures engaged in by subjects-of-events generate affects (whether courage or any other affects) *ex nihilo*, conjuring into existence emotions and feelings that were utterly absent in the individual prior to his/her transubstantiation into a subject. Instead, ethical perseverance is described there as harnessing the already-there affective resources of the human animal:

The “technique” of consistency is singular in each case, depending on the “animal” traits of some-one. To the consistency of the subject that he is in part become, having been convoked [*requis*] and seized by a truth-process, this particular “some-one” will contribute his anguish and agitation, this other his tall stature and cool composure, this other his voracious taste for domination, and these others their melancholy, or timidity [...] All the ma-

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 501.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 502.

terial of human multiplicity can be fashioned, linked, by a “consistency” – while at the same time, of course, it opposes to this fashioning the worst kinds of inertia, and exposes the “some-one” to the permanent temptation of giving up, of returning to the mere belonging to the “ordinary” situation, of erasing the effects of the not-known.⁸⁰

Badiou adds:

The place of ethics is indicated by the chronic conflict between two functions of the multiple material that makes up the whole being of a “some-one”: on the one hand, its simple deployment, his belonging to the situation, or what we might call the *principle of interest*; on the other, consistency, the linking of the known by the not-known, or what we might call the *subjective principle*.⁸¹

In the first of these two quotations immediately above, Badiou describes affects (and, more generally, the varying capacities and dispositions of particular human animals) as pre-existent aspects of individuals and not as after-the-fact effects produced by animal individuality being transformed into a form of post-evental subjectivity with its supporting more-than-biological body. This already-there “material of human multiplicity” (including, as he indicates, the emotions, feelings, and passions of pre-evental individuals) can be harnessed by “the consistency of the subject” (in the terms of *Logics of Worlds*, by the subjective formalism borne by an eventually charged body). However, as Badiou also observes, affective animality is a double-edged sword capable of slicing both ways: Although essential to the enduring coherence of event-subject-truth constellations, these volatile features of human individuals inherently entail the risk of betrayals of or reactions against such constellations (through a de-subjectifying return to non-evental “business as usual” in the interests of psychological and/or physiological comfort). As Badiou puts it later in his *Ethics*, “The Immortal exists only in and by the mortal animal”⁸² (similarly, in *Theory of the Subject*, he asserts that there is always a body where there is a subject, but not vice versa⁸³). In other words, the characteristics of “the mortal animal” (such as the spectrum of this creature’s affects) simultaneously shelter the twin potentials to both enable and disrupt evental subjectification (i.e., the “Immortal”). Furthermore,

⁸⁰ Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 48.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁸³ Badiou, *Théorie du sujet*, p. 306.

subjects-of-events cannot come into effective existence without enabling affects buttressing their attachments to events and these events' respective truths. In *Ethics*, Badiou, following his distinction between "principles of interest" (affects as gluing individual human animals to known situations, these being the affective interests shaken up and disturbed by the impact of an event⁸⁴) and "subjective principles" (affects as reinforcing the positions of subjects within post-evental truth-trajectories) invoked in the second of the two block quotations above, refers to subjectively harnessed affects (i.e., subjective principles) as "disinterested interests"; when the feelings and passions of individuals are decoupled from animal-level self-concern and reorganized through the deployed discipline of a persevering fidelity to a post-evental truth-process, these affective forces are transubstantiated from principles of interest into subjective principles or disinterested interests.⁸⁵

Badiou is well aware that his ethical glosses on the distinction between the all-too-human individual and the "immortal" subject of truth sound, at least initially, quite similar to very traditional intellectualist injunctions to renounce the impure affects often preached by philosophy from Plato onward. But, through his conception of "affects of truth," he sees himself as rejecting this doctrine of renunciation:

Let us call "renunciation" the belief that we must cut back on the pursuit of our interests – the pursuit which, outside truth, constitutes the whole of our multiple-being. Is there renunciation when a truth seizes me? Certainly not, since this seizure manifests itself by unequalled intensities of existence. We can name them: in love, there is happiness; in science, there is joy (in Spinoza's sense: intellectual beatitude); in politics, there is enthusiasm; and in art, there is pleasure. These "affects of truth," at the same moment that they signal the entry of some-one into a subjective composition, render empty all considerations of renunciation. Experience amply demonstrates the point, more than amply.⁸⁶

Corresponding to the four "conditions" generating the truths handled by philosophy (i.e., love, science, politics, and art), Badiou enumerates four affects: happiness (corresponding to love), joy (corresponding to science), enthusiasm (corresponding to politics), and pleasure (corresponding to art). In relation to these four conditions, the four affects of truth arguably function as both catalysts and by-products at the same time, carrying subjects

⁸⁴ Tarby, *La philosophie d'Alain Badiou*, p. 146.

