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Alain Badiou, *The Immanence of Truths: Being and Event III* (translated by Susan Spitzer and Kenneth Reinhard), London: Bloomsbury, 2022. ISBN: 9781350115309 (paper); ISBN: 9781350115293 (cloth); ISBN: 9781350115286 (ebook)

The final volume of Alain Badiou's three-part magnum opus, *Being and Event*, has just appeared in English translation as *The Immanence of Truths* (henceforth *IT*). Like the first two, *Being and Event* (2005; henceforth *BE*) and *Logics of Worlds* (2009; henceforth *LW*), the new volume (originally published in French in 2018) presents a systematic, speculative philosophical argument heavily reliant upon advanced mathematics and politically committed to advancing the cause of communism. One of the most original and potentially useful things about Badiou's work is that he sees these two realms as inseparable: the politics of number is intertwined for him with what might be called the "number of politics" (see Badiou 2008). The realms of art, love, and (especially) science—the other three "conditions" of philosophy alongside politics—are also encompassed by his framework. The focus here will be placed exclusively upon the nexus of number and politics.

As in the earlier instalments of the trilogy, Badiou takes great pains to render difficult mathematics understandable in philosophical terms. He recognises that many readers will not be able to grasp all the intricacies of some proofs, but asserts that this is not absolutely necessary, and urges us to shed whatever fears we may have regarding mathematics and take the plunge (Badiou 2022:49; henceforth all simple page numbers refer to *IT*). Badiou's pedagogical efforts constitute one of the main strengths of his work. They make it possible for a much wider audience of critical social scientists to expand our sense of how mathematical figures of thought can help us understand phenomena and processes that hitherto appeared purely qualitative.

This review proceeds through the following steps: a very brief nod to the first two volumes of Badiou's trilogy and the general purpose of the third volume; a closer look at what Badiou means by "absoluteness", which is the core concept of *The Immanence of Truths*; a discussion of the central opposition between the finite and the infinite through which the book addresses the issue of absoluteness; a sketch of the fourfold typology of infinities he deploys to structure his argument for the absoluteness of immanent truths; and a culminating assessment of how Badiou's mathematical peregrinations help us to grasp concrete, historical examples of politics in a new way. The fourfold typology of infinities constitutes the heart of the argument of *IT*. That it is addressed so late in the review is due to the complexity of the context within which it makes sense.

The First Two Volumes of the Trilogy

By now there are many summaries and in-depth treatments of the first two volumes of Badiou's trilogy, and of the geographical reception of Badiou's work (for general introductions, see Badiou 2011; Bosteels 2011; Hallward 2003; Ruda 2015; and for a selection of treatments in geography, Bassett 2008; Dewsbury 2007; Hannah 2022; Saldanha 2007; Shaw 2010, 2012; Swyngedouw 2021).

At the core of Badiou's mature philosophy lie three key concepts: event, subject, and truth. He elaborates a philosophical system dedicated to addressing a series of fundamental issues concerning these three concepts. (1) How should philosophy understand being, and how do genuinely novel events (works of art, experiences of falling in love, but especially game-changing scientific discoveries and political revolutions) emerge to challenge any given "state" of an ontological situation? (2) How do such events provide an occasion for individuals to become subjects in committing themselves to the exceptional truths such events proclaim? These issues occupy the first volume, *Being and Event*, which (in)famously equates a particular version of mathematical set theory (the Zermelo-Fraenkel axiomatisation plus the Axiom of Choice, or "ZFC") with ontology as such. The second volume, *Logics of Worlds*, supplements this ontology with a "logical" or "phenomenological" account broadly dedicated to answering a second set of questions: (3) How do beings and events actually appear in specific worlds? And finally, (4) How do subjective bodies faithful to events progressively construct themselves in these singular worlds (p.23-24)? Here Badiou deploys concepts from mathematical category theory to characterise relations of co-appearance in a specific world.

