

Lacan and Badiou: Letter and Trait

Jane Kent

This paper begins to explore Lacan's statement "everyone is mad, that is, delusional" and how universalism installs a foreclosure. (Lacan, 2008c, p. 3)¹ It explores how Lacan's letter subverts universalism, that is, it examines how the trait relates to Badiou's philosophy, and how Lacan's letter with a speaking being's real unconscious, contrary to Badiou's trait, *constitutes*, in reference to Bertrand Russell's famous paradox, the set of all sets that are not members of themselves.²

1 An Overview

Although the Kantian aesthetic and logical formalism does not require the body, it summons causality with bodily experience. (Lacan, 2002b, p. XI, 4-5) Such formalism is constituted through the signifier. Thus, Western philosophy has never succeeded in justifying "the function of cause." (Lacan, 2014, p. 214-5) Its logic excludes the signified which is causality related to the body as "cause in the real." (Lacan, 1974, p. 39) Logic, based only on the signifier, *forbids* a speaking being from putting "every relationship and every intuitive support *upon* what may arise from [such a] signified."³ Although "in general,

we are not guided by [formal logic] because we are very intuitive," the matter of only being constituted through a signifier means that "man does not include himself" in the set of all sets or in the class of classes. (Lacan, 2002b, pp. IX, 7, 8)⁴

Contrary to the Kantian aesthetic, psychoanalysis demonstrates that the body "validly articulates" a sensible relationship with the sensorium and it designates subjective organization. When desire enters the primary processes, "desiring beings" become enslaved. Desire keeps the cause in the real as a substrate, "as a lost object at the different levels of bodily experience where its cut occurs." (Lacan, 2014, p. 215) When the cut occurs, an objectified phallus articulates libido and the imaginary of the body is separated from the operation of the signifier.⁵ The phallus comes to the same place in the symbolic function, for example, as the breast when the oral drive is caught as a substrate.

Psychoanalysis is not interested in phenomenology which encompasses the totality of the body. Rather, its focus is on the speaking being's bodily engagement with the signifier and causality with the body in the real.

1 This paper is a variation of a chapter from a book I am writing, *Lacan and Badiou: Colour and Woman*.

2 For a background to the paradox see <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/russell-paradox/>

3 My italics.

4 For some arguments as to whether class resolves Russell's paradox see <https://math.stackexchange.com/questions/116425/the-class-of-all-classes-not-containing-themselves>

5 For example, with this separation the gaze, the scopic drive, is placed outside the body.

It is that *in* the body there is always, by virtue of this engagement in the signifying dialectic something that is separated off, something sacrificed, something inert, and this something is the pound of flesh. (Lacan, 2014, p. 219)⁶

It is a debt “settled in the flesh” related to the object *a*, which is a remainder that survives “the encounter with the pure signifier.” (Lacan, 2014, p. 220) The trait allows mankind, along with philosophy, to “stick” a name on the real - Plato’s idea is an imaginary nomination. The phallus, however, as a hole in the real “metaphorized from phallic enjoyment,” allows mankind “to be the phallus.” (Lacan, 2014, p. 184) It is “the signifier which does not have a signified.” (Lacan, 1998, p. 75) Despite all such holes, “the real doesn’t lack anything.” (Lacan, 2014, p. 185) However, there *is* a hole in the symbolic that starts from the real. (Lacan, 2002m, pp. VII, 106, II, 28, I, 19) It exists because “the signifier, in so far as it can be used to signify itself, has to be posed as different to itself,” but it cannot differentiate from itself. It “cannot signify itself.” (Lacan, 2002b, p. XVII, 9) Nevertheless, within ontology, sameness supposes the difference. All the traits in a social group can be differentiated as differentiated from the signifier. This is like a group of ceramic pots. Each is made around a void, which is nothing but the void in each set. The void in each pot can be substituted between the pots or described as the same as the void in the next pot. (Lacan, 2014, p. 185-7) When this occurs with speaking beings, the void becomes errant in a series because it can’t differentiate from itself.