⁸⁵ Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 48–49.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

along in amorous, scientific, political, and artistic truth-procedures as well as being generated in and through these same truth-procedures. Perhaps such affects signal the establishment of a self-reinforcing virtuous circle, a positive feedback-loop, for the subjects of these truth-procedures (for example, enthusiasm draws a political subject further into a more committed engagement with the procedures of a genuine politics, and this further engagement generates further commitment-enhancing enthusiasm).

In “Book I” of *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou, describing specific affects as “local anthropological signs” of “new intra-worldly relations” ushered into existence through subjective fidelities to event-disclosed truths, reiterates these pairings of politics-enthusiasm, art-pleasure, love-happiness, and science-joy.⁸⁷ Elsewhere in this work, he lists four different affects that “signal the incorporation of a human animal into the subjective process of a truth”: terror, anxiety, courage, and justice⁸⁸ (it should be noted that, in 1982, Badiou says of such affects that they aren’t to be viewed as “states of consciousness,” but, rather, as “categories of the subject-effect”⁸⁹). And, whereas happiness, joy, enthusiasm, and pleasure are affects tied to specific generic procedures of truth-production (i.e., love, science, politics, and art respectively), Badiou doesn’t tie terror, anxiety, courage, and justice to particular types of truths in the same way, instead associating the latter four affects with any and every event-generated truth. That is to say, happiness, joy, enthusiasm, and pleasure reinforce amorous, scientific, political, and artistic truth-procedures respectively; terror, anxiety, courage, and justice are involved in the trajectory of every truth (be it amorous, scientific, political, or artistic). Despite this distinction between, as it were, procedure-specific versus procedure-general affects, these are all “affects of truth.” And, insofar as Badiou is willing to grant that these affective phenomena play an indispensable part as enabling conditions facilitating processes unfolding along event-subject-truth lines,⁹⁰ he is, as he indicates, far from preaching a standard philosophical doctrine of renunciation (as per, for instance, an ethics of pure practical reason purportedly transcending the volatile phenomenal turbulence of human being).

However, in both the *Handbook of Inaesthetics* as well as select portions of *Logics of Worlds*, there are subtle but noticeable indications that Badiou feels less than completely comfortable with the topic of affect despite his above-summarized concessions regarding the crucial contributions affects

⁸⁷ Badiou, *Logiques des mondes*, p. 85, 86.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 96–97.

⁸⁹ Badiou, *Théorie du sujet*, p. 307.

⁹⁰ Badiou, *Logiques des mondes*, p. 98–99.

make to evental phenomena. In the *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, he insists that a vanished event's residual traces can function as names (i.e., as signifying coordinates for post-evental labors of forcing) only if a decision is made to treat these traces as such.⁹¹ One must recall here that every Badiouian event involves, in fact, at least two events: event₁ as a first happening (i.e., an initial event appearing-and-disappearing) followed, after-the-fact, by event₂ as a second happening (i.e., a subsequent event in which it is decided that the past first happening is, in hindsight, to be recognized and baptized as an event per se).⁹² Additionally, Badiou repeatedly describes event-truth ensembles as "un-decidable" or "indiscernible" in relation to the established order of what is acknowledged as existing.⁹³ More specifically apropos the present discussion, his account of events stipulates that nothing within existent states-of-situations or knowledge-encyclopedias legitimates and underwrites the groundless decision-without-guarantee (as a second event in relation to a first event) to elevate a prior occurrence to an evental status. In fact, insofar as an event involves constituents not counted as existing by the established order of things, there isn't even anything to be decided upon to begin with from the perspective of a state-of-the-situation and/or the transcendental regime of a world. But, for those affected in such a way as to feel themselves interpellated from beyond the ordinary reality of their worldly situation by a transpired "x," this "x" and its traces form, in the terminology of *Logics of Worlds*, points for which yes-or-no decisions are called: Is this "x" an event? If the answer is "yes," is this or that given trace to be treated as a name intimately connected with this event? Such yes-or-no questions cannot be answered through an appeal to already-there situational/worldly frameworks of classification and understanding. Unlicensed answers are the sole option here in the absence of any licensed means of discerning and deciding.

The *Handbook of Inaesthetics* speaks of a decision to appropriate traces as names (a decision following closely on the heels of event₂ as itself a self-legitimizing decision to recognize event₁ as an event per se). And, *Logics of Worlds* speaks of such decisions to appropriate traces as names (decisions made in response to intra-worldly points) as "without condition."⁹⁴ As seen, some of these conditions that point-prompted decisions are "without" have

⁹¹ Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, p. 130.

⁹² Badiou, "L'entretien de Bruxelles," p. 9. Cf. also: Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 206, 209–210; Badiou, *Peut-on penser la politique?*, p. 101; Tarby, *La philosophie d'Alain Badiou*, p. 87.

⁹³ Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 201–202, 512, 525; Tarby, *Matérialismes d'aujourd'hui*, p. 29.

