The End of the Political Subject
Wars without Revolutions

Tonči Valentić

University of Zagreb, Faculty of Textile Technology, Prilaz baruna Filipovića 28a, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia

tvalentic@ttf.hr

Abstract

The article reflects on Alain Badiou's philosophy of the subject as a powerful resource in rethinking the link between philosophy and politics. It argues that there is a significant gap between power and governance as "management" without the true subject of politics as such. Modern politics must, therefore, constantly constitute the reasons for the existence of this subject, although it, like society and state, already disappeared with the advent of the post-imperial sovereignty or appears as a relic of

the historical deterioration of the meaning of democracy. One of the main goals of the present paper is to inquire whether Badiou's manifestos of thinking politics apart from the structural normatives actually mean that there are still potentials for the advent of "the revolutionary event" or do we today live in a world of "wars without revolutions"; the latter would suggest that politics has been left without a subject, and society without a substance, which is why the logic of absolute control is at work as the total mobilization of transcendent and immanent power.

Keywords: political subject, event, sovereignty, Alain Badiou.

Konec političnega subjekta. Vojne brez revolucij

Povzetek

Članek razpravlja o filozofiji subjekta pri Alainu Badiouju kot vplivnemu viru za razmislek o povezavi med filozofijo in politiko. Trdi, da obstaja pomenljiva razlika med oblastjo in upravljanjem kot »menedžmentom« brez pravega subjekta politike kot takega. Moderna politika mora potemtakem nenehno konstituirati razloge za eksistenco takšnega subjekta, čeprav je, tako kot družba in država, že izginil s prihodom post-imperialne suverenosti oziroma se pojavlja kot preostanek historičnega razkroja pomena demokracije. Eden izmed poglavitnih ciljev pričujoče razprave je raziskava glede vprašanja, ali Badioujevi manifesti mišljenja politike onstran strukturnih normativov dejansko pomenijo, da še obstajajo potenciali za prihod »revolucionarnega dogodka« ali pa danes živimo v svetu »vojn brez revolucij«; slednje bi namreč lahko naznanjalo, da je politika ostala brez subjekta in družba brez substance, zaradi česar se udejanja logika absolutnega nadzora kot totalne mobilizacije transcendentne in imanentne moči.

Ključne besede: politični subjekt, dogodek, suverenost, Alain Badiou.

1. Introduction

Alain Badiou, a prominent French contemporary philosopher, has through his work significantly influenced the understanding of the political subject. His theories provide new insights into the dynamics of power and political processes, challenging traditional perspectives and offering alternative approaches to understanding political reality. Badiou's work, entailing books, such as *Metapolitics*, *Theoretical Writings*, *Being and Event*, and *Theory of the Subject*, explores the complex connections between philosophy, politics, and subjectivity. The idea of the political subject as a key factor in understanding and shaping political events and processes is central to his thought. Badiou's analysis shows how political subjects can be a force for change, challenging established power structures and opening the way to new forms of political action. The importance of Badiou's philosophy lies in its contestation of the existing political paradigms and its encouragement to critically examine political structures and power. His philosophy provides tools for understanding contemporary political problems, especially in the context of the post-imperial sovereignty and changes in the democratic processes. Badiou's work offers new interpretations of the role and place of the political subject, thereby contributing to the rich and dynamic discourse of contemporary philosophical thought.

As one of the most important philosophers of our time, Badiou advocates for a discipline of philosophy that challenges traditional approaches and opens new perspectives in the understanding of politics, truth, subject, and existence. His work represents a series of decisive negations of the history of philosophy, creating a system that simultaneously relates to, but also separates from, the history of contemporary French philosophy, German idealism, and Greek antiquity (Strand 2020). Badiou's philosophical system is based on the four "conditions" of philosophy: science, art, politics, and love. Each of these spheres produces "truths" that are not to be confused with matters of knowledge or opinion. Rather, truths are existential, permanent, and open ontological operations that do not belong to any epistemic category. Philosophy, according to Badiou, does not produce truths, but thinks them and considers their interconnectedness. At the center of Badiou's philosophy is the notion of event. An event is something that interrupts being, introducing newness

into closed situations or worlds. Although such events are rare, they encourage the creation of subjects who, in fidelity to the event, create unexpected, new truths. Badiou believes that truths can be derived from the events that occur within four areas that he called generic actions: science, art, politics, and love (Güngör 2019). Likewise, Badiou's work includes a critique of postmodernism and analytical philosophy, and advocates for the virtue of curiosity and the perspective of "truth education" (Dewsbury 2007). His philosophy, which is both influential and controversial, challenges the established order and encourages thinking about new possibilities of the political subject and the social transformation.

