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THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE EVENT: ONTOLOGY AND HISTORY*

Abstract: Heidegger's *Ereignis* is riddled with ambiguity. On the one hand, *Ereignis* is the event of appropriation, the retrieval of *Dasein*'s own proper, or Being; on the other hand, it is to be thought as a rupture and transformative break, the unconcealment or essencing of the truth of Being. The event is the name for the primordial co-belonging of the ontological and the historical, of the plunging of Being in Time, the last chapter in the History of Being. In this paper I argue that Badiou's thinking of the event aims to address the tension, inherent in Heidegger's project, between the *ontological* and the *historical*. First and foremost, (a) Badiou constructs a mathematical ontology, based on set-theory, which thinks of any situation in terms of its presentation, in the conjuncture of the void and the infinite. Secondly, (b) strictly speaking, ontology, which deals with the presentation and representation of multiplicities in a situation, according to a count as one, accounts for normal multiplicities, barring in essence the abnormality and disequilibrium between presentation and representation that constitutes an abnormal multiple, or, what Badiou calls an evental site. Thus, the event is barred from ontology, unforeseen from within the situation, which unfolds according to its laws of presentation. Differently put, from the point of view of Being, the event is not; *of the event ontology can say nothing*. Thirdly and most importantly, (c) the event is neither an all-embracing totality of possibility or sense, nor a scriptural or linguistic effect. The event — far from being a name for Being itself, or the primordial co-belonging of Being and time — is an exception to Being, such that it is unforeseen from within the laws of possibility of any given world. The event is thus barred from ontology, but it is also subtracted from History.

Keywords: *event, ontology, history, Heidegger, Badiou*

1. INTRODUCTION

After Heidegger, the concept of the event occupies a central position in Contemporary French Thought. In this paper, I briefly present the tension surrounding the event in the work of the late Heidegger and how Badiou's thinking seeks to surpass and respond to

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the problems posed by Heidegger's critique of Western Metaphysics. The 'other beginning', presented by Heidegger as a thinking of the event, is still entangled in the remnants of the ontological difference. Accordingly, the tension between Being and beings, which defines much of Heidegger's early project, is reconfigured in terms of Event and events. More specifically, it shall be shown that through its appropriation by Badiou, which attempts to clarify the tension — inherent in Heidegger's project — between the ontological and the historical, the event may provide for what Heidegger considered to be a new beginning for thought.[1]

The event is used as a term by Heidegger as early as 1927, where it is linked with the immediacy of experience in the context of phenomenology, but it is in truth after the so called 'turn' and on the way to overcoming the thought of ontological difference that it acquires in his thinking something which indicates towards a new beginning. The event is thought of as the co-belonging of Being and Time, as the *'and'* between Being and Time. Plunging ontology in history and history in ontology, the event is thought of as the last epochal configuration in the History of Being. Thus, the event is neither ontological nor ontic, neither subjective nor objective. It is neither substance, nor structure, nor subject; it is neither internal nor external, neither the result of will, action, or passion, of the mixture of bodies, nor their cause. Rather, the tension between the ontological and the ontical is reconfigured in terms of the ontological and the historical, between the Event and events.

2. The Event as a New Beginning for Thought

But what are the conditions if the event is to be considered as *'a new beginning for thought?'* If we are to inquire, in the manner of Heidegger, into the nature of thought after the closure of Western metaphysics, what would constitute another beginning? If the 'first beginning', tracing back to the Greeks, is related to a thinking of *arche*, ground, tied to the principle of sufficient reason, then the 'other beginning' must be thought of as a leap away from the ground, into groundlessness, the abyss — of unreason and contingency. If the first beginning is concerned with the question of Being and beings, then the other beginning is on the way to think the truth of Being,

[1] Whereas for Heidegger the event is the very uncovering of a primordial co-belonging of Being and Time, a gathering that makes all separation and difference possible, the latest iterations of the event attach a rapturous and transformative quality to the evental surging and procedure. Notable examples would be Claude Romano, *L'Évènement et le Temps* (Paris: PUF, 2012), and *L'événement et le Monde* (Paris: PUF, 1998); François Raffoul, *Thinking the Event* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020); Gert-Jan van der Heiden, *Ontology after Ontotheology. Plurality, Event and Contingency in Contemporary Philosophy* (Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2014). While van der Heiden presents a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach (Heidegger, Romano) and a speculative approach (Badiou, Meillassoux), we may add several thinkers in between, like Agamben, Nancy, Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida, and Deleuze.

its evental occurrence, away from the ground, as groundless, unreason, contingent, that is, to think Being *as* event.