Lacan laughs about this - that Russell’s famous paradox had to mobilize “the whole of time and space,” “just to sustain the distinction between individuals.” It was necessary because individuals had to be compared with the real where there is no individuation, as I cited above, the real does not lack anything. Lacan refers to a Chinese expression for “all:” “each man one + one + one + ... all, without exception” or “all men, each taken for himself and added to the others.” Yet, there is no guarantee of a woman’s universal essence. Contrary to the masculine universal limit, with her, there is no exception. “The *without exception* far from giving a consistency to some *all* naturally gives even less of it to what is defined as *not all*.” (Lacan,

2008b, pp. 67, 68) Nothing (the trait in a series) is lacking in not-all knowledge because the object for her is not linked to the object cause of desire as it is with man. The phallic object is second for a woman. (Lacan, 2014, pp. 185, 189, 184, 183)

Badiou disagrees with this in *The Immanence of Truths*. He places women - and men - *only* with the minimum. In Lacan’s terminology, Badiou’s minimum, μ , is the trait.⁷ Badiou wants the feminine to be the same as masculine mankind for the sake of “humanity,” universalism. His theory is philosophy’s realized imaginary in the symbolic (R.I.S.). (Badiou, 2022, pp. 538, 541) (Lacan, 2002m, p. I, 11) Lacan disagrees with philosophy’s R.I.S. with set theory mainly because the signifier (trait) signifies in the sets where man does not include himself. The trait can only “be *posed* as different to itself.” (Lacan, 2002b, p. XVII, 9)⁸ It is lacking - that is why man isn’t included. Moreover, since Russell’s paradox, what is excluded in the intersection of the non-relation between two terms relates axiomatically in set theory to “the logic of a class.” What is excluded is considered to be lacking. “It is an error.” However, the class and the set are different. “When the class is emptied, there is no longer any class, but when the set is emptied, there is still [the] element of the empty set.” (Lacan, 2008b, p. 67) The phallus is excluded from class because the definition of class guarantees “its universal status insofar as [formal logic] constitutes ... possible inexistence with this class.” (Lacan, 2002b, pp. XVII, 5-7, XII, 6, 5, 6)

The signifier is not “*posed* as different from itself” when there is no difference in class between one classification or another. It is “not possible, it is nothing maybe” in a series. It is important nevertheless, that “the rights of the nothing” are preserved so that the real can create the possible. (Lacan, 2002b, p. XII, 7)

This is the stupefying error of the whole abstract deduction of the transcendental – far from being able to say that anything real is possible, it is only starting from the not possible that the real can take its place. (Lacan, 2002b, p. XII, 7)

2 Badiou: Belonging and Inclusion

The symbolic presumes that being is in words such as “individual” or “substance.” However, such

⁶ My italics.

⁷ The ‘*u*’ in *The Immanence of Truths* aligns with the Greek letter ‘ μ ’ in *Logics of Worlds* which designates the minimum. (Badiou, 2009a, p. 588)

⁸ My italics.

Being is but “a spoken fact” - “it subsists qua existence with the respect to the act of speaking.” (Lacan, 1998, pp. 118, 119) As such an individual subsists as a “particularity [because] there is no equivalence between words and objects. With words and objects, you cannot have an exception.” (Izcoch, 2022, p. 3)⁹ Philosophy’s logical formalism does not recognize that there is *no* equivalence. For psychoanalysis, equivalence *only* subsists with “what is said.” (Lacan, 1998, p. 118) Likewise, the *value* of the image with human vision involves a “bi-univocal concordance” between the symbolic and imaginary. (Lacan, 2002b, p. II, 2)

In *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou doesn’t refer to the opposition with such bi-univocal concordance. Rather, he defines an “impossible” bi-univocal correspondence between “two types of multiplicity.” One is with belonging and the other with inclusion. He states from his mathematics=ontological perspective that the correspondence with “a set of all sets is inconsistent” and impossible because “the virtuality of the parts [sub-sets] overflows the initial multiplicity.” (Badiou, 2009b, pp. 219, 216-7, 219)

The first multiplicity necessarily exceeds the second. Suppose that you have ... the set of all sets, at once you have to reject it as absolute, for being lesser than the set of its parts.” (Badiou, 2009b, p. 217)

For him, elementary multiplicity induces “an overtaking of itself.” It only “stands in [the] *virtuality* of its being, by its parts, more numerous than itself.”¹⁰ Likewise, one can conclude that it is impossible for the elementary multiplicity of a human animal to nominate all its sub-sets - its parts remain indistinguishable because according to set theory they are “more numerous than itself.” (Badiou, 2009b, p. 218) The upshot is that the being of a human animal is rejected as lesser than the set of parts. However, for psychoanalysis, the speaking being subsists as a particularity, that is, “what is said about all can also be applied to the particular.” (Lacan, 2002m, p. III, 45) Badiou upholds the collective, which overtakes what he defines as a politically

ineffectual individual.¹¹ He states that “the resource of the collectives necessarily surpasses [the elementary] multiplicity in which individuals are resolved.” His focus is on collectives that are oppressed by other more powerful sub-sets in society. He concludes that “the universe is closed, total” and “statist,” and that for proletarian politics “this lack of civil status is precisely its political status. It indicates as non-State, as non-whole.” (Badiou, 2009b, pp. 218, 219)