The aim of this article is to explore and analyze some of the key aspects of Alain Badiou's political philosophy with special emphasis on the works *Metapolitics*, *Theoretical Writings*, *Being and Event*, *Theory of the Subject*, and *Controversies: Politics and Philosophy in Our Time*. More precisely, this article aims to provide an in-depth analysis of Badiou's philosophical thought, considering how his concepts and theories influence the understanding of the political subject, truth, subjectivity, and ontology. Analyzing these works, the article will focus on the following central themes:

1) Badiou's conceptualization of the political subject; an exploration of Badiou's ideas about the political subject, particularly in the context of *Metapolitics* (Badiou 2005b).

2) Theory of the subject and its application; a consideration of Badiou's theories of the subject as presented in *The Theory of the Subject* (Badiou 2009).

3) Ontology and the event; a detailed analysis of Badiou's approach to ontology, particularly in *Being and Event* (Badiou 2005a).

4) Contributions to the *Theoretical Writings*; a review and an analysis of one of the key works within Badiou's oeuvre (Badiou 2004).

6) Politics and philosophy; an exploration regarding the link between politics and philosophy in *Controversies: Politics and Philosophy in Our Time* (Badiou and Milner 2014).

The present paper, therefore, seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of Badiou's philosophical thought, exploring how his theories provide a new perspective on key philosophical questions and how these concepts can be applied to various aspects of the contemporary political

and social reality. The goal is also to show the relevance of Badiou's thought for contemporary philosophical discourses and its potential contribution to further development of the philosophical thought.

2. Review of the key concepts in Badiou's philosophy

Alain Badiou's philosophy is characterized by a series of key concepts that are fundamental to his understanding of politics, art, science, and love. His philosophy represents a significant departure from many contemporary philosophical approaches.

Event: as a central concept in Badiou's philosophy, the event represents a break in the established flow of reality, introducing novelty into closed situations or worlds. Events are rare, but have the potential to radically change the existing world order and create new worlds (Hewlett 2004).

Truth: Badiou rejects the traditional correspondence theory of truth, arguing that truth is unrelated to statements about the actual state of affairs. Rather, truth is the result of a process, the final effect of generic procedures. There are four types of such processes that produce truths: scientific, artistic, political, and love.

Subject: in Badiou's philosophy, the subject is not a predetermined entity, but is formed through fidelity to the event. The subject is created in response to an event and is dedicated to the exploration and realization of the truth that such an event reveals.

Set theory: Badiou uses mathematical set theory as a means of addressing key questions of ontology, arguing that our perception of reality is largely dependent on significant, world-changing events in politics, mathematics/science, aesthetics/poetry, and love (Calcagno 2018).

Ethics of truths: Badiou advocates for an ethics of truths, which supports a disciplined, subjective commitment to a militant cause (whether political, scientific, artistic, or romantic) and distinguishes a clearly defined zone of application of the concept of evil (Badiou 2001).

Because of such conceptualizations, Badiou's philosophy was, and still is, very influential, and provides a deep analysis and understanding of political, artistic, scientific, and love processes, while challenging traditional

philosophical paradigms. Let us enumerate some of the most important writings by Badiou.

Being and Event: this work represents Badiou's fundamental philosophical theory, where he uses mathematical set theory to explore ontology. *Being and Event* is a key work for understanding Badiou's ideas about the event, subject, and truth, considering mathematics as a basis for addressing the main questions of ontology.

Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil: in the work, Badiou criticizes contemporary ethical principles and advocates an "ethics of truth," which supports a disciplined, subjective commitment to a militant cause and distinguishes a clearly defined zone of application for the concept of evil.

Manifesto for Philosophy: here, Badiou presents his views on the role and significance of philosophy, criticizing ideas about "the end of philosophy" and emphasizing the importance of philosophy in the modern world.

Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism: in this work, Badiou reinterprets the figure of Saint Paul, exploring how Paul's understanding of truth and the subject can be relevant to contemporary philosophical thought.

Being and Event 2: Logics of Worlds: in the continuation of his previous work, Badiou deepens his analysis of ontology and introduces the concept of "the logics of worlds," exploring how events affect the structure of reality.

Badiou's works examine the complex connections between mathematics, politics, art, and love, and offer new perspectives on classic philosophical questions. In this sense, his work provides a foundation for understanding how to approach contemporary *political*, *ethical*, and *ontological* problems.