⁹⁴ Badiou, *Logiques des mondes*, p. 454.

to do with onto-logical structures – in particular, the extant languages and epistemologies of given situations and/or worlds as conditioning decisions with regard to points (i.e., points that, if decided upon in certain fashions, become events and their respective associated signifier-names). Decisions to treat a past happening as an event and to identify specific traces of said happening as signifier-names of this event are not and cannot be conditioned by a state-of-the-situation and/or the transcendental regime of a world because, in relation to the specificity of the very material at stake in such decisions (as per *Being and Event*, this material being singular, abnormal multiples⁹⁵), these states/regimes offer neither recognition nor rules (as Monique David-Ménard clarifies, there are, in fact, two intermingled varieties of indeterminacy and undecidability at play in the Badiouian theory of the event: that pertaining to the event itself [event₁] with respect to its surrounding situation/world plus that pertaining to the decision to name this past happening an event [event₂]⁹⁶). However, an interesting question to raise here is: According to Badiou, are affects (especially as already-there features of the pre-evental individual human animal) among the conditions from which these decisions-without-condition subtract themselves?

Near the end of the seventh and final book of *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou enumerates five conditions necessary for the genesis of a subjectified post-evental body arising in the wake of an event, a body willing and able to confront the salient-but-thorny junctures of various pressing points. In the absence of such a body, an “x” that could have been an event (with “event” defined in *Logics of Worlds* as a maximally existent singularity whose ensuing situational/worldly consequences are maximal as well⁹⁷) fails actually to become an event given that there is no material support (i.e., body) to bring to bear upon the existent situation/world the potentially maximal consequences of this appeared-and-disappeared “x.” Evental openings do not necessarily generate bodies; these openings can be “without consequence.”⁹⁸ A world in which the genesis of a truth-bearing body is possible must not be atonal, stable, inconsequent, inactive, or inorganic.⁹⁹ In other words, there

⁹⁵ Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 173–174, 175; Tarby, *Matérialismes d’aujourd’hui*, p. 99–100.

⁹⁶ Monique David-Ménard, “Être et existence dans la pensée d’Alain Badiou,” *Alain Badiou: Penser le multiple – Actes du Colloque de Bordeaux, 21–23 octobre 1999* (ed. Charles Ramond), Paris: L’Harmattan, 2002, p. 36–37.

⁹⁷ Badiou, *Logiques des mondes*, p. 397–398, 400, 416, 417–418, 600–601. Cf. also: Badiou, “The Paris Commune,” p. 283, 286–287, 288–289; Badiou, “Matters of Appearance,” p. 251.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 512.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 514.

are five conditions of possibility for a body coming to be in a world: One, the transcendental regime of the world must allow for and create the existence of points¹⁰⁰ (i.e., tonality); Two, there must have been an event in the world¹⁰¹ (i.e., instability); Three, there must be a sufficient number of elements appropriated by an event and its site for the formation of a coherent body capable of post-eventally sustaining the implications of the event¹⁰² (i.e., consequentiality); Four, there must be a sufficient number of elements within each constituted body for the efficacious treatment of the post-evental points that surface in connection with the event¹⁰³ (i.e., activity); Five, each constituted body must contain appropriate “organs” for engagement with the post-evental points it encounters¹⁰⁴ (i.e., organicity). In light of the query posed at the end of the previous paragraph, what strikes the eye here is the absence of any explicit reference whatsoever to affects (*à la* the “affects of truth” spoken of in *Ethics*, among other places).

One might argue that concepts of affectivity are implicit in Badiou’s five listed conditions of possibility for the genesis of a subjectified post-evental body. In “Section 2” of “Book VII” of *Logics of Worlds* (the section entitled “Lacan” glossed previously), doesn’t Badiou explicitly address the topic of affect via a reading of the position of corporeality in Lacanian theory? Yes – but, as seen, he indicates there that affects are after-the-fact phenomena produced by (rather than preceding as pre-existent) the prior impact of an event’s alterity (as per Badiou’s translation of Lacan’s Other into the evental “x” alien to the human individual) – and this contrary to earlier indications in his 1993 *Ethics* to the effect that affects are pre-existent enabling factors for the forging and perpetuation of a subject’s forceful post-evental truth-pursuits. Hence, at least for Badiou *circa* 2006, it seems that affects are not to be considered already-there, pre-evental conditions for the auto-authorizing gestures erecting the scaffolding of event-subject-truth frameworks. They are, rather, subsequent effects generated exclusively in the aftermath of a past event.