Do not look ... to the ‘micro-revolutions’ of the desiring individual, they stay in their place. No individual has the power to exceed the era and its constraints except by the mediation of the parts, and let’s say it, of parties. (Badiou, 2009b, p. 219-20)

However, what is imperative for this is the fixed status of the first count. If the initial set remains fixed the elements belong to the sub-set, that is, the first set has successfully bestowed the virtuality of being, an immanent nomination, onto the sub-set. Alongside this bestowal there is exclusion. As Chiesa states, the initial set is “excluded by the law, that ‘the One is not.’” (Chiesa, 2006, p. 150-1) “It is, therefore, the subject, as one might have expected, who introduces privation and this by the act of enunciating.” (Lacan, 2002b, p. XVII, 9) However, both the bestowal and the exclusion suit philosophy’s generic multiplicity and the masculine universal.

[The trait is] the One, the big 1 which dominates all thinking from Plato to Kant, the One which for Kant, *qua* synthetic function, is the very model of what in every *a priori* category, brings with it, he says, the function of a norm, to be understood as a universal rule. (Lacan, 2002b, p. X, 3)

Although Badiou requires immanent virtuality, that inclusion overtakes belonging, in *The Immanence of Truths* he seeks to bypass constructible infinity - he uses the classifications of class as the attributes of infinity and proposes mathematics can bypass the dominance of the singleton, $\{\emptyset\}$.¹² This is conve-

9 Pagination is from private notes.

10 My italics.

11 He refutes the “isomorphism that is [often] presupposed ... between that which is of value to the individual and that which is of value to the collectivities.” (Badiou, 2009b, p. 218)

12 He uses immanence and maintains via classes that there is a strong resemblance to being with well-foundedness (set theory’s first axiom) along with the other fundamental property, extensionality (axiom seven). (Badiou, 2018a, p. 376)

nient for philosophy because the set rather than class indexes the exclusion of the being of a human animal, and that the void cannot differentiate from itself. As I cited above, “when class is emptied there is no longer any class, but when the set is emptied there is still the element of the empty set.”

In *Being and Event*, philosophy had to ward off the void's errancy. (Badiou, 2005, p. 93) He explains that what he presented there was “an ontology, that [was] of pure multiplicity, or multiplicity without – one.” He goes further in *The Immanence of Truths* – he mathematizes how class, as attributes of infinity, forecloses the initial set with a specific kind of “thinkable infinity.” He had no choice because, as Spinoza discovered, either the errancy of the void breaks the signifying set or the infinite attributes are God Himself. Thus, although classes cannot be shown to exist inside a universe, he asserts his infinity is not completely dependent on the singleton. And, given constructible multiplicities cannot exist, he builds, via the theories of several mathematicians', his different mathematization of infinity. He describes his theory of ultra filters as “the single most important concept of [his] whole theory of infinite multiplicities.” The Principled Ultra Filter contains the singleton but the Non-Principled Ultra Filter (N.P.U.F.) excludes it to some degree. The intersection with the N.P.U.F. is ruled by *classes of elements*, not the single element that is a “dominating” singleton. He states that “infinity ... is more intense and immanent [if it is freed] from the power of the One.” (Badiou, 2022, pp. 589, 294, 297) His focus is where the singleton returns as an absolutely, ontologically minimal element. It is minimal with a maximal ontological outcome. It is the return of the One, but it does not dominate by being gigantic rather it is omnipresent in every sub-set and intersection. It is a minimal, immanent domination by the One rather than transcendental domination.

Pointedly, such domination still requires the minimal element of the singleton, even if it is absolutely, ontologically immanent. For example, when he aligns the N.P.U.F. politically with collectivity, a community of equals, a commune, he is asserting that every element in the commune has the same power which is contrary to submitting to the transcendental domination of the singleton: the elements are equal to itself, the set, not the State. (Badiou, 2018a, p. 359-61) Purportedly his mathematics can then, with

the immanent domination of the One, think equality differently. It is “the One, that is the One of a one, i.e., a singleton.” He states that this is like “what Marx meant when he declared ... that all the communist principles come down to a single one: the abolition of private property.” (Badiou, 2022, p. 299)

He asserts, as he did in *Being and Event*, that the singleton is implied in the State's jurisdiction over the particular individual. (Badiou, 2022, p. 297) However, his universalism is drawn from “truths [which] are simultaneously both particular and universal.” He states that it is fine that these truths “have these two properties, which appear to be opposed unless they are equally absolute,” because his N.P.U.F. can thus produce generic sets. (Badiou, 2018a, p. 392)¹³