2.1. The political subject and sovereignty

In the philosophy of Alain Badiou, the political subject and sovereignty are key concepts that challenge the traditional understanding of politics and power. Badiou's approach to the political subject emphasizes the role of events in the creation of new political subjectivities, going beyond established structures and norms. Badiou believes that the political subject cannot be assumed as something pre-existing. Rather, it is formed in response to an event, which interrupts the regular flow of things and introduces a new

possibility for political action. Subjectivity in politics for Badiou comes only after the event, leaving the potential subject in a passive position before the event (Hewlett 2006). Furthermore, Badiou's concept of sovereignty is closely related to his understanding of events and the political subject. Sovereignty is not something that is simply possessed; it manifests itself through the ability to recognize and respond to events that change the order of things. Badiou, thus, challenges traditional ideas about static and centralized sovereignty, offering a more dynamic and event-oriented approach. Badiou's philosophy, therefore, opens new avenues for understanding politics as a sphere, in which events, not just power structures, play a key role in shaping the political subject and sovereignty. His theory of politics offers a rare opportunity to engage with a thinker who attempts to offer a new philosophy of practice, despite his sometimes uneven or problematical positions on democracy, parliamentary politics, and political activism.

2.2. Revolution and its meaning in the context of Badiou's philosophy

Revolution in the context of Badiou's philosophy can be understood as a key event that leads to the creation of new truths and subjectivities. Badiou's thought, based on his ontology of events, sees revolution as a significant break with the existing order, thereby opening up possibilities for radical transformations in society. Badiou defines an event as a sudden and unexpected event that disrupts the established structure of things. Such an event creates an opportunity for the formation of new facts and subjectivities, which are crucial for understanding the revolution as a trigger for profound changes (Critchley 1999). Revolution, according to Badiou, can only happen through the ruptures that enable the reconfiguration of social, political, and ethical institutions (Hewlett 2006). Badiou's understanding of revolution is also linked to his notion of truth operations. Truth is not static or unchanging, but is actively formed through certain procedures that involve dealing with the consequences of events. During a revolution, truth procedures begin, resulting in the exploration and construction of new truths (Hewlett 2004). Additionally, Badiou's view of revolution aligns with his broader ethical and political principles. At the heart of his philosophy, is the concept of devotion,

which implies a firm commitment to the realities that arise from experience (Güngör 2018). Badiou's philosophical perspective emphasizes revolution as a key element in stimulating transformational changes and the development of new truths and subjectivities (Erzetič 2019). Based on his ontology of events, the notion of truth operations, and his ethical convictions, Badiou's interpretation of revolution highlights the possibility for *transformative upheaval* and the constant construction of alternative realities.

3. Badiou's philosophy of the subject

3.1. *The significance of the political subject*

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Badiou's philosophy of the subject explores the central concept of the political subject, defining its importance in the context of political participation and power. Many authors highlight the importance of political subjectivation in the context of ideology and class, and how certain ethnic differences become politically relevant and a source of political power. This perspective emphasizes how discursive and institutional conditions play a key role in shaping the political subject. Furthermore, some philosophers discuss the notion of a de-individualized political subject, and emphasize the need to consider an alternative political horizon that differs from the *homo oeconomicus*. Such a perspective points to the importance of collective political subjectivization and its role in shaping political identity. In the context of political participation, the focus is on investigation of the perception and experience of corruption in relation to political participation (Boelderl 2022). There is a need to test hypotheses about the influence of corruption on political participation in different countries, which would highlight the importance of understanding how the experience with corruption affects the engagement of citizens in the political process. This perspective provides an insight into the complex relationship between the political subject and corruption, and emphasizes the importance of analyzing this relationship in the context of political participation.

3.2. The connection between philosophy and politics

Within the framework of Alain Badiou's philosophical perspective, it is imperative to investigate the interdependence between philosophy and politics. Badiou's framework prioritizes the significance of truth procedures and the occurrence of events in politics, pushing for *the complete restructuring of the political landscape*. An analysis of the connection between philosophy and politics is required, specifically within the context of Badiou's philosophical principles. Badiou's viewpoint highlights the importance of truth procedures in politics, accentuating the transforming power of events. This is consistent with his claim that philosophy should actively involve itself in the political domain, in order to ascertain the reality of a given situation and take appropriate action based on it. In addition, Badiou's focus on the event as a trigger for political transformation highlights the interdependence of philosophy and politics, as it is through philosophical investigation that the reality of the event is unveiled. Furthermore, the significance of Badiou's philosophy in relation to the political sphere is emphasized by the necessity to restructure current power hierarchies and question the prevailing state of affairs. Badiou's focus on the universality of truth and *the possibility of egalitarian political action* corresponds to the interdependence of philosophy and politics, as it demands a reassessment of current political structures. When considering the connection between philosophy and politics in Badiou's framework, it becomes clear that philosophical investigation plays a crucial role in understanding the reality of political events and sparking revolutionary political action. Badiou's focus on the event and truth procedures highlights the interdependence of philosophy and politics, as it demands a restructuring of current power systems and the achievement of universal truths in the political domain.