As with so much else in Badiou’s thinking, the affects that come to be entangled in event-driven truth-trajectories are, more often than not, conceived of solely as post-evental. First there is event₁. Then, there is event₂. Event₂ is the decision to acknowledge event₁ as an event strictly speaking. Once this has happened (i.e., following the second event of baptism in which the

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 512–513.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 513.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 513–514.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 514.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

first event is christened an event per se), there are subsequent occurrences of decisions-without-condition (as described by Badiou in both the *Handbook of Inaesthetics* and *Logics of Worlds*) taken with regard to points (“points” in the Badiouian sense) at which traces present themselves, traces calling for decisions as to whether or not they are associated with the event in question. Those traces decided to be associated with the event thereby become names (i.e., signifier-like marks of the past event mobilized in the course of the evental subject’s post-evental labors of forcing). And, in many contexts, Badiou proposes that affects (especially those affects, like courage, fortifying the ethical consistency of persevering evental subjectivity) are conditioned, stirred into existence and thereafter nourished, by those post-evental traces-become-names fashioned as a result of unconditioned subjective decisions.¹⁰⁵

However, in “Book IV” of *Logics of Worlds* (entitled “Theory of Points”), Badiou asserts that, “the declaration of the atonality of a world cannot but be ideological.”¹⁰⁶ States-of-situations and transcendental regimes of worlds proclaim that their present is without points (i.e., atonal) – they attempt to mask the latent presence of intra-systemic nodes of volatile tension – so as to buttress their appearance of possessing an enduring monolithic solidity invulnerable to disruption and subversion. This appearance is generally just apparent; the statist big Other usually isn’t nearly as “big” as it struggles to seem. In the face of this ideological masquerade, this motivated denial of the existence of situation/world-immanent loci of potential event-level change, Badiou encourages those confronting this alleged atonality to have the courage to affirm the existence of at least one point (contrary to the statist declaration of the, as it were, point-less nature of the *status quo*) within the world through which it is possible to become an “anonymous hero”¹⁰⁷ (i.e., a subject-of-an-event faithful to evental truth[s]). So, perhaps this particular variety of courage could be described as the affective confidence or fortitude of pre-evental human individuals, individuals (as opposed to post-evental more-than-human subjects) stuck in worlds ostensibly still awaiting the arrival of the “*il y a*” of an event, to risk treating coordinates of the current worldly situation as if these coordinates are points of evental potentials – and to do so before the tangible promise of an event-level happening becomes visible.

Slavoj Žižek also takes up the Badiouian concept of the point. In his recent text “Badiou: Notes from an Ongoing Debate,” he argues that, “The

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 445.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

first task of the emancipatory politics is [...] to distinguish between ‘false’ and ‘true’ points, ‘false’ and ‘true’ choices.”¹⁰⁸ As just observed, Badiou identifies one tactic of statist ideology as the gesture of representing contemporary circumstances as atonal (i.e., lacking points, point-less). Žižek supplements this by identifying another ideological tactic with the same end (i.e., the prevention of serious challenges to the established order of things arising): disguising as genuine choices, as point-like “yes-or-no” crossroads of decision, alternatives that offer no real alternative to reigning systems (Badiou and Žižek undoubtedly would concur that the “for us or against us” choices insisted upon by both Bush and Bin Laden are perfect examples of false points). Whether by throwing a discouraging wet blanket over the terrain of the present so as to cover and smother any immanent kernels of possible radical transformation of this same present (Badiou) or by creating misleading distractions that confuse and obscure the distinction between authentic points and their inauthentic semblances (Žižek), statist ideologies strive to forestall in advance the arrival of any destabilizing revolutionary changes, to nip the pre-conditions of potentially momentous upheavals in the bud. Since this tactically nimble and savvy enemy wisely already begins its preemptory offensive during pre-evental time, the fight against it must occur within this time too. Waiting around for the saving grace an event to fall out of the sky isn’t always a promising option. In certain times, the only real option is to make efforts (in Badiou’s own terms) to force an event, to precipitate “prematurely” the genesis of genuine change.

In his *Ethics*, Badiou, momentarily deviating from his penchant for casting the human animal in a somewhat unflattering light, is willing to grant that certain emotions and feelings forming part of this animal’s make-up (i.e., aspects of the individual’s pre-evental being) are able to play an important part in cementing in place the conviction and consistency of a subject-of-an-event. But, generally, Badiou tends to maintain that these “affects of truth” reinforcing post-evental processes come into effective operation only once decisions-without-condition have been made that create an event-subject-truth configuration. And yet, taking into consideration what was said in the immediately prior paragraphs, are there not ample reasons for thinking through differently the status and role of pre-evental affects? More specifically, as regards those affects justifiably focused on by Badiou in discussions concerning the sorts of movements of change that interest him most, one could contend that, whether faced with ideological declarations of worldly

¹⁰⁸ Slavoj Žižek, “Badiou: Notes from an Ongoing Debate,” *International Journal of Žižek Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2007.

atonality or ideological representations of false points as true ones, what is required of those desiring transformations yielding political emancipations is courage and conviction before (and not merely after) evental occurrences transpire.