For Heidegger this is the difference between *Andenken* and *Vordenken*, whereby a decision prepares the way to think the event. Yet this decision does not enact the event, only decides on an anticipatory resoluteness, the destiny/destining *(Geschick)* of a historical *(Geschichtlich) Dasein* or a people, which prepares its arrival. The thought of the other beginning, or a new beginning for thought, then, requires the closure or exhaustion of Western metaphysics, traversing the history of *arche*, if only to liberate itself from the metaphysics of presence, the epochal, historical configurations of Being, or ontotheology. The other beginning is, accordingly, a thinking which has not yet arrived and which requires a different comportment towards Being, truth, and event. Being essentially occurs as the event. The essential occurrence of Being and this other beginning is the way into the truth of Being as event.[2]

Thus, the thinking of the event aims to be a thought beyond the ontological difference. This would mean that the event is to be thought neither as Being, nor as a being. The event is neither ontological, nor ontical. Yet, as Being needs beings to unconceal itself, so does the Event rely on singular things, beings and events — to "shelter the truth of Beyng".[3] The event is neither ontological, nor historical — neither ever present, Being, nor accident and empirical singularity. Rather, the event is, for Heidegger, the co-donation, co-belonging and reciprocal appropriation of Being and time, ontology and history. In Heidegger's late project of plunging Being into time and time into Being, the event is thought of as the co-belonging of Being and time, the event is the essencing of the truth of Being. The event is the last epochal configuration in the history of Being, whereby Being is reconfigured as event.

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[2] Martin Heidegger, "Of the Event," in *Contributions to Philosophy: Of the Event*, trans. R. Rojcewicz and D. Vallega-Neu (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 26: "Thinking of Beyng as event is inceptual thinking." See also 141−149, for the relation between the Event and inceptual thinking; 139−145, for the transition from the "first" to the "other beginning"; 180–190, for the "leap" to inceptual thinking as preparation, and inceptual thinking as leap. See also, Martin Heidegger, *Hölderins Hymne "Andenken,"* in Gesamtausgabe, vol. 52 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1982). For more on the relation between *Geschick, Schicksaal* and *Geschichte*, Sending or Destining, Destiny and History and for a discussion on *Ereignis* as appropriative event, as a letting be present, advent to presence which occurs in destiny, as a giving which at the same time holds back and withdraws and the vocabulary of sending, between Heidegger and Derrida, see Marco Antonio Nunez Canto, "Sending, Event and Catastrophe. The correspondence between Heidegger and Derrida," *Thémata Revista de Filosofia* 63 (2021): 339–358.

[3] Martin Heidegger, "The Origins of the Work of Art," in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. J. Young and K. Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 32. See further down for a discussion of the fourfold with regards to the ontological difference.

The other beginning would liberate thinking from the ontotheological reign of the One, of necessity and reason; it would be a leap from the ground, away from sufficient reason, into the abyss. The event names the suspension of sufficient reason and the primacy of contingency for ontology, for an 'ontology after ontotheology'.[4] Traditionally the event is situated outside of thought.[5] The event is posited as the outside, hazard, pure *alea* — what cannot be thought but only either prepared as destinal decision (Heidegger) or discerned in its post evental traces (Badiou).

As we shall see, much of the literature surveyed, which adheres to and takes part in what may be called the philosophy of the event, succumbs to this tension, facing a *double temptation*, effect, or rather symptom, of the confusion of the singular, the indistinguishability of the event in the ontological and the historical sense. This temptation is to either *ontologize* or *historicize* the event; to absolutize or relativize, dogmatize or empiricize it; either turn the event into the structure of Being itself, or slide the event into everydayness, phenomenal experience or at best some experience of rare and transformative value. Beyond that banality there is a third choice, namely, to think, with and against Heidegger, the singularity of the event — disconnected from ontology and subtracted from history — that is to say, in its exception.

Hence, what I shall hereafter call the 'tension of the singular' is a confusion between the ontological and the historical, appearing in the form of ontological and ontical events, passing freely from one to the other, with often catastrophic results for both ontology and the Philosophy of History.[6] In other words, beginning with Heidegger, the event is riddled with confusion, absorbed in ontology, steeped in historiality.[7] Thus the argument of the present paper is that if the event is to be a new beginning for thought, it must be disentangled from the tension — inherent in Heidegger's destining of the concept to French thought — between the ontological and the historical.