3.3. Critical analysis of Badiou's position on the political subject

Understanding Alain Badiou's perspective on the political subject requires examining the complex relationship between his philosophical framework and its impact on political agency (Dewsbury 2007). It offers significant elucidations regarding Badiou's understanding of the individual in relation to political ideology, highlighting the influential role of intellectual contemplation

in molding the political behavior. This is consistent with Badiou's focus on the event as a trigger for political transformation, accentuating the interdependence of philosophy and politics (Dewsbury 2007). Additionally, Paccoud (2018) explores Badiou's emphasis on coordinated action, providing insight into the state's function and strategic planning in navigating "the post-political condition." This source provides a detailed and sophisticated analysis of Badiou's viewpoint with regard to political subjectivity, specifically in relation to urban uprisings and government involvement (Paccoud 2018). Bialecki (2009) adds to the discussion by emphasizing Badiou's doubt over the ability to propose a comprehensive approach for political activity inside the existing neoliberal system. This citation highlights Badiou's sophisticated perspective on political subjectivity, recognizing the intricacies of implementing progressive transformation within established political frameworks (Bialecki 2009). Moreover, Gray and Webb (2008) provide significant perspectives on the changing characteristics of political agency, aligning with Badiou's focus on the necessity of redefining political approaches in the present time. This

310 source offers a thorough comprehension of the difficulties and intricacies involved in reconsidering political subjectivity within the ever-changing socio-political environment (Gray and Webb 2008). Bassett (2008) offers a persuasive examination of Badiou's philosophy of the event, with a specific focus on its manifestation in the context of the Paris Commune. This citation provides insight into Badiou's understanding of the event and its consequences for political subjectivity, presenting a subtle viewpoint regarding the convergence of philosophy and political engagement (Bassett 2008). Upon analyzing these sources, it becomes clear that Badiou's perspective on the political topic is closely connected to his philosophical structure, highlighting the influential capacity of cognition, coordinated effort, and significant occurrences in determining political efficacy. An in-depth examination of Badiou's viewpoint with regard to political subjectivity requires a sophisticated comprehension of the intricacies involved in implementing political transformation within present-day socio-political environments.

3.4. Implications of Badiou's ideas for contemporary politics

Badiou's notion of the event, which refers to a profound and disruptive incident that alters the established structure, carries substantial consequences for present-day politics. This concept poses a challenge to the existing state of affairs and demands a reassessment of deeply rooted systems of authority, thus impacting political action and movements of resistance (Dewsbury 2007). In addition, Badiou's focus on the universality of truth and the communist premise highlights the capacity for profound political change, presenting a fresh outlook on political agency and mobilization (Strand 2020; Tupinambá 2017). Furthermore, Badiou's *criticism of the post-political state* and his demand for a revitalization of political ideology has immediate consequences for present-day politics (Howard 2021). The author's strong belief in the importance of transcending depoliticization and actively participating in political activity aligns with endeavors to *rejuvenate democratic engagement* and address the complexities of neoliberal administration. Badiou's exploration of the commons and his examination of capitalism provide useful perspectives for modern political movements that promote social and economic fairness (Tupinambá 2017). Likewise, the thinker's concepts also converge with debates on biopolitics and the human animal, offering a distinctive perspective to examine current political processes (Prozorov 2014). His intellectual contributions in the field of "biopower" and the pursuit of truth add to the current discussion on governance, resistance, and the politicization of life. Besides that, Badiou's exploration of the concept of the political subject and the significance of organized action has consequences for comprehending present-day manifestations of political mobilization and collective agency (Paccoud 2018). Upon analyzing these implications, it becomes apparent that Badiou's views have extensive ramifications for present-day politics, since they question existing norms and provide novel opportunities for political involvement and change. His philosophical paradigm offers a rich foundation for reconsidering political subjectivity, addressing the removal of politics and imagining different political futures.

4. Power *versus* governance

4.1. The concept of "governance" without the political subject

In the context of contemporary political thought, Alain Badiou offers a unique perspective that challenges traditional concepts of the political subject and governance. Badiou's philosophical researches, especially in the works like *Being and Event* (Badiou 2005a) and *Theory of the Subject* (Badiou 2009), represent the basis for *understanding "governance" in the absence of a conventionally defined political subject*. A central element of Badiou's philosophy is the concept of *the event* (Badiou 2005a). In Badiou's sense, the event represents *a radical break with the existing state of affairs*, which opens up space for a new form of political engagement. This is particularly important in the consideration of "governance," where Badiou suggests that real change emerges from unexpected and unpredictable events that alter fundamental structures of power and identity. In the work *Metapolitics* (Badiou 2005b), Badiou deconstructs the traditional notion of the political subject. Instead of a fixed or inherent subject, Badiou proposes that *the political subject emerges from the event and the relationship to it*. This points to the changing and fluid nature of the political subject, which is not predetermined by institutional or ideological structures. A key dimension of Badiou's approach to "governance" lies in his *rejection of traditional models of power and control*. In *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (Badiou 2001), Badiou explores the ethical implications of this approach. Governance, according to Badiou, should not be understood as a process that relies on previously established political subjects or institutions, but as a dynamic response to events that redefine the possibilities of political action. Badiou's philosophy offers a new framework for understanding political practice. In the context of "governance," this means that political strategies cannot be based solely on the existence of stable political subjects or institutions. Instead, as Dewsbury states in "Unthinking subjects: Alain Badiou and the event of thought in thinking politics" (Dewsbury 2007), management should be understood as a process that is constantly in formation, reacting to unpredictable events and changes in the political landscape. Badiou's approach to *"governance" without a political subject* represents a radical departure from