Logics of Worlds contains an appendix-like section entitled “Enquiries, comments, and digressions.” Therein, Badiou mentions the two-volume project of the “young philosopher” Mehdi Belhaj Kacem (the two volumes being *Event and Repetition*, with a foreword by Badiou, and *Affect*, both published in 2004).¹⁰⁹ He notes that Kacem’s work, drawing on Lacanian and Deleuzian concepts in the course of its engagement with Badiouian philosophy, seeks to highlight “the importance of affect in the evental constitution of a subject.”¹¹⁰ So, it might sound as though this endeavor here risks reduplicating the philosophical efforts of Kacem. However, despite some overlap with Kacem’s labors at select intersecting points of agreement apropos Badiou’s treatment of affects, there are certain key moves Kacem doesn’t make – indeed, he refuses and rejects such moves – that are central to this present project.

Before spelling out the crucial differences between this project and that pursued by Kacem, it would be appropriate briefly to take note of the specific propositions advanced in Kacem’s approach to Badiouian thought affirmed here as compelling and valid. To begin with, Kacem rightly emphasizes the importance of the potent affects of a more-than-merely-sexual *jouissance* in any and every evental phenomenon. He justifiably dismisses the interpretive restriction of the semantic scope of this Lacanian term to the domain of sexuality as too narrow, pleading instead for a “subtractive” (in Badiou’s sense) understanding of this notion as an unconditional thrust manifested as the affects of truth associated with each of the four domains of subject-driven truth-production identified by Badiou and already discussed here previously.¹¹¹ Similarly, he insists that affects defy standard Lacanian and/or Badiouian schemas of theoretical categorization¹¹² (for instance, with respect to Badiou’s distinction between “democratic materialism” [positing that, “There are only bodies and languages”] and the “materialist dialectic” [countering that, “There are only bodies and languages, except that there are also truths”] as delineated in the opening pages of *Logics of Worlds*,¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Badiou, *Logiques des mondes*, p. 550.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 550.

¹¹¹ Mehdi Belhaj Kacem, *Événement et répétition*, Paris: Éditions Tristram, 2004, p. 230–231.

¹¹² Mehdi Belhaj Kacem, *L’affect*, Paris: Éditions Tristram, 2004, p. 172–173.

¹¹³ Badiou, *Logiques des mondes*, p. 9–10, 12–13, 15.

Kacemian affects would constitute a fourth category irreducible to bodies, languages, and/or truths).

Kacem defines affect as the intrusion of *jouissance* into the realms of representation¹¹⁴ (in Badiouian parlance, this would be to say simply that affective forces disrupt the state-of-the-situation). And, he correlatively speaks of the *jouissance* of the event¹¹⁵ (in an essay on the topic of structural change as addressed in the works of Lacan and Badiou, Oliver Feltham expresses skepticism about whether “Badiou’s philosophy can account for the role of *jouissance* in such change”¹¹⁶ – dovetailing with this doubt, it should be observed that Kacem’s notion of affective *jouissance* as subtractive is nowhere to be found in Badiou’s own texts). In *Event and Repetition*, Kacem, referring to the title of Badiou’s 1988 *magnum opus*, contends that, “Affect is *the being of the event* for the speaking animal”¹¹⁷ (early on in the sequel text *Affect*, he reiterates this contention,¹¹⁸ and, later in this same text, adds a clarifying reminder that these affects lending a degree of ontological heft to evanescent events are irruptive upsurges of a *jouissance* “beyond the sexual”¹¹⁹). For Kacem, “the event is the place of major affects” and it “has as its index affects.”¹²⁰ Minus an appropriate accompanying affective charge, an event is doomed to vanish as an inconsequential transient transgression of the laws of ontology, of being *qua* being as what is (with Badiou defining the event as an “illegal” multiple whose property of functioning as a set that counts itself as one of its own elements violates the basic set theoretic rules of *l’être en tant qu’être*¹²¹). Put differently, if an event fails to stir up a sufficient amount of energy in terms of affects, it will fail to leave lasting transformative marks on the world in which it suddenly flashes and then abruptly vanishes.

Additionally, Kacem claims that human beings alone enjoy the capacity to inscribe the affects of a more-than-sexual *jouissance* (as subtracted from representational states-of-situations) into forms and structures permitting iterations and repetitions.¹²² In other words, individuals struck by the momentary affective impact of a fleeting event are able to draw out and re-instanti-

¹¹⁴ Kacem, *Événement et répétition*, p. 171.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 198. Cf. also : Kacem, *L’affect*, p. 92–93.

¹¹⁶ Oliver Feltham, “Enjoy Your Stay: Structural Change in *Seminar XVII*,” in: *Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis: Reflections on Seminar XVII* (ed. Justin Clemens and Russell Grigg), Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, p. 192.

¹¹⁷ Kacem, *Événement et répétition*, p. 199.

¹¹⁸ Kacem, *L’affect*, p. 16.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

¹²¹ Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 179, 180–181, 184, 189–190.