Thinking the event thus requires not simply to begin to think free from sufficient reason or ground, in the abyss. The event is a thinking liberated from subjectivity, subjectivism, volition, decision.[8] Yet all subjectivity, fidelity, truth, relies on and begins its trajectory from an event. In addition, the event has to be thought as neither

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4 See Gert-Jan van der Heiden, *Ontology after Ontotheology*, 135–136, 145–156.

5 See François Raffoul, *Thinking the Event*, 23.

6 The event may be the event of Being, or writing (for Derrida), or sense (for Deleuze), Cantorian set-theory (for Badiou), and at the same time it may stand for the *Beerputzpakt*, May 68, or the first live-televised Iraq war.

7 Heidegger talks about Historicality *(Geschichtlichkeit)* in *Being and Time* §72–77, while the later Heidegger speaks of Historiality or Destiny *(Geschichte, Geshick)*, not as a series of happenings *(Historie)*, but as a sending and destining of Being. See Heidegger, "Of the Event," 7, 388–399.

8 See François Raffoul, *Thinking the Event*, 3, 72, 93. As Raffoul argues, the event is free from causality, necessity, possibility, and subjectivity: improbable, uncalculable — the event must surprise.

dogmatic, nor *empirical*; neither *essence*, nor *accident*; neither *substance*, nor *subject*; neither *transcendent*, nor *immanent*; neither *subjective*, nor *objective*; neither *destinal*, nor *arrivant*; but exceptional; in exception to Being, in excess over any situation, will, calculation, or machination. In short, the event must be freed from the double bind of ontology and history, as the bind between Being and time, freed from the shadow of the ontological difference — between Being and beings — and reconfigured in terms of Event and events; between the event in the ontological sense and events in the historical sense, or mere facts, happenings no matter how rare. The difference between the Event and events is not a matter of degree, or intensity.

If the event is to be considered as a new beginning for thought — a thinking beyond the difference between Being and beings, beyond the ontological difference, which Heidegger himself understood to be metaphysical — it must be disentangled from the tension and the abyss in which Heidegger concealed it, between ontology and history. If the thought of the event is to be a thinking beyond the ontological difference, the obscure relation and reduplication between the Event and events must be reconfigured. Thus, also, the event must be neither *ontological*, nor *historical*. In other words, *if Being is not a being, the Event is not an event*.

The omission of several thinkers of theological or messianic conceptions of the event is part of a strategic decision or a conscious error. For, it is also one of the arguments of this project that if the event is to be regarded as a new beginning for thought, then it must not only be freed from causality, probability, reason, and subjectivity, but also from its messianic or theological dimension. The event cannot be an absolute destiny or arrival. In other words, the event cannot be a name for the absolute. As it is liberated from the bounds and the grounds of traditional metaphysics — the ontotheology of meaning — of presence and the subject, so it must be liberated from theological thinking. This not only means that the event is to be thought of as exception and hazardous encounter, excluded from the principle of sufficient reason, from the God-principle of the philosophers, but also from the last God of the poets, for which Heidegger pleads the return in his poetic thinking. Rather, it entails unbinding the thought of the infinite from its traditional theological and metaphysical connotation and association with the one; and to reallocate its truth to the unfounded and the void, the rupture with Being and its laws of presentation.

For, the recovery of a novel, philosophical and not theological conception of the infinite has been one of the great stakes of 20th and 21st century thought. If, for Heidegger the event is essentially an uncovering of finitude, of the primordial and co-originary belonging of Being and Time, for Badiou the event is the appearing of infinity, the beginning of a truth procedure, which is the ‘being-there of eternity’. It is with the hazardous supplementation of any situation by an evental multiple, which exceeds and surpasses the count-as-one, that the infinite work of subjective fidelity

— work of a laborious subject — begins, thereby producing, locally and temporally, a finite fragment of an infinite and eternal truth. Thus, the task to think the event as a new beginning for thought coincides with the project of an *ontology after ontotheology*, or, in the words of Badiou, a *metaphysics without metaphysics*.[9]

But, of the event, can it be only said that it is not? If so, how does this conception differ from all previous negative theology? As a new beginning with regards to the history of Western metaphysics, the event is not to be subdued to the metaphysics of presence, but neither is it to be given up to the sacralization of absence, a hypostatization of the nothing and the romantic, nihilistic exaltation of finitude and the cult of death. For, if the event is to be subtracted from presence, it must also be subtracted from absence — not a *Deus absconditus* — in retreat, for that would turn the event into an absolute arrivant or destinal, i.e., into a name for the absolute.[10]