Absoluteness

Badiou explains the burden of the third volume, *The Immanence of Truths*, in the following way:

> After I had investigated truths and subjects—i.e. what we are capable of in terms of universality—from the perspective of the theory of being and explained how this universality of truths and their subjects obey the rules of appearing or existence in a particular world, I still needed to understand how it can be maintained that truths are absolute, that is … that they have a being independent of the subject or subjects that were, nevertheless, the, as it were, historical participants in them in particular worlds. (p.24)

How exactly is absoluteness different from the "pure" universality of truths already laid out in the first volume of the trilogy? Perhaps the clearest explanation appears late in *IT*, in a discussion of the features the concept of truth must have, according to Badiou. First, "there must be examples of it", examples that are singular; second, a truth "cannot be dependent on human judgment, linguistic variations, or the fluctuation of perceptions or historical trends. What is true here is true everywhere", i.e. it is "universal". But thirdly, a truth involves "the undeniable persistence of its being-true".

> Universality itself is not sufficient for the task, because it needs to mobilize, so to speak, the multiplicity of "places" where a truth comes to appear. Its definition is largely negative … What is involved in the third feature of a truth follows a different path, however. It is not a negative identification, the universal versus the particular. Rather, it is maintained that a truth identifies itself as true *by itself*, without any differential reference to anything else, merely by the effect of its real presence. (p.462)

The Finite and the Infinite

As this passage suggests, Badiou conceives of the conceptual pair conditioned / unconditional in terms of the contrast finite / infinite. The relation between the finite and the infinite is of course one of the most basic and enduring of philosophical and theological problems (focused in the Christian tradition, for example, upon the life and significance of Jesus Christ as the finite appearance in a determinate world of infinite, absolute power). The principle of finitude Badiou identifies in *LW* as "democratic materialism" can be taken to encompass the whole range of positions tethering thought to concrete historical, existential, linguistic, and political contexts. A good deal of current critical human geography can be understood as democratic materialist in this basic sense. Badiou summarises democratic materialism in the principle "there are only bodies and languages", and opposes to this his own formula: "there are only bodies and languages, except that there are truths" (Badiou 2009:4). Thus, for him, truths are associated with the presence of some kind of infinity in an otherwise finite, determinate world.

Two circumstances complicate the idea that truths involve the presence of infinity in a determinate world, and make it necessary for Badiou to introduce a series of curves and detours into his argument. First, the relation between the finite and the infinite is complex and variable. In fact, so he claims, the finite, "*in whatever sense it is understood, has no being*. The finite, which is not, exists only as the result of operations involving infinite multiplicites. Or, more precisely, *the finite is generally the result of the operative intersection between two infinites of different types* (of different sizes)" (p.21).

There are two basic types of interaction between infinities. In the first, a transcendent, unattainable infinity is understood as disjoint from a second, potentially emancipatory infinity that could form around a truth, and the latter is "forbidden from existing by the power imputed to the first infinity" (p.75). The corresponding belief in the ideology of finitude leads to actions and practices that do not challenge the basic structure of what exists, and can thus be seen as "passive results", "*waste products*". In the second type of interaction, "there will be the immanent construction of a finite result that produces, as its condition of existence, an infinity situated beyond the infinity of the situation in which this existence is affirmed" (p.75). The latter type describes a transformative "truth procedure" in the wake of an event, a "*work*". In line with Badiou's entire theory of events, the works that strive to realise events are not run-of-the-mill, but rare and disruptive.

Examples of the first, ideological type of interaction between infinities include:

> religious oppression, "which seeks to force people to remain within the narrow confines of the possible, ordained by God as the Law" (p.76);
>
> oppression by the state, which is a form of infinity that escapes, "at least ostensibly, the divisions in the human community, divisions it constantly induces, maintains, and codifies" (p.77);
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> oppression by the economy, which "purports to be the infinity of the circulation and continuous expansion of material goods" and forbids belief in or construction of another kind of infinity "that would be entirely based on the real use value of what is produced, exchanged, and circulating" (p.78-79); and finally,
>
> "ideological-philosophical oppression", whether in the guise of "sophistry that purports to eliminate all instances of the true", or of "the narrow critical rationalism [i.e. Kant, Badiou's chief nemesis (Johnston 2008:347-348)] that relishes the fact that thought has no access to the real" (p.81).