¹²² Kacem, *L’affect*, p. 163, 169.

ate the affects thus aroused. Such a *jouissance*-fueled extenuation of events is what paves the way both for the linking of Badiou's first event (i.e., event₁) to the second event of the first event's retroactive recognition by a subject-of-that-specific-event (i.e., event₂) as well as for the struggle to bring the implications of evental currents to bear on the "normality" of the *status quo* (insofar as the affect-sustained power of repetition keeps events alive so that they can continue to change subsequent situations).¹²³ Obviously, Badiou's conception of fidelity is at stake here. Kacem convincingly describes this faithfulness as a compulsive *jouissance* overwhelming the event-interpellated person for whom undergoing submission to this experience is akin to the ordeal of falling in love. This subjective fidelity is certainly not a stance endorsed by the individual in a calm and reflective manner through cold cognitive deliberation. If an affective investment in an event and its associated elements truly has occurred, it is as though, at least according to Kacem, the subject-of-the-event has no choice but to remain faithfully committed to its chosen event-truth trajectory.¹²⁴ Along these lines, the affects associated with fidelity create and reinforce varieties of heroism.¹²⁵

This project endorses all of the above-summarized facets of Kacem's treatment of Badiou's philosophy. However, apart from two inter-related assertions made by Kacem that are quite dubious from a psychoanalytic perspective – he insists both that the affective involves a sort of "absolute presence"¹²⁶ as well as that affects are fundamentally honest and incapable of succumbing to repression¹²⁷ – there is, from this standpoint here, one major problem with his position: Kacem, concurring with Badiou, denies the possibility of pre-evental prophecies able to anticipate the potential arrivals of events.¹²⁸ Coupled with this, his references to Badiou's four affects of truth seem to indicate that he accepts the characterization of these affective forces as strictly post-evental.¹²⁹ Thus, the pre-evental is again problematically neglected and left shrouded in darkness – and this despite the fact that Kacem's previously mentioned theses about the uniquely human ability to entwine the affective with the representational indicates some sort of awareness of the need philosophically to examine the faculties of pre-evental individuality preceding the genesis of post-evental subjectivity (with the former

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 163–164.

¹²⁴ Kacem, *Événement et répétition*, p. 153.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

¹²⁶ Kacem, *L'affect*, p. 165, 174, 177–178, 182.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

¹²⁸ Kacem, *Événement et répétition*, p. 203.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 218–219.

arguably having somehow to contain certain conditions for the possibility of the latter).

Near the end of *Event and Repetition*, Kacem alludes to Badiou's discussion of the link between anxiety and courage in *Theory of the Subject* (more specifically, the idea of courage being the inverse or reverse side of anxiety).¹³⁰ In that 1982 text, Badiou characterizes courage as a putting-to-work of anxiety, with the latter depicted (using Lacan's vocabulary) as an effect of the disruption of the Symbolic by the Real¹³¹ (Kacem's above-cited definition of affect as the intrusion of more-than-merely-sexual *jouissance* into the realms of representation echoes this Badiouian depiction of anxiety). Translated into the terminology of Badiou's later work – *Logics of Worlds* indeed speaks of “terror” and “anxiety” as the first two affects registering respectively the initial disturbance of an event and the facing up to the yes-or-no points connected with it, affects through which each subject-of-an-event necessarily must pass in the dynamics of evental subjectification¹³² – courage is the affective fortitude able to turn the anxiety-inducing shock of an unexpected rupture (as an unsettling interruption of a state-of-the-situation and/or transcendental regime of a world) into a deployable program of sustained inquiring and forcing (i.e., an enduring event-subject-truth constellation).

In the Badiouian fashion of pairing anxiety and courage, anxiety is associated with the instability of an event and courage with both the strength to endure this anxiety as well as the ability to respond to this upsetting affect in ways that entail faithfully tarrying with the evental cause of anxiety (through the militant fidelity of post-evental subjective labors on behalf of the given event-cause). And yet, what about stable situations and atonal worlds as contexts unruffled by the buffeting blows of events? Badiou's cataloguing of affects arguably ignores another variety of anxiety, one which palpably hangs in the air today: not the anxiety of evental instability, but the anxiety of non-evental claustrophobia, the agitated, nervous feeling of being trapped in the stasis of a system that seems to be highly resistant to extreme and extensive modifications. Stable situations and atonal worlds generate a particular type of anxious negative affect different from that provoked by the upheavals of events. If courage should be linked to anxiety, then, if there is non-evental in addition to evental anxiety, shouldn't another conception of courage, a non-evental one, be forged too? In a January 2007 piece entitled “The Contemporary Figure of the Soldier in Politics and Poetry,” Badiou

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

¹³¹ Badiou, *Théorie du sujet*, p. 176–177.