Of the event; Heidegger gives us only silence, sibyllic and obscure remarks, concealing the event in that 'wholly other song of Beyng'.[11] If the event is to be a new beginning for thought, it must be uncovered from the dark abyss of Heidegger's other beginning — precisely because the event is the thought of another beginning, neither ontological nor ontical, historical, or temporal. If the first beginning is occupied with and by the ground, *arche*, unity, necessity, and reason, then a thinking of the event requires a leap away from the ground, into the abyss, or rather, into the void — where no sound or clamor is ever possible. But this void is, as Badiou suggests, the other name of being.[12] To which, the supernumeral and incalculable of the event adds, as we shall see, a hazardous supplement.

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[9] See Alain Badiou, "Metaphysics and the critique of Metaphysics," trans. A. Toscano, *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy* 10 (2000), 174–190. Badiou's task is to describe being-qua-being in terms of situations, sets, parts, inclusion and belonging, presentation and representation in the count-as-one; and the event as *trans-being*, what is not being-qua-being, fixed on no ontological category, errant excess over the count, hazardous supplementation of the name as intervention and deductive fidelity; a theory of the subject configured as trace of the event and finite fragment of an eternal truth. See also van der Heiden, *Ontology after Ontotheology*, vii, 9, 26, 263–264.

[10] See Heidegger, "Of the Event," 321–330, on the event with regards to the "absconding" and the "advent" of the gods. This subtraction from presence/absence is also in a sense what Deleuze aims at with the *virtual*, Derrida with the concept of *differance*, or Badiou with the *indiscernible* and the dialectic of forcing, as well as with the later concepts of the *inexistant* and the *transcendental* of a world and the general topology of intensities.

[11] One could connect this silence, the comportment towards the event, to the silence the poet Paul Celan encountered on the part of Heidegger, when confronted with the horrors of his catastrophic political decisions and allegiances. See Alain Badiou, *Manifeste pour la Philosophie* (Paris: Éditions Seuil, 1989), 68.

[12] Alain Badiou, *L'Être et l'Événement* (Paris: Éditions Seuil, 1988), 72.

3. BEYOND THE ONTOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE

The concept of the event can be found in Heidegger's work as early as 1927. In the *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, the event names the immediacy of presence in experience, linked with corporeality and the situation in which one finds oneself always immediately engaged. In a second phase (1936–39), the event seems as an attempt to bridge a schism in Heidegger's own thought, opened wide through in *Being and Time* and leading up to the famous 'turn'.

In Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*, the event names the relation between the ontological and the historical, in a way that is obviously problematic and symptomatic of the aforementioned tension surrounding the singular.[13] It is well known that Heidegger at the time connects his thinking of the event to a form of idealized national socialism, the preparation of a decision and of a people. However, one may argue that the concept of the event, as a double movement of appropriation and expropriation *(Ereignis-Enteignis)*, is already on the way of overcoming the thinking of the ontological difference, of the difference between Being and beings, which is still bound, as Heidegger admits, to the metaphysics of presence. Accordingly, the thought of the ontological and the historical is reconfigured in terms of the relation between the Event and events. The Event, as primordial, is posited as foundation and condition of the possibility of events: as the co-originary belonging of Being and Time, as the 'and' of *Dasein* and truth, as 'essencing and truth of Being'. Being essentially occurs as the Event.[14] The Event requires events in order to uncover itself, in the manner in which Being requires beings. This double, equivocal appropriation, Heidegger tells us, is the Event. Essentially, it is Being which eventally occurs.[15] In *Identity and Difference*, Heidegger writes that in the Event, Being and humans are led to their own proper (or property/propriety).[16] Being, as Event, is in need of beings in order to occur. Conversely, beings do not need Being in the same way. For Heidegger, beings may well 'be' and remain within the neglect and abandonment of Being, what he calls the errancy and forgetfulness of the oblivion of covering of Being.[17]

The event is essentially that which renders possible the difference between Being and beings. It is the rift that unites in a clearing the opposites in a strife, in their common ontological ground, in the co-originary of *Dasein* and the Event.[18] However,

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13 Heidegger, "Of the Event," 49, 69–81.
14 Ibid., 12, 25.
15 Ibid., 26.
16 Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. J. Stambaugh (New York / London: Harper & Row, 2002), 28, 36–38.
17 Heidegger, "Of the Event," 26.
18 See also Heidegger, "The Origins of the Work of Art," 32.