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traditional political theories. His emphasis on the event and the fluidity of the political subject opens up new possibilities for understanding and shaping political engagement in the contemporary world.

4.2. Questioning the role of power in politics

Understanding the role of power in politics is essential to any analysis of political processes and structures. The question of power is central to the works of many philosophers, including Alain Badiou. Badiou's theory, especially in the context of his considerations of the political subject and event, provides significant insight into the dynamics of power within the political space. Badiou's interpretation of power is based on his theory of events, which refers to radical breaks in the existing order that open space for a new form of political engagement (Badiou 2005a). Power, in this context, is not static or monolithic; instead, it is dynamic and often emerges from unexpected and revolutionary events. Badiou's conception of the political subject offers a new way of understanding power. According to Badiou, the political subject does not arise from a predefined structure of power or authority, but is the result of *engagement with the event* (Badiou 2005b). This perspective implies that power is not inherently located in institutions or individuals, but can be the result of collective action and relation to events. In *Metapolitics* (Badiou 2005b), Badiou explores the relationship between power and political institutions. He criticizes traditional approaches that place power exclusively within institutional frameworks, arguing that such a view ignores the potential for political action outside these structures. Power should be understood as something that can be redistributed or redefined through political events and collective action.

Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil (Badiou 2001) explores the ethical dimensions of power. Badiou emphasizes the importance of responsibility in relation to power, suggesting that ethical action requires recognition and engagement with events that transform political space. The ethical use of power, according to Badiou, lies in the ability to recognize and respond to these transformative events. The role of power in politics, according to Badiou's theory, is not fixed or limited to traditional government structures. Instead, power should be understood as being dynamic and changing, with

the potential to be redefined through political events and collective action. This approach opens up new perspectives in the understanding of power in politics, and encourages a rethinking of traditional understandings of political engagement and authority.

4.3. *The impact of the separation of power in modern politics*

The separation of the concept of the political subject from traditional power structures, as interpreted by Alain Badiou, has a significant impact on the understanding and practice of modern politics. This deconstruction not only challenges conventional approaches to the political subject and power, but also affects the way we perceive political processes, decision-making, and civic participation in the contemporary society. Badiou's philosophy, especially in works, such as *Being and Event* (Badiou 2005a) and *Metapolitics* (Badiou 2005b), emphasizes the fluidity of the political subject and the dynamism of power. This separation from traditional concepts enables a new view of political agency and authority, where *political subjects and power are not inherently tied to institutions or fixed identities*. The shift in perspective offered by Badiou affects political theory and practice in a number of ways. First, it enables greater flexibility and openness to new forms of political activity and organization, which is particularly relevant in the context of global social movements and protests. Second, it encourages a critical review of existing political structures and their limitations in addressing contemporary challenges.

The separation of the political subject from traditional power structures, according to Badiou, offers a new framework for understanding democracy and civic participation. In this context, democracy is not only considered as a formal process within institutional frameworks, but as a living process that develops through events and the active participation of citizens in political life. Although Badiou's perspective offers an innovative approach, it is also challenging and subject to criticism. One of the main challenges is *the practical application of his ideas in real political systems*. Critics argue that Badiou's theory, although theoretically attractive, can be difficult to implement in the complex and multi-layered political realities of contemporary societies.

The impact of Badiou's separation of the concept of the political subject from traditional power structures on modern politics is multidimensional. It not only provides a new theoretical framework for understanding politics, but also prompts practical changes in the way we approach political engagement and organization. Although certain challenges are associated with it, his ideas remain relevant to contemporary political discourses and can offer new perspectives for understanding and shaping political processes in the 21st century.