3 Lacan: Belonging and Inclusion

Although he declares Lacan is his mentor, Badiou's theories are diametrically opposed to Lacan's because his mathematico-logical formalism with the immanence of truths is constituted through the signifier, the trait as a minimum. In the early 1960s Lacan asserts that man, along with philosophy, *believes* that he perceives only via knowledge which is the idea of things parcelled “into a universe of discourse.” Freud's transference unconscious embodies a different *belief* as well as the root of knowledge, the cause in the real. Whilst the transference unconscious emerges with the first count, it is already “constituted ... with things of the real,” that is, it is constituted at the “radical level of the emergence of enunciating” after the preconscious enters the real through its border with the symbolic. (Lacan, 2002b, p. VII, 8) (Lacan, 1974, p. 62) Thus, when the trait emerges with the transference unconscious it retains the “unicity” of the object *a* in the real. And, when all other ramifications are effaced, we have a sign with the trait. (Lacan, 2002b, p. VII, 5)

[At] a moment [when] something is read with language when there is still no writing, [there] is [a] reversal of this relationship [, that is, the real to the trait]. [There is a] relationship of reading to the sign, where writing can subsequently be born in so far as it can serve phonemicization. (Lacan, 2002b, p. VII, 5)

Lacan makes the bi-univocal concordance between the imaginary and the symbolic function

13 In short, the Absolute is $0=1$. (Badiou, 2022, p. 592)

to isolate the trait as an object. When read as a sign it indexes “the primary kernel [in the real] as a signifier, ... the speaking heart of the subject.” “It speaks” from the real unconscious and profoundly and *retroactively* alters the transferential unconscious. In other words, when the transferential unconscious is structured like a language, the language is from the real unconscious. It is not structured *by* the “articulated language of common discourse” which takes place “everywhere.”

Thus, despite Badiou’s imperative that the elementary multiplicity of the initial set remains fixed, the causal signified retained in the real unconscious can easily intervene as the errant void because “it is at home” with “an already existing discourse.” Moreover, it cannot be reorganized by the preconscious. (Lacan, 2002b, pp. VII, 6, 7-8, 8, 7-8) As early as 1954, Lacan states something like this. “The real – as that which is excised from the primordial symbolization – is already there. We might even say it talks all by itself.” The void in the real unconscious “expects nothing” from the transferential unconscious, and it does not wait with the drives or accept any fixity. It is errant because it “resists symbolization.” It “erratically” makes “itself recognized.” (Lacan, 2006b, p. 324) Whilst the real unconscious cannot be reorganized it can subsequently “refuse what comes to it from the preconscious [because it can] choose [precisely] ... what it needs for its own purposes.” (Lacan, 2002b, pp. VII, 8, 9) This is because it is outside symbolization. Thus, the initial set is not overtaken by sub-sets more numerous than itself, and it can never be fixed, precisely because it is *not* structured *by* language. The causal signified does not require discursive denumerable structure. It consists with real numbers.

Lacan’s theory is contrary to set theory which is basically undone by Russell’s work.¹⁴ For example, set theory declares the initial set is designated *by* a letter, but Lacan states that it is structured *like* a letter. A letter from the real unconscious does not designate the transferential unconscious - it *constitutes* it as the initial set. The transferential unconscious is “recognized ‘retroactively’” via annoyingly errant drives that repeat. However, when it is acknowledged its errancy is successfully terminated. (Lacan, 2018, p. 131) Either way, whether it is repetitively errant or terminated with acknowledgment, the letter is recognized as what *constitutes* the initial set and thusly the set of

subsets. The acknowledgment of this *constitution* thereby includes the speaking being in the set of all sets because if the letter constitutes the set, the letter *functions* like the set, which is like the letter. (Lacan, 1998, pp. 47-8)¹⁵

4 Lacan and Badiou

This is antithetical to Badiou who thinks he can illude Russell’s paradox with class and immanence. In *Anti-Philosophy: Plato and Lacan*, written some twenty-six years before *The Immanence of Truths*, he declares that the void, or better said, the singleton which “stands in virtuality” or immanence for the void in each of the sets, requires “the radical transcendence of the big Other.” (Badiou, 2008, p. 235) He states that this is necessary because there are two paradoxes involved with “the initial image” of the One in Plato’s concept of participation. The first paradox involves the fragmentation of the One by sensible multiplicities.