All of these versions of the ideology of finitude involve what Badiou calls the "cover[ing] over, by means of finite mechanisms taken from the alienated present, [of] anything that could give rise to a new infinity making possible works that are themselves modern but independent from Capital" (p.104). Covering over involves rendering potentially novel infinities "countable" or "constructible". The new modernity that defies constructibility, shaped by new interactions of types of infinity, would carry the name of "communism" (p.559).

A second complication regarding the relation between the finite and the infinite is directly implied by the idea that finitude is a product of the interaction of infinities. The mathematics of large cardinals that has developed since the discoveries of Cantor, Cohen, and others has hypothesised a range of different kinds of infinity, among which it is not such an easy matter to establish straightforward relations of "bigger" and "smaller", or the relation of "nextness". In short, in addition to parsing the complex relations between the finite and the infinite, a second major task Badiou sets himself in *IT* is to pin down the relation between different kinds of infinity and absoluteness. Only once he has done these two things can he adequately explain how a "work" undertaken with finite materials in a specific world can produce a truth that is not only universal in applying to everybody and every situation but also timelessly absolute in its validity.

Maximality and the Decision for Infinities

Absolute truths must refer to an ontology that is itself absolute. Early in *IT* Badiou lays out four criteria of an absolute ontology as "a universe of reference, a place for the thinking of being qua being". Such an ontology must be (1) "immobile", not subject to the changes whose comprehension it makes possible; (2) based on "nothing" in the sense that "there is no entity of which it would be the composition"; (3) "radically non-empirical", describable only on the basis of axioms, not dependent upon any kind of experience; and (4) "maximal", in the sense that "any intellectual entity whose existence can be inferred without contradiction from the axioms prescribing [the absolute place of possible reference] exists by that very fact" (p.39-40). Especially criteria (2) and (3) were the focus of the first volume of the trilogy. Key to this last volume is the fourth criterion, maximality.

Whereas theology had identified a unified God, Badiou names the ultimate place "*V*":

> the letter *V*, which may be said to formalize the Vacuum, the great void, but also Truths [*Vérités*], *the place of everything that can validate propositions concerning multiplicities as such*. What is metaphorically "in *V*" is what can satisfy the axiomatic injunction of set theory … [But *V*], the place of all the possible forms of the multiple (what we call sets) cannot itself be a set, since the existence of a set of all sets is contradictory. (p.43)

V is not a unified set, but it can be thought of as a "class". All sets are classes, but not all classes are sets. Badiou will wager that it is possible, by means of ever-"larger" concepts of infinity, to construct ever-more-capacious classes as "models" of *V* that satisfy the axioms of set theory (p.60-63, 260).

The path toward demonstrating a sort of absoluteness for Truths leads Badiou through the "baroque" (p.249) world of very large cardinal numbers identified by mathematicians over roughly the last century. Before getting too deeply into the details, Badiou urges readers first to "enjoy the terms" coined for the different species of infinity: "weakly inaccessible, weakly compact, indescribable, ineffable, compact, Jonsson, Rowbottom, Ramsey, measurable, strong, Woodin, superstrong, strongly compact, supercompact, extendable, Vopenka, almost huge, huge, superhuge, and so on" (p.248-249).