4.4. Badiou's critique of contemporary political structures

Alain Badiou, in his theoretical works, articulates a penetrating critique of contemporary political structures. His analysis, based on concepts, such as event, truth, and the political subject, provides a profound critique of the way contemporary political structures function and influence social processes. Badiou's critique of contemporary political structures is based on several key aspects of his philosophy. In *Being and Event* (Badiou 2005a) and *Metapolitics* (Badiou 2005b), he expresses skepticism about traditional political structures and their ability to act as agents of real change. Badiou argues that contemporary political structures often serve to preserve the status quo, preventing the emergence of truly transformative events. Badiou criticizes the way, in which political institutions have become focused on maintaining their own power and hegemony, rather than serving as vehicles for real political change (Badiou 2005b). This process of the institutionalization of politics, according to Badiou, leads to the erosion of authentic political engagement and creativity, instead of encouraging new forms of political expression and action.

In the paper "Badiou, Haussmann and Saint-Simon: Opening Spaces for the State and Planning between 'Post-Politics' and Urban Insurgencies" (Paccoud 2018), Badiou's critique of the phenomenon of "post-politics" is explored. Badiou believes that *post-politics* is a form of depoliticization that neutralizes political diversity and conflict, leading to apathy and the loss of opportunities for genuine political transformation. He also explores the role of power and ideology in contemporary political structures. As he states in *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (Badiou 2001), contemporary

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political structures often use power and ideology to maintain the existing order, instead of enabling the creation of new political spaces and subjectivities. Badiou's critique of contemporary political structures presents a thorough and penetrating analysis of the limitations and problems facing contemporary politics. His work encourages critical review and the need to redefine political processes and structures, in order to provide space for authentic political events and transformations. This critique not only affects theoretical debates in philosophy, but also has practical implications for shaping political strategies and practices in the 21ˢᵗ century.

5. Post-imperial sovereignty and democracy

5.1. *The concept of post-imperial sovereignty*

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In the context of the discussion about post-imperial sovereignty, it is relevant to consider how sovereignty is redefined in the era after the demise of the imperial structures, especially in light of globalization and transnational processes. This chapter uses sources related to Alain Badiou and other relevant theorists to explore this concept. In works, such as *Being and Event* (Badiou 2005a) and *Metapolitics* (Badiou 2005b), Badiou provides a framework for understanding the transformation of political structures in the contemporary world. Although Badiou does not directly address post-imperial sovereignty, his focus on events and political subjects can be applied to understanding *how sovereignty is transformed after the fall of imperial regimes*. Works, such as "Badiou, Haussmann and Saint-Simon: Opening Spaces for the State and Planning between 'Post-Politics' and Urban Insurgencies" (Paccoud 2018), explore how globalization and transnational processes affect traditional concepts of sovereignty. In a world where borders have become more fluid and less defined, sovereignty can no longer be understood solely in terms of territorial autonomy and control. Badiou's theory of political subjectivity, as expounded upon in *Theory of the Subject* (Badiou 2009), provides insight into how sovereignty can be understood in the context of individuals and collectives operating within and outside of traditional state structures. In the post-imperial world, political subjectivity and sovereignty are closely linked, given that political agency is increasingly manifested through *transnational and*

global networks. Post-imperial sovereignty is a complex and multidimensional topic that requires an interdisciplinary approach. Badiou's theory, along with the work of other relevant authors, provides a framework for understanding how sovereignty is transformed *in a world that has undergone fundamental geopolitical changes*. Analyzing this topic through the prism of philosophy, political theory, and global studies, we can better understand the dynamics and challenges of post-imperial sovereignty in the contemporary world.

5.2. Changes in society and state

Changes in society and state, especially in the context of post-imperial sovereignty and globalization, are fundamental to understanding contemporary political and social structures. Badiou's philosophy, although it primarily focuses on metaphysical and ontological aspects, indirectly illuminates these changes through the prism of events and the political subject. In *Being and Event* (Badiou 2005a), Badiou considers the idea of the event as a key driver of change. In contemporary society, these events often lead to a redefinition of the relationship between society and state, disrupting traditional structures and encouraging new forms of political and social order. In *Metapolitics* (Badiou 2005b), Badiou critically approaches traditional concepts of political structures. Changes in the state, in light of Badiou's philosophy, can be seen as a response to events that require a new approach to governance, legislation, and political organization. The impact of contemporary changes on the concept of democracy is a central issue in understanding the political dynamics of today (Neri 2019). Badiou's theory offers insight into how democracy can be reinterpreted in light of these changes. According to Badiou, political events have the potential to redefine the foundations of democracy (Badiou 2005a). This includes *rethinking traditional democratic practices and institutions* and encouraging a more active and participatory form of civic engagement. In *Theory of the Subject* (Badiou 2009), Badiou explores the idea of the political subject. In the context of democracy, this implies the recognition of the plurality of political subjects and their different perspectives, which is essential for a dynamic and inclusive democratic practice. The analysis of contemporary political reality through the prism of Badiou's theories provides a unique

insight into the complexity and dynamics of today's political processes. A central concept in Badiou's philosophy is *the event*, which, as described in *Being and Event* (Badiou 2005a), represents a crucial point of change in the political landscape. Contemporary political reality, with numerous global challenges and crises, can be analyzed through this prism as a series of events that reshape the political space.