¹³² Badiou, *Logiques des mondes*, p. 96–97, 98–99.

asks, “Is there a place, in a disoriented world, for a new style of heroism?”¹³³ A similarly structured question should be posed here: Is there a place, in an apparently established world, for a new kind of bravery? *Theory of the Subject* contains a remark about courage that can be read as gesturing in this direction – “All courage returns to passing there where before it hadn’t been foreseeable that anyone could find a passage.”¹³⁴ In situations and worlds where it appears that nothing on the order of the evental is to be found (i.e., contexts seemingly devoid of passages), certain pre-evental human beings might nonetheless be brave enough to wager investing their faith in incredibly uncertain prospects for potential change that have yet actually to transpire. Sometimes, this is the only source of a hope that sustains those who are neither pre-evental individuals wholly entangled in the relational matrices of the *status quo* situation/world nor post-evental subjects fully subtracted from such relational matrices.

As is well known, starting in the seventh seminar, Lacan develops the notion of a state “between-two-deaths” (*entre-deux-morts*).¹³⁵ Badiouian philosophy ought to be supplemented with a notion of a state “between-two-lives,” namely, a space within which a human being struggles to exceed his/her status as an all-too-human individual (along with the entire surrounding environment connected with this identity) while not (at least not yet) being clearly identifiable as a proper subject *vis-à-vis* a distinct event-level happening. There must be something between what Badiou sharply and starkly contrasts as the living death of non-evental individuality versus the immortal life of evental subjectivity. In a 2006 lecture on “The Truth Procedure in Politics,” Badiou speaks of an “arithmetic war” between the Two of democratic materialism (i.e., bodies and languages) and the Three of the materialist dialectic (i.e., bodies and languages, plus truths).¹³⁶ But, with, on the one hand, the bodies and languages of democratic materialism, and, on the other opposed hand, the additional excess of the trans-corporeal, trans-linguistic truths of the materialist dialectic, this opposition itself arguably constitutes a Badiouian Two restrictively allowing only for either non-evental corporeal-linguistic individuality or subjectivity as bound up with a more-than-corporeal, more-than-linguistic event and its respective truth(s). At the risk of

¹³³ Badiou, “The Contemporary Figure of the Soldier in Politics and Poetry”.

¹³⁴ Badiou, *Théorie du sujet*, p. 310.

¹³⁵ Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII*, p. 320. Cf. also: Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre VIII: Le transfert, 1960–1961* (ed. Jacques-Alain Miller), Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001 (seconde édition corrigée), p. 122.

¹³⁶ Alain Badiou, “The Truth Procedure in Politics” (Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York City, November 18th, 2006), <http://www.lacan.com/blog/files/archive-1.html>.

igniting another separate arithmetic war between the Two and the Three, this author would like to suggest the viability of a third materialist position, drawing upon the theoretical resources of psychoanalysis in particular (including those resources proffered by Freud, Lacan, Laplanche, Žižek, and Kacem, among others), focused on an “x” situated in-between democratic materialist life and the life of the materialist dialectic. Badiou seems to have no confidence in such a Third, avoiding any mention or acknowledgment of it. What is being called for here is a metapsychological investigation into the affective, libidinal, and identificatory features of the pre-evental human psyche with an eye to discerning what, within these features partly tied to what could be designated as a sort of “constitution” or “nature,” harbors the possibility for a readiness or responsiveness to the transformative effects of evental interpellations (this would involve a Badiou-inspired reassessment of psychoanalytic metapsychology and its accompanying theory of subjectivity, a reassessment with real political stakes). Perhaps this third position should be labeled “transcendental materialism,” a materialism striving to account for how more-than-corporeal structures of subjectivity immanently surface out of the odd materiality of human corporeality (as a “corpo-Real” to be distinguished from the two bodies either of democratic materialism’s biopolitics or Badiou’s materialist dialectic).¹³⁷

As observed, Badiou, in some of his recent interventions, invokes the themes of war and the soldier, with military metaphors abounding throughout his corpus. In this vein, it’s worth dwelling for a moment on the notion of the “military-industrial complex.” This phrase, made popular in American political discourse thanks to U.S. President Eisenhower’s 1961 “Farewell Address to the Nation” (with his words of warning having proven to be powerfully prophetic), tends to connote the sense of a perverse reversal in the supposed proper order of things with respect to the fighting of wars. Instead of the defense establishment remaining strictly defensive (i.e., waging war solely in response to the provocation of external threats to the nation-state), a military-industrial complex is assumed actively to precipitate wars due to its

¹³⁷ Adrian Johnston, “Revulsion is not without its subject: Kant, Lacan, Žižek, and the Symptom of Subjectivity,” *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, no. 15, Spring 2004, p. 228. Cf. Adrian Johnston, “Against Embodiment: The Material Ground of the Immaterial Subject,” *Journal for Lacanian Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, December 2004, p. 250–251; Adrian Johnston, *Time Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005, p. 266, 340–341; Adrian Johnston, “Ghosts of Substance Past: Schelling, Lacan, and the Denaturalization of Nature,” *Lacan: The Silent Partners* (ed. Slavoj Žižek), London: Verso, 2006, p. 36–37, 46–47, 51, 52–53; Adrian Johnston, *Žižek’s Ontology: A Transcendental Materialist Theory of Subjectivity*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008.