Do these exotic species exist? Here the criterion of "maximality" comes into play: anything that can be consistently inferred exists. This criterion is a highly contentious, partisan assertion on Badiou's part. He is well aware both that he needs to justify his position, and that he ultimately cannot do so via logical reasoning. This is because there are competing views in mathematical logic regarding which specific kind of logic ("classical", "intuitionist", or "paraconsistent") should be used (p.115-118). Of these three, only classical logic provides the resources for inferring the multiple kinds of infinity with which Badiou works (p.34-36). Thus he has to make a momentous decision: "What should be done in this kind of situation? Well, you have to choose, there is no way around it" (p.232). Badiou makes the Platonic—and at the same time, the *communist*—choice, namely that these hypothetical, gargantuan infinities have being.

The Four Types of Infinity

The four kinds of infinity, from the bottom to the top of the hierarchy he seeks to construct, are summarised by Badiou as follows: (1) infinities of inaccessibility or transcendence; (2) infinities that resist internal division; (3) infinities of immanent pressure or interior hugeness; and (4) infinities of approximation to the absolute (p.254). Somewhat more colloquially, Badiou also labels these in terms of infinity "from below", infinity that "resists division", infinity "in itself", and infinity "from above".

The first category captures the way in which most people think of infinity (if we think of it at all): as something "beyond" our knowledge. The paradigm case of an inaccessible infinity is the set of natural numbers (1, 2, 3, etc.), which is denoted by the symbol ω (p.268). This most basic of all infinities is already mind-boggling because, unlike with finite sets, ω can have subsets (the odd or the even numbers, for example) that leave out elements of the whole set but are nevertheless *the same size as* ω (this can easily be proven). This first kind of infinity is inaccessible in the sense that it cannot be constructed or reached either by building unions of its finite subsets or by way of its "power set" composed of all of its finite subsets (p.287).

The second way of thinking about infinity is more complicated. What could it mean to say that an infinite set "resists division"? Here Badiou refers to Christian theological conceptions of the Holy Trinity (p.256), and the strategy of the Chinese communists in resisting the attempts of Chiang Kai-Shek's nationalists to separate and thus neutralise different parts of the movement in the years before 1949 (p.280-281). Resisting division does not mean an infinite set can't be divided, or, as Badiou terms it in this context, "partitioned". In partitioning, the set of all the subsets of a given size that can be formed from the original set is divided into two or more parts. The idea is rather that no matter how this partitioning is done, it fails to reduce the "power" of all of the resulting parts, at least one of which remains "as powerful" as the whole set. (Here as throughout his work Badiou plays upon the slippages and resonances between mathematical and more everyday political terminology.)

The property of infinite cardinals that resist division in this sense is called "compactness", and is defined more technically in the following way:

> An infinite cardinal κ greater than ω is a compact cardinal if it resists the partition of the set constituted by all its pairs of elements into two parts. In other words, whatever the partition into two of the pairs of elements of κ may be, there exists a subset H of κ of cardinality κ such that all the pairs of the elements of H are in the same half [of the partition]. (p.286)

Put more colloquially, the subset H is "as big" as κ but the set of all of its pairs (which is as big as the set of all pairs of κ as a whole) has not been divided by the partitioning of κ. So H, though a subset of κ, survives as a kind of "fully equipped" grouping with all the features of κ.

It turns out that the familiar, countable set of natural numbers ω is compact, that it resists division in this way (p.281-282). But Badiou is interested in cases of stronger compactness, particularly in the category of so-called "Ramsey" cardinals. A Ramsey cardinal resists partition not just when the set of all *pairs* of its elements is partitioned but when the (much larger) set of *all the finite subsets* of κ (that is, its "power set", the set of subsets of *any and every* finite size) is partitioned into two. Ramsey cardinals are significant because they mark the line between "countable" and "uncountable" infinities (p.290).

The fact that infinite subsets and the infinite sets in which they are included can be the same cardinality or size becomes all the more important in the third category of infinity Badiou identifies. This category he characterises in terms of the immanent "pressure" put on the size of an infinite set by the infinite number and infinite size of its subsets. Here the set-theoretic concept of intersection (which we intuitively understand as "overlap" or "shared part" of two sets or subsets) is central.