this ground is not a foundation, we are not within a logic of ground (foundation, ratio, cause). The event is not a cause and foundation of beings, but groundless, unfounded and unfounding, ecstatic, or, as Heidegger calls it, the abyss *(Abgrund)*; a logic of the abyss, of freedom as the abysmal, unfounded and unfounding foundation of existence. The Event is, in essence, an uncovering of finitude. It is the point of a co-existence or co-donation of an equiprimordial unity and rift. As equivocal appropriation, the event is the end of possibilities and the possibility of the end, the horizon of an opening which makes it possible to speak of the difference between Being and beings. This is also what constitutes a problem in the parts where Heidegger speaks of death as having this double structure of difference and event. Whence the popular misreading, associated with the anthropological reading of *Being and Time*, which Heidegger sought to debunk with the "Letter on Humanism", about whether death can constitute an event at all.[19] It is already apparent that if it is so, this is because it shares the structure of something like an archi-event, an event whose structure is shared by all events, an event which makes the difference between Event and events possible in the first place.[20] The event is first the event of appropriation, *enowning* — the appropriation of *Dasein*'s own abysmal groundless ground.[21]

Already then in Heidegger the event carries this double significance, a tension which runs also through the epigones. Even though Heidegger advises against the rendering of *Ereignis* as event, emphasizing the appropriating, visual and conceiving

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19 See Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Pathmarks*, ed. and trans. W. McNeil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

20 For a reading that delves into the ontological and the historical dimensions of the concept of the event in Heidegger, see James Bahoh, *Heidegger's Ontology of Events* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 56–95, 131–152. See Carol Jean White, *Time and Death: Heidegger's Analysis of Finitude* (New York: Routledge, 2015) xx–xxxii, 19, 63–84, for a contrast between death as an event in the ontical sense, the end of one's life, demise, and in an ontological sense, which is more about the death of a worldview, akin to an epistemic shift. The event as appropriation is for Heidegger profoundly linked to language (see Heidegger, "Of the Event," 401), and the appropriation of the poetic voice through the encounter with the foreign language, as with Hölderlin's encounter with the Greek language of Sophoclean tragedy. Interestingly, Romano conceives of the event in an analogous way, as event of events, horizon of sense and opening of a new world, but conversely to his reading of Heidegger, in which death and the existential analytic structure the eventality of everydayness, for Romano it is birth which forms the archi-event which creates the world of sense for what he calls the *advénant*. See Claude Romano*, L'événement et le Monde*, 26–33, 106. See also van der Heiden, *Ontology after Ontotheology*, 186–197.

21 See also in Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (London: Harper & Row, 1972): "What determines both, time and Being, in their own, that is, in their belonging together, we shall call: *Ereignis*, the event of appropriation." The rendering of *Ereignis* as *enowning* in the translation of Heidegger's "Vom Ereignis" by Emad and Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999) attempts to keep the linguistic link between 'to own' or 'appropriate' *(Eigen)*, as in authenticity *(Eigentlichkeit)*, as well as 'to see with one's eye' *(Auge)*, and *Ereignis*.

operational metaphors which are mobilized, the event is: (a) On the one hand, a transformative rupture in the history of Western metaphysics, the opening of thought to the possibility of the new, the re-appropriation of the ontological ground from which existence has been alienated — in the withdrawal and absorption of the Event, of difference in the like and the same, in finitude. Thus, surging from within the breakdown of the meaning of each world, the Event names something like the truth of Being, even though it is a truth in turmoil or in transit between two worlds. Additionally, (b) revealing itself in the aforementioned primordial proximity, belonging, or co-originary unity, it is Being itself which reveals itself as Event. Being itself is, in its essence or co-propriety, Event. Being, as Event, determines itself as pure *difference*. Finally, (c) the Event, as pure difference, reveals itself as the truth of Being, the coming to itself of the fulfilment of a destinal belonging. Abandoned by Beyng, the Event is obscured in the nihilism of the planetary reign of technology, enframing *(Gestell)* the world in an eternal repetition of the same, in the Event and as the Event is hidden, what Heidegger fatefully calls, the "last God".[22]

Arguably then, the event is neither ontological nor ontical, but neither is there any tension between ontology and history, as Heidegger's effort already in *Being and Time* consists in plunging ontology into time, or history and the introjection of time into ontology. Being is no longer eternal and forgotten eternally, but temporality and temporization. Moreover, the later Heidegger explicitly undertakes the project of a History of Being.