[It is] fragmented not only in the *sensible* manifold it is presumed to link together, but also in itself, and is thereby dialectically subtracted from the unity of its One. (Badiou, 2008, p. 235)¹⁶

According to him, sensible multiplicities fragment the trait’s unifying function, whereas, for Lacan, this occurs because “we are very intuitive” and “the mirage” of the One fragments us. (Lacan, 2002b, p. IX, 7) Badiou partially cites Lacan. “There are as many Ones as you like – they are characterized by the fact that none of them resemble any of the others in any way.” (Lacan, 1998, p. 47) The intuitive relates to the void in each ceramic pot – it cannot differentiate itself from the void in the other pots. However, something ruptures the resemblance for speaking beings. For example, the rupturing connects with a “collective calculus” where everyone is “trapped in their private hell.” It is with the three prisoners wearing black or white disks. They “can only calculate because one element is missing: the phallus.” (Laurent, 1995, p. 23) To be precise, the rupture happens when the phallus is elided. The aleph or cause in the real thus allows the prisoners to calculate via a singular symptom.

The prisoners must break from “their private hell” within the “collective calculus” of a group or a commune

14 Also see the following. (Lacan, 2008b, p. 91-3)

15 See footnotes related to “if-then.” (Lacan, 1998, pp. 48, 59)

16 My italics.

because when the particular and the universal are in locked step “everyone is mad, that is, delusional.” (Lacan, 2008c, p. 3) Badiou’s collective subject, most obviously his political subject, is generic madness, a delusion that “begins with [signifier] knowledge.”¹⁷ However, the causal signified erratically breaks from this knowledge when *any one of the particular* breaks from the delusions of the masculine universal, the “not 0=1.” The masculine “slips away,” it “slid.” It veers to a real number – slides from the particular with the universal - and thus not-all logic can emerge because there is no contradiction. (Lacan, 2018, pp. 157, 149, 181, 157)

Although in *Anti-Philosophy: Plato and Lacan*, it appears that Badiou agrees with Lacan’s assessment of the resemblance of “many Ones” because he thinks the unity of Plato’s One is fragmented by the sensible, he doesn’t agree. For example, he doesn’t place Lacan’s assessment specifically with two things. Firstly, he doesn’t place the resemblance with his political object: the human protagonists that become a collective subject in his political work of truth. His political activists in *Logics of Worlds* or those in the communes in *The Immanence of Truths* are all tied to the trait like “many Ones,” even if the trait is absolutely, ontologically immanent. They are all tied to the One because they are speaking beings. Nevertheless, nothing, including mathematics in relation to speech, “transcends the effects of the repressed.” (Lacan, 2015, p. 337)

Secondly, the rupturing of the phallus also comes into play for his human protagonists. The trait has a unifying function - as the singleton it has a numerical “signifying function.” (Lacan, 1998, p. 28-9) The unifying signification occurs when “all the sets that are of the single element [highlight] their equivalence [as] One.” Badiou relies on this resemblance of the many Ones. (Lacan, 2018, pp. 124, 125, 144) The trait’s succession supposedly fixes elementary multiplicity. However, as with the prisoners, the phallus for a speaking being is “elided” when it indexes the missing element, that is when the void is

errant. (Lacan, 2002m, p. VII, 103) It is problematic for Badiou’s collective subject because it keeps undoing the trait’s function – fragmenting the unity of the One.

In other words, spoken common discourse, which reveals that it “start[s] from the not possible,” is a problem for Russell’s paradox and set theory. (Lacan, 2002b, p. XII, 7) Neither reflects on “what a 1 is” for a speaking being, that there is a difference between the signifier and the sign. The errancy of the void not only involves the rupture of the phallus but also it impacts the trait because what is sought by the speaking being in “the circuit” of the errant return is a “signifying unicity [that] has marked the subject.” (Lacan, 2002b, pp. IV, 11, XII, 4, 5)

Badiou’s first paradox of Plato’s One merges with his second - he doesn’t connect Lacan’s assessment of the many Ones with Lacan’s criticism of Plato’s “reminiscence” and “participation.”¹⁸ He decides that Lacan’s refutation shows that the imaginary “leads thought along an infinite regress” such that the symbolic as the Other must “name” participation.¹⁹ Thus, Plato’s Oneness pays “the price ... in thought for introducing ... the symbolic... where the multiple [the virtual void in sub-sets] is presented to us.” If philosophy’s truth is to “remain intact [then] the big Other is required.” (Badiou, 2008, pp. 232, 235) Truth with participation is thus consolidated via the trait between both counts.²⁰ As such, there is confusion between two types of Oneness in *Anti-Philosophy: Plato and Lacan*. The confusion points to the distinction between Lacan’s letter and Badiou’s trait. (Badiou, 2008, p. 236) Lacan defines *Yad’lun* as “the One [that is] real.” It “cannot be said to be 1.” It is not the One of Badiou’s human protagonists neither is it the finitude of each “one of them” because each of them is “not *one*. [They] are, alas!, uncountable.” (Lacan, 2008b, p. 92) It is the “1 that is missing at the level of 0.” It is the aleph zero that “produces [Lacan’s] subject.” (Lacan, 2018, pp. 121, 114, 115) (Lacan, 2008b, p. 85) Badiou’s subject, however, relates to the symbolic Oneness in Plato’s “ontological underpinning” with participation. The symbolic is required