6. Wars without revolutions

6.1. The phenomenon of "wars without revolutions"

The phenomenon of "wars without revolutions" illuminates *the paradox of contemporary armed conflicts*, which, while changing political and territorial landscapes, rarely result in profound social or political transformations. This concept can be explored through the prism of Badiou's philosophy, particularly in the context of his reflections on events and political change. In *Metapolitics* (Badiou 2005b), Badiou approaches politics as a field of intrinsic tension and conflict. However, he emphasizes that *wars in the modern context* often do not achieve a truly revolutionary character, but *tend to maintain or even reinforce existing political and economic structures*. In the work *Theory of the Subject* (Badiou 2009), Badiou explores the idea of the subject in relation to events and political actions. This is relevant for understanding contemporary wars, which, although they can be dramatic events, often do not lead to the creation of new political subjects or revolutionary changes. This lack of revolutionary potential can be linked to a globalized and interconnected world, where local conflicts are often conditioned by wider international forces. *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (Badiou 2001) provides a framework for understanding the ethical aspects of conflict. Badiou's critique of ethical nihilism in international relations can be applied to contemporary wars, suggesting that the lack of revolutionary potential also reflects a crisis in the international moral and political order. The phenomenon of "wars without revolutions" points to an important dimension of contemporary global conflicts. Through Badiou's philosophical perspective, one can understand why contemporary wars often do not lead to deep social and political changes, despite their destructiveness and political

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importance. This understanding offers important insight into the dynamics of contemporary international relations and political conflicts.

6.2. Politics without a subject

"Politics without a subject" refers to *the contemporary political landscape*, in which traditional political subjects—such as nations, classes, or clearly defined ideological groups—are losing their dominant role in the political processes. In light of Badiou's philosophy, especially his works like *Being and Event* (Badiou 2005a) and *Theory of the Subject* (Badiou 2009), the consideration of politics without a subject implies a questioning of the political subject beyond traditional boundaries. In the modern world, political action increasingly emerges from diverse and fluid collectives, instead of stable and homogeneous groups. With the development of technology and globalization, political processes are becoming more and more dispersed and less tied to traditional political entities. Social media, transnational movements, and global networks create new forms of political engagement, where traditional concepts of the political subject are no longer adequate for understanding political reality. "Politics without a subject" presents a challenge for contemporary political thinking and practice, where new theoretical and practical frameworks must be developed for understanding and acting in this new context. This phenomenon encourages the re-examination of the role of individual and collective actors in the political process as well as the consideration of the new role of technology and globalization in shaping the political landscape.

6.3. Society without substance

The concept of "society without substance" reflects contemporary social dynamics, where traditional structures and identities are becoming fluid and fragmented. This phenomenon can be explored through the prism of Badiou's philosophy, especially in the context of his understanding of events and political subjectivity. In *Metapolitics* (Badiou 2005b), Badiou considers political structures and their role in shaping society. In the contemporary context, this approach can be applied to understanding how traditional social structures are losing their fixed essence, becoming increasingly fluid and changing. Modern

technologies and globalization processes play a key role in the transformation of social structures. As Badiou emphasizes in *Being and Event* (Badiou 2005a), events that change social structures today are often global in character, leading to changes that cross national and cultural boundaries.

6.4. The total mobilization of power

The total mobilization of power in the modern world refers to the way, in which power and authority are distributed and exploited in a comprehensive way. Badiou's philosophy provides insight into this phenomenon, especially through his critique of contemporary political structures. In *Metapolitics* (Badiou 2005b), Badiou criticizes the manners, in which contemporary political structures use power. He points out that political structures often become instruments for the total mobilization of power, where power is used not so much to achieve political goals as *to maintain the structures themselves*. Globalization and technological development have allowed power to be mobilized in ways that were unimaginable in the past. This includes surveillance, digital control, and the spread of ideologies through new media, which Badiou in *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (Badiou 2001) implicitly addresses through his consideration of ethical issues in politics. The concepts of "society without essence" and "total mobilization of power" explore key aspects of contemporary social and political reality. Through Badiou's philosophical perspective, these phenomena can be understood as the result of the spread of globalization and technological progress, leading to fundamental changes in the way society functions and how power is used and distributed.