> Generally speaking, the intersection of a large number of finite sets in the ordinary sense, that is, sets all of which are smaller than ω, cannot have more elements than the smallest of them. Infinity arranges things in a completely

> different way … If you take the set of even numbers and the set of multiples of three, both of which are as large as the total set of numbers, their intersection, what they have in common, consists of all the numbers that are multiples of six, and this set is, again, as large as the sum total of the whole numbers. (p.302)

In short, intersections of infinite subsets of an infinite set can themselves be as large as the original infinite set. The idea of infinities of immanent pressure can be explained as follows:

> the larger "what is common" to different large subsets of [an infinite set] *S* is itself, the more that means that there is in *S* not only room for the differences (since there is already a very large number of very large, distinct subsets), but also room for what is shared, what is identical about, these different subsets. (p.304)

In a rough sense, this can be thought of as a kind of distension or bloating. An infinity that can accommodate all of this commonality alongside its infinity of immanent differences must be "truly gigantic" (p.305). Here again, Badiou draws an important connection with his political vision:

> The realm of infinity suggests that a subset of a situation can combine with an infinite number of other subsets in such a way that this combination is itself in a position of equality not just with the other subsets involved in the combination but even, potentially, with the overall situation as a whole. This point is in line with something that is a leitmotif of this whole book: infinity is … a power that is simultaneously egalitarian and commensurate with the situation as a whole. Thus it is opposed to finitude, which objects that any maximum power is tyrannical, or conversely, that only a shared powerlessness is egalitarian. (p.302-303)

"Communism" would be another name for a maximum power that is nevertheless egalitarian.

Badiou's formal argument here revolves around the highly abstract concept of a "non-principal ultrafilter", a mathematical device that is defined, for a given infinite set, as containing "a large set of distinct subsets nearly all of which can be said to be truly 'large', i.e. of a size comparable with the Whole of which they are the parts" (p.292). Cardinals with a non-principal ultrafilter are "egalitarian" in the sense that "every element of this ultrafilter, and therefore every large subset belonging to this ultrafilter, is equivalent in power to the situation as a whole" (p.305).

The fourth and final type of very large cardinal is the most mathematically difficult, and Badiou himself essentially throws up his hands at a few points (e.g. p.392, with regard to Jensen's Theorem). As always, however, he strives mightily to render the abstract, formal reasoning involved accessible to an interested lay audience. The basic idea behind the fourth and most gargantuan type of cardinal will be to try to establish ever closer, demonstrable proximity to *V*, which, again, is not a set but rather the ultimate class, the ultimate "place" or "universe", in which any conceivable set can appear.

The idea is effectively to "climb" toward the absolute by means of constructing new subclasses of *V*, new classes of very large cardinals (p.328-329). In the process, Badiou also clarifies the meaning of comparative "size" in this exotic realm of number. If a particular type of cardinal with stringent criteria can be proven also to meet the criteria defining other cardinals, but not the reverse, it can be considered "larger" than those others. The yardstick of "larger" and "smaller" is thus that of one-way logical implication, not direct comparison of "magnitudes" (cf. p.430).

Here Badiou's argument borrows from Spinoza's complex account of infinity.

> For Spinoza, the infinity of substance, which is first and foremost, it would seem, that of the One-All, is transformed, multiplied, and organized by that fact that it includes an infinity of attributes, themselves infinite, which Spinoza says "express" the infinity of infinite substance. (p.323)

Badiou transfers the notions of "attribute" and "expression" to the more precisely defined mathematical realm in which he is working:

> In the position occupied by Substance in Spinoza's system there is the place *V* of a symbolic ultra-infinity, which is the meeting-place of all the other infinities. There are classes—hence subsets of *V*—that "resemble" *V* and can be compared to Spinoza's attributes. Finally, there are infinite sets capable of existing as forms of the multiple in actual worlds, which are analogous to Spinoza's mysterious "infinite modes". (p.324-325)

Badiou's ultimate ambition is to show that the absolute validity of Truths can be thought of as validity in the context of a class ("attribute") that "expresses" something of *V*. Each subclass-attribute can be thought of as "an *immanent miniature model*: a subclass of *V* reflects *V*'s main characteristics, which effectively means that true statements in *V* can be transposed, in a regulated way, into true statements in the miniature model" (p.341). The truth of the statements in the model are in this sense "almost" absolute (p.343).