17 The generic madness is equivalent to “the effect of signification.” “It ... begins with knowledge. When to one signifier all by itself you add the articulation of a second one, whereby the “all by itself” becomes one.” (Miller, 2013, p. 39) My italics.

18 See Lacan’s text. (Lacan, 1988a, p. 292)

19 As Plato said, the Good far exceeded *ousia*, the One is beyond being which is “itself incompatible with Being.” (Badiou, 2008, p. 236)

20 He asserts that Lacan “was heading down” a road where desire is coupled with truth, that truth requires the Other. Consequently, participation involves “signifiers that articulate” desire in the first count, and he presumes, the object that causes desire in the second. (Badiou, 2008, p. 235) This is not the road Lacan “was heading down.” In fact, as I stated above, such fixity/foreclosure leads to the generic madness of the masculine universal.

to “regulate” over “the fact that none of the Ones “resemble any of the others.” This is antithetical to Lacan’s theory. For Lacan, such Ones are the “trait [which] has nothing to do with *Yad l’un*. ... the unary trait is what repetition as such is marked by.” (Lacan, 2018, p. 146) Badiou proposes that his mathematized event can “support” the trait.

In Lacan’s terms, there is definitely some Oneness (*il y a de l’Un*), but it does not follow from this that the One is. The One’s non-being separates it from itself and links it to the Other in a constitutive torsion that only the event can support. (Badiou, 2008, p. 236)

He defines the trait as “the underlying multiple whose value of existence is minimal.” It “inexists in a world.” He cites as an example, a group of Indigenous people who “have no electoral existence. [They are] nil (or indexed to the minimum).” (Badiou, 2009a, pp. 322, 323)

[They are] undoubtedly (ontologically) ‘of the world’ ... not absolutely in the world according to the strict logic of appearing. [As] the inexistence of an object [they are] suspended between (ontological) being and a certain form of (logical) non-being. (Badiou, 2009a, p. 324)

This minimum, the trait is significant for his theory because it functions with the event as “the tipping over of a nil intensity of existence into a maximal intensity,” which is “the signature” of “an event.” (Badiou, 2009a, p. 343) His theory around the minimum continues with *The Immanence of Truths*. For example, the generic positions “woman” and “man” are “two external halves” with the minimum, μ , as “the cause of their common desire.” He expounds upon his love truth procedure - it has a double function: “an object in which desire finds its cause, and that of a point in which the Two can be counted.” The minimum is read in two ways. Firstly, it doesn’t construct a “scene of the Two.” Secondly, it does not share the object. He states that both display sexual non-rapport. The event with love establishes a difference between an indeterminacy with one that lacks

“its relationship” and indeterminacy with one that works in “excess over its non-relationship.” Thus, post the event, love continues “limping as long as it can” for the sake of “humanity,” that is, for universalism. He concludes that his event with love is an “immanent construction of an indeterminate disjunction.” The minimal One cannot stop the errancy of the speaking being’s void, and his event does not solve the non-sexual relation with maximal intensity. (Badiou, 2022, pp. 534, 538, 539, 540, 541)

Lacan asserts that set theory attempts to make up for the absence of a sexual rapport. (Lacan, 1998, pp. 47, 48) Mathematico-logical formalism is constituted through the signifier in a metalanguage. (Lacan, 1998, p. 119) (Cutrofello, 2002, p. 142) However, as I cited above, within speech, which is in common discourse, nothing “transcends the effects of the repressed.” (Lacan, 2015, p. 336-7) The letters in mathematics don’t “govern.” They “disperse.” (Lacan, 1998 p. 128) For example, in speech, if you “subtract the One, ... the entire edifice of numbers ... come[s] undone.” (Lacan, 2018, p. 150) Contrary to Badiou’s minimum, Lacan’s *Yad l’un* evokes, via the sensible, which Badiou defines as the “sensible manifold,” the letter with the real. (Badiou, 2008, p. 235) In *Anti-Philosophy: Plato and Lacan*, Badiou doesn’t analyze how different his and Plato’s One is from *Yad l’un*, that Lacan’s theory cannot retain the One as the Other.²¹ According to Lacan, set theory “appropriate[s] the One in a way *other than the intuitive*” - it grants itself “the right to designate the resulting assemblage by a letter.”²² This amounts to us “merely reading letters” in mathematical writing. (Lacan, 1998, pp. 47, 48)