institutional and financial interests. When a defense establishment becomes a military-industrial complex, it ceases to be defensive, dishonestly remaining so in name only. Apropos Badiou and the problem of the pre-evental, maybe what is required in contexts apparently lacking and resistant to possibly momentous changes is a militant theoretical collective – this would be the emancipatory inverted double of the figure of the oppressive military-industrial complex – as a war-machine in search of its war. Rather than, as it were, defensively waiting for an extra-philosophical event to spark conflicts and contradictions shaking up the *status quo*, a pre-evental militant theoretical collective (as a set of philosophical insurgents instead of the court of a Platonic philosopher-king, although both of these figural images reflect the wager of a faith in philosophy's political potentials) should aggressively go on the offensive, struggling to destabilize the seemingly stable through the minimal-yet-massive powers of thought.

For this sort of work, one must, at a gut level, believe that true points exist in one's seemingly point-less pre-evental world and that what one selects as promising true points really are true. That is to say, one must have the confidence to disbelieve ideological depictions of the times (especially times tied to potential and/or actual transformations). This confidence isn't just a fanciful story, a useful fiction for intervening actors to tell themselves so as to avoid getting dragged down into a cynical, quietist pessimism – this inspiring conviction is fully justified from a descriptive theoretical perspective. By contrast, those who manage to convince themselves that the order of the Other is here to stay, that the statist power of the present is firmly grounded and basically secure, are the ones clinging to a shaky arrangement with quiet desperation. Those who roll the dice betting on act/event-level transformations are, contrary to senseless common sense and vulgar popular opinion, sober realists – today's self-declared "realists" (i.e., those individuals banking on the indefinitely enduring continuity of current circumstances) are the ideologically intoxicated idealists enthralled by dreams of a non-existent, unattainable stability. In 1946, Mao unflinchingly declares that, as he puts it with elegant succinctness, "All reactionaries are paper tigers. In appearance, the reactionaries are terrifying, but in reality they are not so powerful. From a long-term point of view, it is not the reactionaries but the people who are really powerful."¹³⁸ Departing from this declaration, he subsequently pleads for a distinction between "tactical" and "strategic" outlooks, for a simultaneous dual-vision political perspective on the part of those engaged in struggling toward revolutionary change: The various short-term tactics

¹³⁸ Mao, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, p. 39.

mobilized from battle to battle require viewing, with deadly seriousness, the foes fought against as “real tigers,” while, at the same time, unshakable faith in eventual victory is sustained by a long-term strategy predicated upon the belief, supported by the “scientific” philosophical theory of Marxist historical materialism, in the ultimate weakness of the enemy as a “paper tiger.”¹³⁹ These statements should not be allowed to fall away as verbal cadavers into the dusty domain of mere textbook-style historical records.

For processes of pre-evental forcing, one must be brave enough to risk being wrong. One’s struggle to force an event can fail in various ways, perhaps even catastrophically. There are no extant guarantees given in advance that one’s world isn’t atonal or that discerned choices are indeed the real ones to be made. One’s gestures aimed at system-interrupting change might very well fall flat – or, much worse and more discouraging, be appropriated by one’s conservative adversaries, co-opted so as to become additional supports for the *status quo*. During a 1977 public lecture delivered on the occasion of his assumption to the Chair of Literary Semiology at the Collège de France, Roland Barthes quotes Pasolini, a quotation worth reciting at this point – “I believe that *before* action we must never in any case fear annexation by power and its culture. We must behave as if this dangerous eventuality did not exist [...] But I also believe that *afterward* we must be able to realize how much we may have been used by power. And then, if our sincerity has been controlled or manipulated, I believe we must have the courage to abjure.”¹⁴⁰ This groundless bravery prior to acting is something other than the justified courage sustaining fidelity to a past event already registered as a decisive break with the powers-that-be.

Due to the inherent margin of incalculability necessarily obscuring from view the future repercussions and reverberations of interventions targeted at transformation, nothing promises absolutely that such interventions will succeed in bringing about anything other than more of the same business as usual. But, coupled with the theoretical legitimacy of presupposing that Badiouian states aren’t as solid as they often appear to be and that Žižekian big Others are actually quite fragile and insubstantial virtualities, this same margin of incalculability, rather than spurring doubt or hopelessness, should be seen as cause for optimism. Although nobody knows for sure what will happen in each instance of each battle waged in wars (however hot or cold)

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 40, 42–43.

¹⁴⁰ Roland Barthes, “Inaugural Lecture, Collège de France” (trans. Richard Howard), *A Barthes Reader* (ed. Susan Sontag), New York: Hill and Wang, 1982, p. 468.

for change, one thing is certain: From the patient perspective of philosophy, time never sides with those who bet on the smooth stasis of any purported “end of history.”