7. Evaluation of Badiou's ideas in the context of contemporary politics

Badiou's conceptualization of the political event and subject, as presented in *Theory of the Subject* (Badiou 2009) and *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (Badiou 2001), offers an alternative view regarding political processes. In the context of globalization, his ideas help us understand how traditional political structures may not be equipped to deal with contemporary challenges. Badiou's theory faces criticism, especially regarding its practical applicability. As Hewlett (2006) points out, there is a gap between Badiou's *theoretical*

ambition and reality of the political practice. Badiou's works sometimes lack concrete guidelines for political action, which can be problematic in a practical political context. Consideration of the practical implications of Badiou's philosophy is essential to understanding its influence on contemporary politics. His research, although theoretically deep, often raises the question of its *practical applicability*. Badiou's idea of the political event as a switch for change offers an interesting framework for analyzing political revolutions and changes. However, as Prozorov (2014) suggests, the question arises as to how these concepts can be applied in real political scenarios, where complex economic, social, and geopolitical factors are often present. Badiou's works have a significant influence on contemporary political theory, encouraging the questioning and expansion of the boundaries of political thought. As Bassett (2008) states, Badiou's philosophy sheds new light on events, such as the Paris Commune, offering new perspectives for understanding historical and contemporary political movements. Badiou's philosophy provides challenging and innovative perspectives in political philosophy, but its practical applicability remains a matter of debate. His works encourage a critical review of existing political structures and practices, offering a theoretical framework for understanding the dynamics of contemporary political changes (Paić 2023). However, further research is needed to successfully apply these ideas in real policy contexts.

7.1. Philosophical and political challenges

The philosophical and political challenges posed by Badiou's thought are reflected in the complexity of his ideas and their application to contemporary political reality. His works, such as *Being and Event* (Badiou 2005a) and *Theory of the Subject* (Badiou 2009), present challenges in both theoretical as well as practical terms. One of the main philosophical challenges in Badiou's work is the concept of "the truth of events" and its application in reality. As Hewlett (2004) points out, Badiou's philosophy requires a radical rethinking of traditional notions of truth and subjectivity. This is not only a theoretical problem, but also challenges the way we think about political practice. Badiou's idea that political events can create new forms of subjectivity and social

structures represents a political challenge, as Critchley (1999) underlines. Contemporary political structures are often rigid and resistant to change, which makes applying Badiou's philosophy in practice a complex task. Considering the potential future perspectives of Badiou's philosophy allows us to imagine how his ideas might shape future political and philosophical discourses. His philosophy, especially his focus on events and change, could have a significant impact on future political theories and practices. As Prozorov (2014) suggests, Badiou's idea of the political event offers a new way of understanding and approaching political change, which can have far-reaching consequences for political theory. In the context of globalization, Badiou's philosophy offers a framework for understanding and addressing international and local political challenges. As Badiou and Milner (2014) point out, his theory can provide insights into global political processes and how they are reflected in local policies. Philosophical and political challenges posed by Badiou's philosophy, as well as potential future perspectives, represent key topics for further research. His ideas can serve as a catalyst for new forms of political thinking and action, encouraging us to rethink existing structures and practices, and to consider new possibilities for political change and development.

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8. Conclusion

The present article offers an overview of Alain Badiou's political philosophy, exploring its implications for contemporary politics and society. Through the analysis of key works, such as *Being and Event* and *Theory of the Subject*, we attempted to expose the complexity of Badiou's ideas, from the concept of the event to the political subject. Despite challenges in practical applicability, Badiou's theories offer new and significant interpretations of political dynamics. Badiou's critique of contemporary political structures and his reflection on events as drivers of change highlight his importance in philosophical and political discourse (Paić 2015). His approach encourages the questioning of traditional political paradigms, offering alternative models for understanding political reality. In the context of globalization and changes in society and state, Badiou's ideas provide a crucial framework for analyzing and understanding these complex processes. Although we face challenges

in applying Badiou's theories to practical politics, his influence on political thought remains undeniably significant. His ideas open up space for new forms of political thinking and action, encouraging us to consider new possibilities for political change and development. Ultimately, Badiou's philosophy not only enriches theoretical discourse, but also challenges practical political structures, enabling us to better understand and shape political processes in the 21st century. His ideas, although sometimes controversial and challenging to apply, remain a vital contribution to contemporary political philosophy and practice.

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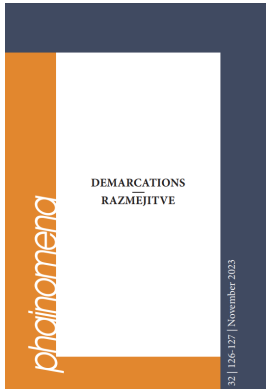
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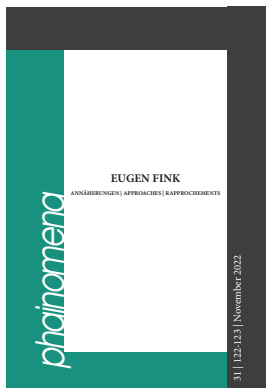*Phainomena 32 | 126-127 | November 2023*

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