Generic multiplicity necessitates that the initial set is fixed because otherwise the One is ruined. (Badiou, 2005, p. 93) However, the writing of the event via set theory mathematics=ontology doesn’t stop the errant void from cutting the fixity. This is because, for a speaking being, the preconscious as a record in any relation to perception, “is already in the real” unconscious - something *was* already there “to be read with language.” The phallus with its elision to the signified as cause keeps making the trait susceptible to the void’s repetitive errancy. The errancy does not question perception. It questions the Other: “whether as such what the subject receives from *outside* is a

21 All he states is that Lacan knew “this One that is not, this One that is the Other as such, has its origins in the work of Plato.” (Badiou, 2008, p. 236)

22 My italics.

reliable sign,” and whether it is possible “to *know* when one can trust the Other.”²³ If the transferential unconscious is structured *like* a set rather than *by* a set, the speaking being’s identification to the signified in the real is constituted in a moment of certitude via the undecidability between the One identified as Other and the other. This is because the One makes a clear distinction between the Other and the other. (Lacan, 2002b, pp. VII, 5, 11, III, 8)

Badiou’s event props up an ancient Platonic impasse, which occurs when the non-being of One makes One separate from itself and link to the Other. (Badiou, 2008, p. 236) Lacan sees an “access to being” in the impasse of the no-sexual relation. This is because when the initial set is understood to be structured *like* a language the function of the One is read like a compass that points to what “make[s] up for the absence of the sole part of the real that cannot manage to be formed from being.” The function of the One can then be read as what has tried to make up for the “one element [that] is missing.”²⁴ Most importantly the letter marks out the place of the signifier” as where it was “first manifested.” (Lacan, 2018, p. 16) (Lacan, 1998, pp. 49, 48)²⁵ The impasse with One provides access to being because it points to the real where there is a sexual rapport beyond the non-sexual relation. One cannot be taken as the Other because *Yad’lun* “separates 1 from 2.” “Then each of the 2 remains 1.” (Lacan, 2018, pp. 16, 171, 135) If there is One and the Other, which equals two, then *a*

leads to identification via a ternary articulation.²⁶ It is “from the standpoint of *a*” that we can proceed to a different knowledge and a different infinity. However, the *a* as *semblance* “supports” discourse and is “correlative” as a universal proposition with truth. (Lacan, 2002i, p. II, 5) It must fall before non-initiatory knowledge presents know-how with Lacan’s infinity.

Badiou’s infinity is with multiplicity and immanence - Lacan’s is with the aleph zero, “the real [that is called] number.” The fact that set theory grounds One and makes number lean on it as “a class of equivalence” is enough “to highlight what it calls the *non-denumerable*.” It is “impossible to denumerate.” Cantor created his Diagonal Method with real numbers because constructible theories about infinity did not work. The method shows that with a real number, “irrespective of how you might have ordered it ... there will be yet another way of denumerating it.” The real number cannot be inscribed but it “is defined by its correspondence with the sequence of integers,” that is, in his graph, it is on the diagonal at the point between 0 and 1.²⁷ This is how “the real attached to the One consists.” If the “one element [that] is absolutely equivalent ... to an empty set” is “not subsumed into ... aggregative inclusion,” then “at one point it is counted.” What is produced with “non-initiatory knowledge” via the analyst’s discourse “at the level of the jouissance of speaking ... is *S1*.” The subject that is produced is “a real number.” (Lacan, 2018, pp. 152, 32, 124, 181, 124, 144, 152)

23 My italics.

24 For example, being in love despairs to make up for it – unless it is in “the place of non-existence” and “missing” the mark. (Lacan, 1998, pp. 144, 145)

25 This reduces “the function of being in love.” (Lacan, 1998, p. 49)

26 “There are two plus *a*. This two plus *a*, from the standpoint of *a*, can be reduced not to the two others, but to One plus *a*. ... It is insofar as, starting from little *a*, the two others are taken as One plus *a*.” (Lacan, 1998, p. 49)

27 The diagonal on Cantor’s graph is between the decimal places of a real number and real numbers between 0 and 1 with ordered whole numbers. (Badiou, 2022, p. 597-9)