And yet, of the event and from the event *(Vom Ereignis)*, no logical or mathematical proposition can be said; of the event and from the event there is silence. The event is a silent implosion of meaning, uncovering of primordial proximity and co-belonging of Being and time. The event as primordial is what makes the ontological difference possible in the first place, however, this primordiality or equiprimordiality is not itself temporal. The new beginning for thought is not a principle (an *arche* or ground, for that would situate us squarely once again within the tradition of Western metaphysics), nor a beginning in time. Rather, it points to the simultaneity of Being and beings in the event, the event as the co-primordial belonging of Being and beings. Of Being and time, the event is posited as the '*and'*. The event is the temporal-spatial simultaneity of Beyng and beings; historical beings coming into the open, appropriating their own proper — the sheltering of Being in beings or historical entities, as a relation between truth and singular happenings.

[22] Heidegger, "Of the Event," 21, 45–65, 76, 321–330. This is, however, not the God of faith, nor the God-principle of metaphysics, but the last God of the poets, as Badiou claims, in retreat and awaiting for their arrival. See Alain Badiou, *Court Traité d'Ontologie Transistoire* (Paris: Éditions Seuil, 1998), 18–19.

Being needs beings to reveal itself in the opening, clearing of truth. But beings do not need Being, they can be in the abandonment by being — in machination. Being is not a being, the Event is not an event. The Event needs events to be uncovered, but events do not need the Event.

The ontological difference and beyond; *Ereignis*, Heidegger claimed to have been thinking for most of his life.[23] *Ereignis* is not event, but rather the event of appropriation, the event of world, the event of difference. *Ereignis* is enowning, appropriation, appropriating event, the uncovering, unconcealment of meaning, but also a rupture with previous meaning and world, change of worldview. Heidegger's thought is all the more moving into thinking the singularity of the Event and the relation between Being and singular beings — things; between the Event and historical events. Here, the privileged example to understand the singularity of Being in relation to singular things, would probably be works of art, singular beings, sheltering the truth of Beyng. In several late texts the event is attempted to be thought beyond the ontological difference. But a new kind of difference arises; one between Beyng and being/beings; which Heidegger reconfigures in terms of the fourfold — between world, earth, mortals, and gods.[24]

4. 'OF THE EVENT ONTOLOGY CAN SAY NOTHING'

Badiou's concept of the event draws on multiple sources and is mobilized in response to the above iterations and appropriations of the event. As noted, Badiou's approach is speculative, rather than phenomenological or hermeneutical. But his speculative

[23] See Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Pathmarks*, ed. and trans. W. McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 240. "For, since 1936, 'event' [*Ereignis*] has been the leading word of my thinking."

[24] See Heidegger, "Of the Event," 99–110. The event is obscured in machination, technical calculating thought (*Machenschaft*) and its framework (*Gestell*); the symptom of the forgetting of Being and focusing on beings, a logic of domination and utility, turning the world, nature, truth, and humans into standing reserve. *Dasein* is no longer attuned to Being. The contemporary configuration posits Being as nothing; flatly equating ontology and history. This culmination of Western metaphysics in the nihilism of technique and in a disastrous philosophy of history, whereby the subject, as nihilism of will, coordinates the objectification of nature and destruction of the earth, modern science and totalitarian state. Thus, the late Heidegger proposes a poetics of the event, one of desubjectification and desobjectification, unbounding subject and object in their primordial word of *poein*. For further exploration of a thinking of the event beyond the ontological difference one may look into Heidegger's later work which conceptualizes a new kind of difference, between Beyng and being/beings, in terms of the fourfold. See for example Martin Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*; *What is a Thing?*; *The Question concerning Technology* (1954); *The event* (1941–1942); *Four Notebooks*. To which extent Heidegger manages to disentangle the thread between the ontological and the historical, of which the event represents the co-originary bind in the poetic word, must remain the topic of further investigations.

metaphysics, or 'metaphysics without metaphysics', does not aim at a rehabilitation of the classical categories of subject and truth as foundations. Subject and truth are divided and united by the evanescent and hazardous encounter with an event. The event is, in other words, an exception to Being, disassociated from the one, thought of as hazardous supplement to any situation.