The process by which characteristics of *V* are "transposed in a regulated way" into a model is called "elementary embedding". Given a subclass *M* of *V*, "there exists a relation *j*, called an elementary embedding of *V* into *M*, such that if *x* has such and such a property in *V*, *j(x)* has the same properties in *M*…" (p.363). An important issue in this relation is that of how far classes can be handled as though they were sets. Badiou admits that dealing with classes as though they were sets is not strictly speaking permissible. Yet the "careful", if "somewhat deviant" use (p.325) of set-theoretic concepts affords him additional resources with which to construct proximity to *V*.

To pin down the character of the similarity between relations in classes and the relation of belonging ($\in$) in set theory, Badiou returns to the axioms of ZFC. Those that concern the nature of belonging are the Axiom of Extensionality and the Axiom of Foundation (p.330-332). The Axiom of Extensionality says that if two sets have the same elements belonging to them, they can be considered the same set. The Axiom of Foundation says that while an element of an element of a set can itself be an element of the "higher-level" set, this self-belonging does not continue down *ad infinitum*: "for any set *S* there exists an element *x* of *S* such that *x* and *S* have no element in common" (p.335). The relation of belonging thus "*founds* the notion of multiplicity by firmly supporting it from below, without dissipating this support in an endless descent" (p.336).

If a class has these two properties, it can be "replaced" by a transitive class, that is, a class all of whose elements are also subsets. Relations between classes like this, or between these classes and sets, are then analogous or structurally equivalent to the set-theoretic relation of belonging. If this can be established, "we will really be able to say that the order and connection of things remains invariable, being the order that ZFC attempts to express as the order of the absolute itself" (p.337). In other words, a truth appearing in a specific, constructible class can be linked to the absolute.

The signature category of very large cardinals here is the class of "measurable", or as Badiou redubs them, "complete" cardinals.

> A complete infinity … is inaccessible, it cannot be constructed "from below" using the natural operations of the theory of pure multiplicites [in other words, the operations of union and power set]. It is also a Ramsey cardinal: it resists any attempt at partition of its finite units. It is immanently defined by its large subsets since it accommodates the construction of a non-principal ultrafilter. And, finally, it is the obligatory critical point of every relation of attribution or participation between the absolute and a truth. Thus, it engages all four of the powers of infinity: operative transcendence, resistance to divisions, immanent immensity, and dialectical proximity to the absolute. (p.366)

Complete cardinals mark a crucial boundary within the hierarchy the very large. Scott's theorem proves that "if there exists a complete cardinal, then it is impossible for all sets to be constructible" (p.376). This is in a way the whole point of Badiou's long engagement with the theory of large cardinals: to show that there can be nonconstructible infinite sets, that is, sets that escape the deadening determinations of finitude, within a specific world.

The Number of Politics: Works and Waste Products

It is perhaps inevitable that when Badiou finally re-emerges from the twists and turns of his long mathematical presentation and addresses concrete historical examples in the two final Sections VIII and IX, readers will expect the mathematical concepts to be "applied". This only occurs in a very minimal sense. The discussion of how Auguste Comte's "painful and magical" experience of the affective event of falling in love (p.543) with Clotilde de Vaux in the 1840s led to "the complete revision of his entire [philosophical] system" (p.550) is fascinating. The closing account of the place of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the history of the communist project draws on Badiou's long years of activism and study, and is certainly interesting (p.571ff.). However, even here there is very little explicit reference to the foregoing, intricate arguments regarding infinity.