References

- Chiesa, L. (2006) Count-as-one, Forming-into-one, Unary Trait, S1. In *The Praxis of Alain Badiou*. (Eds. P. Ashton, A. J. Bartlett, J. Clemens). re.press, Melbourne, p. 68-101.
- Cutrofello, A. (2002). *The Ontological Status of Lacan's Mathematical Paradigms*. In *Reading Seminar XX: Lacan's Major Work on Love, Knowledge, and Feminine Sexuality*. (Eds. S. Barnard, B. Fink). State University of New York Press, Albany, NY, p. 141-170.
- Izcovich, L. (2022). What is a Case in Psychoanalysis? Forum of Melbourne in conjunction with Australian Centre for Psychoanalysis, Zoom Presentation, 13/2/2022. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82569629884?pwd=TTFZSINML2xJSDRid1FuVU9tTEVpZz09>
- Badiou, A. (2005). *Being and Event*. (Trans. O. Feltham). Continuum International Publishing Group, London, New York.
- Badiou, A. (2008). *Conditions*. (Trans. S. Corcoran). Continuum International Publishing Group, London, New York.
- Badiou, A. (2009a). *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event, 2*. (Trans. A. Toscano). Continuum International Publishing Group, London, New York.
- Badiou, A. (2009b). *Theory of the Subject*. (Trans. B. Bosteels). Continuum International Publishing Group, London, New York.
- Badiou, A. (2018a). *L'Immanence des Vérités: L'être et l'événement*, 3. Fayard, Paris.
- Badiou, A. (2022). *The Immanence of Truths: Being and Event 111*. (Trans. S. Spitzer, K. Reinhard), Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney.
- Lacan, J. (1974). *La troisième*. (Trans. Y. Szczech). VIIème Congrès, De l'école freudienne de Paris. Rome. p. 1-74. English translation viewed 19/8/2017. <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/307210365>
- Lacan, J. (1988a) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book 2: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique Psychoanalysis 1954-1955*. (Ed. J. A. Miller). (Trans. S. Tomasetti). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Lacan, J. (1998). *On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972 – 1973: Encore The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XX*. (Ed. J.A. Miller). (Trans. B Fink). W.W. Norton & Company Inc., New York, London.
- Lacan, J. (2002b). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Identification, 1961-1962, Book IX*. (Trans. Cormac Gallagher) Cormac Gallagher, Paris. <http://www.lacanireland.com/web/published-works/seminars/>
- Lacan, J. (2002i). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, On a Discourse that Might Not Be a Semblance, 1971, Book XVIII*. (Trans. Cormac Gallagher). Cormac Gallagher, Paris. <http://www.lacanireland.com/web/published-works/seminars/>
- Lacan, J. (2002m). *R.S.I.: Seminar XXII, (1974 – 1975)*. (Trans. Cormac Gallagher). Cormac Gallagher, Paris. <http://www.lacanireland.com/web/published-works/seminars/>
- Lacan, J. (2006b). *Jacques Lacan, Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*. (Trans. B. Fink). W.W. Norton & Company, New York, London.
- Lacan, J. (2008b). *The Knowledge of the Analyst (Seminar 1976-1977)*. (Trans. M. Plastow). Unpublished, for private use only. Melbourne, p. 1-102.
- Lacan, J. (2008c). *There are Four Discourses*. In *Culture Clinic*. (Trans. A. R. Price, R. Grigg). University of Minnesota Press, Vol. 1, 2013, p. 3-4. First, published in 1979 *Ornicia?* 17/18, p. 278. www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/cultureclin.1.2013.0003 Viewed 11/6/2022.
- Lacan, J. (2014). *Anxiety: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VIII*. (Ed. J. A. Miller). (Trans. A.R. Price). Polity Press, Cambridge, U.K., Malden, U.S.A.
- Lacan, J. (2015). *Transference: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VIII*. (Ed. J. A. Miller). (Trans. B. Fink). Polity Press, Cambridge, U.K., Malden, U.S.A.
- Lacan, J. (2018). *... or Worse: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XIX*. (Ed. J. A. Miller). (Trans. A. R. Price). Polity Press, Cambridge, U.K., Medford, U.S.A.
- Laurent, É. (1995). *Alienation and Separation (I)*. In *Reading Seminar XI: Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. (Eds. R. Feldstein, B. Fink, M. Jannus). State University of New York, Albany, New York, p. 19-28.
- Miller, J. A. (2013). *Everyone Is Mad*. In *Culture Clinic*. (Trans. A. R. Price). University of Minnesota Press, Vol. 1, p. 17-41. Originally in *L'orientation lacanienne, Jacques-Alain Miller's Course III*, 10. www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/cultureclin.1.2013.0003