First and foremost, (a) Badiou constructs a mathematical ontology, based on set-theory, which thinks of any situation in terms of their presentation, in the conjuncture of the void and the infinite.[25] Thus, already Badiou thinks of Being at a distance from Heidegger, for whom mathematical presentation of the idea is the very beginning of the forgetfulness and oblivion of Being. 'Mathematics is ontology' is for Badiou a fundamental philosophical proposition which in *Being and Event* is posited as an axiom. On the one hand, this is to be understood as not being a mathematical proposition, but one which expounds and utilizes mathematics as a recourse for philosophy. Yet it is not the vertical appropriation of mathematics for philosophical use, which Badiou would call the "little style", but the letting of mathematical reasoning implode the philosophical discourse from the inside, for mathematics, being a truth procedure, like art, politics, and love, thinks. This is what Badiou calls the "grand style".[26]

On the other hand, by positing 'mathematics is ontology' and 'the one is not' at the start of the endeavor, the entirety of *Being and Event* may be seen as an exemplar of deductive fidelity to the axiom posited. In this sense does not Badiou's argument present a certain suture to the truth procedure of mathematics, a privileged relation of philosophy to one of its conditions, science? The axioms are never revisited, to be dialectically challenged in the manner that the *eleghos* requires, as Plato presents the conflict between dialectics and mathematics in his *Republic*. Can we not say that conversely to Heidegger, who sutures philosophy to the poetic condition as the 'abode of the word of the event', Badiou sutures his philosophy to mathematics?[27] Yet for Badiou dialectics and mathematics are not opposed in this manner, similarly to thinkers like Lautman, Cavailles, and others. Nor is mathematics the apogee of calculative thinking and machination, the site of the forgetfulness of Being and the nihilist reign of technique. If Badiou brings the mathematical — as a figure of

[25] Burhanuddin Baki, *Badiou's Being and Event and the Mathematics of Set-Theory* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2015).

[26] Alain Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, trans. and ed. Ray Brassier and A. Toscano (London: Continuum, 2004), 3–20.

[27] See the helpful discussion in van der Heiden, *Ontology after Ontotheology*, 103–109. Moreover, as van der Heiden notes, this conception of the relation between mathematics and dialectics constitutes a paradoxical and renegade Platonism which Plato himself would not recognize. Yet Badiou is well aware of this, see for example the confrontation between dialectics and mathematics in Badiou's rendering of Plato's *Republic*, Alain Badiou, *La République de Platon* (Paris: Fayard, 2012).

deductive fidelity to an axiomatic decision — to resolve the aporias of the dialectic, which is in his view, laden by its predisposition with totality and the one, this is because, as he argues already in *Theory of the Subject*, mathematics is what sharpens the dialectician barber's blade.[28]

Secondly, (b) strictly speaking, ontology, which deals with the presentation and representation of multiplicities in a situation, according to a count as one, accounts for normal multiplicities, barring in essence the abnormality and disequilibrium between presentation and representation that constitutes an abnormal multiple or an evental site, which is, as Badiou writes, on the edges of the void.[29] Thus, the event is barred from ontology, unforeseen from within the situation, which unfolds according to its laws of presentation. Differently put, the event is not; *of the event ontology can say nothing*.[30] If anything that can be said of Being can be put in the language of set-theory, of the event there can be no *matheme* which will be mathematical. The event does not belong to what is being-qua-being. It is, rather, what Badiou calls elsewhere *trans-being*.[31] The event is thought of as errant excess over the count, ultra-one, and the hazardous supplementation of an intervention; in the juncture of the void and an excess.

Thirdly and most importantly, (c) the event is neither an all-embracing totality of possibility, sense, nor a scriptural or linguistic effect. The event — far from being a name for Being itself, or the primordial co-belonging of Being and time — is an exception to Being, such that it is unforeseen from within the laws of possibility of a given world. The event is thus barred from ontology, but it is also subtracted from History. From the point of view of the event, "History" as a totality of possibility and the linear representation of a narrative, "does not exist".[32] It is rather the interdiction of the event from the count-as-one of the multiple which constitutes this multiple as natural, as opposed to historical, abnormal multiples.