Disappointing though this is at first blush, the chief value of *The Immanence of Truths* as a political text is not to be sought in a "punchline" or an empirical "cashing out" at the end. The truly interesting political ideas are woven throughout the mathematical expositions. Each of the four kinds of infinity at the heart of *The Immanence of Truths* reveals a fundamental aspect of what might be termed the underlying logic of communist politics. The historical fortunes of the communist idea up to the present day make it crystal clear that there is no guarantee of success. However, grasping the core logic of the idea can still be an important part of working to realise it.

The first type of infinity, that of *inaccessibility*, foregrounds that fact that a revolutionary movement aimed at the construction of a generic set has the potential to elude all attempts at domestication or capture within the mesh of pre-existing political categories, within the state's "power set" of definable subsets. The second type of infinity, *resistance to division*, describes the capability of such a movement to harbour all the resources necessary for its full unfolding in each of its local parts, so that its segmentation by the oppressive forces of finitude according to the strategy of "divide and conquer" can be overcome. This is clearly an important political idea in the history of communist movements.

Infinity understood, thirdly, in terms of the *immanent pressure of large subsets* captures the notion that in the construction of a new, communist infinity, the magnitude of what is shared in common by all, can grow as capacious and powerful as the entire movement without denying or minimising the differences within it. This must be considered the single most important political concept Badiou distils from the mathematics of large cardinals. Though it is intuitively difficult to grasp, and although a lot of additional conceptual work would need to be done to explain how it could be operationalised in concrete, historical movements, it illustrates very well why Badiou considers a concept of infinity indispensable for communism.

This third type of infinity could also form the basis for addressing one of the great weaknesses of Badiou's political philosophy. In all three volumes of the trilogy, Badiou repeatedly criticises forms of what he simplistically understands as "identity politics". In almost dizzying contrast to the care he devotes to thinking about communism, he relies here upon the shallow memes and stereotypes with which right-wing movements have so successfully engaged with more "mainstream" cultural conservatism. For example, he lists "feminism" alongside a host of other "commonplaces" such as "organic food" and "humanitarian intervention" as "phrases, taglines, terms, bits of state power, ideological detritus, and false 'scientific' concepts [that] are actually fragments of ideological obedience, pegged to the established language and available for any covering-over operation" (p.212).

He does have an argument of sorts, namely that group-specific advocacy for official recognition or redistribution fits all too easily within the state's "democratic materialist" power of defining and redefining official categories. But the idea that there is no place at all for the constructible within radical politics is simply too Manichean in its imposition of an "either/or" structure on a complex set of movements challenging existing power relations.

With the concept of infinities of immanent pressure Badiou at least sketches the basis of an alternative answer to the question of how those subject to racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and other kinds of (often intersectionally intertwined) oppressions can conceive of solidarities that extend beyond group boundaries without diminishing the importance of specific differences. The notion of an intersectional commonality between subsets that can become as all-encompassing as the overarching set is thus probably the most potentially innovative mathematico-political idea in the book.

Finally, the fourth kind of infinity, *proximity to the absolute*, lends the communist project an unshakeable and eternal validity founded in the conviction that belonging to the movement "models" what it will mean for all of humanity to be free and democratically self-determined in a real sense. The belief that the Truth to which one has given allegiance is touched by absoluteness can be thought of as an additional support for the "fidelity" that animates those who have devoted themselves to developing the consequences of an event.

Badiou himself seeks not just to argue but really to *prove* in a logical and transparent way that another world is always possible within this world. The fidelity he displays in this project to a few key events in modern politics and mathematics places the series of decisions he makes throughout his philosophy in the context of a truth procedure. Based on the principle of maximality, the repeated decision for the real being of ever higher infinities, *The Immanence of Truths* represents a "work" within that truth procedure (p.452).

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