In other words, *of the event there is neither a being, nor a history*. The event is neither ontological, nor historical. Whereas we cannot survey Badiou's thinking of history within the confines of this article, we can simply say, as a general comment, that the subtraction of the event from history does not indicate towards an absence of historical thinking from Badiou's part.[33] In fact, being no history of the event, but

28 Alain Badiou, *Théorie du Sujet* (Paris: Éditions Seuil, 1982), 226.
29 Badiou, *L'Être et l'Évènement*, 195.
30 Ibid., 212.
31 Badiou, *Court Traité*, 55–59.
32 Badiou, *Théorie du Sujet*, 110.
33 See also Alberto Toscano, "Emblems and cuts: Philosophy in and against History," *Symposium*: *Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy* (2008), 18–35, for a discussion of this thesis as well as the relation of Badiou's philosophy to History. Badiou's position changes on the subject; from the position of *Theory of the Subject*, where 'History does not exist', to the dialectic of nature and history

escargots of periodization, what is attempted is a thinking of history which would free the event from the historical narrative (of events), the one of teleology and subjectivity, count and state of power. In the end, Badiou's subtraction of the event from history is rather the liberation of historical thinking from the one, an evental history, a history of multiplicities, of their multiple evental sites decomposing and producing truths. In this sense one may argue that Badiou's thought follows Althusser in thinking a 'history without a subject'.

But does Badiou succeed in thinking the event beyond ontotheology, or does he absolutize the event? There is no 'event of events',[34] any more than there is an idea of ideas in his Platonism of the multiple. For this would be the very crown of sense, or religion. By disassociating the event from Being and the One, by positing the exception to the principle of sufficient reason, Badiou escapes ontotheology, but at the risk of making the event a trace of subjectivity.[35] Yet it is the other way around. It is in decision, naming, and fidelity to the truth procedure that the subject is formed and incorporated into a body. The subject is the trace of the event, the event is not the product of the subject's will, passion, or action.

On the other hand, does this self-containing set not turn the event into a paradoxical eksistence, both presupposition of itself and of the subject's fidelity; a vanishing cause and the result at the same time? Like the ego in Fichte or the human in Sartre, this opens the way to the absolute — being both presupposition and end result, *causa-sui*. Yet, this absolute is neither omnipresent nor defused, neither immanent, nor transcendent, but exceptional. There are only bodies and languages, as Badiou affirms in *Logics of Worlds*.[36] This arrangement pertains to the domain of finitude, inert being and everydayness, animal humanism, being towards death, calculating thought of democratic materialism. Except, that there are truths. Borne out of a hazardous, evental and evanescent encounter, truths are woven to infinity by

in *Being and Event*, the relation between philosophy and its conditions where events in the singular and historical sense occur, to *Logics of Worlds* and the concept of appearing, to *Immanence of Truths* and the historicity/eternity of works of truth.

34 As for example in the aforementioned readings of Romano and Heidegger.

35 See van der Heiden, *Ontology after Ontotheology*, 157–158. This touches on the issue of the link between the event and truth, for which both Heidegger and Badiou have been criticized by Nancy. For Nancy, this constitutive self-evidence of the event and its link to truth is part of ontotheology, reinstating the event in a metaphysics of presence. For Heidegger, it is the hint *(Wink)* of the event, the time of the event is the time of advent, the event is that which is to come. For Badiou, though there are shifts in his position, the event has to have taken place. The event is known by its traces, traces of a vanishing encounter. It cannot be presented in the situation but does affect the post-evental situation. In the context of *Logics of Worlds*, the event cannot not appear in the world but does change the structure of appearance of this world.

36 Alain Badiou, *Logiques des Mondes. L'Être et l'Événement II.* (Paris: Éditions Seuil, 2006), 13.

the laborious work of a faithful subject, as deductive subjective fidelity in the form of a subjective (post-evental) body or body of work.

The interdiction of the event from ontology and the subtraction of the event from history does not mean, then, that the event is barred from philosophy altogether, or outside of thought; that nothing can be said of the event. Philosophy is the general theory of being and of the event, insofar as they are tied in their exceptional interruption, by truths.[37] Moreover, it is from the event, always on the edges of the void, that a truth procedure begins, in the form of a throw of the dice, always locally and situated, and yet extending towards infinity and universality.[38] The subject, being the effect of such a procedure and born out of such a chance encounter, as arduous fidelity to the consequences of an exceptional break, is the finite fragment of an infinite and eternal truth.[39] The event is thus not the originary unity expressed in and as the *'and'* between Being and Time. Rather, it is the '*and'*, between Being and the Event, finite presentation and infinite truth, which incarnates itself, rarely and exceptionally, as subject.

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[37] See Alain Badiou, *Petit Manuel d'Inesthétique*. Paris: Seuil, 1998, 45–46.
[38] See Badiou, *L'Être et l'Évènement*, méditation 31.
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