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UNIVOCITY FOR MILITANTS: SET-THEORETICAL
ONTOLOGY AND THE DEATH OF THE ONE

Mathematics is a thought, a thought of being qua being. Its formal transparency is a direct consequence of the *absolutely univocal* character of being. Mathematical writing is the transcription or inscription of this *univocity*.¹

In the epigraph above and throughout his masterwork, *Being and Event*, Alain Badiou notes that he designates that mathematics as ontology—the thought of “being qua being”—because of its ability to express the “univocal” character of being.² But in his critical and indeed controversial reading of Gilles Deleuze, Badiou accuses Deleuze’s univocal ontology of being fundamentally a metaphysics of “the One”. This raises many questions for Badiou’s own commitment to ontological univocity: Doesn’t the *uni-vocity* of being presuppose that there is only *one* single way/value of being? If so, wouldn’t a univocal ontology fundamentally be an ontology of “the One” rather than “the many”? How does Badiou’s set-theoretical ontology of the multiple be simultaneously against “the One” whilst upholding “univocity” at the same time?

This essay offers a reading of Badiou’s univocity of being in relation to his understanding of ontological immanence and also his commitment or indeed “fidelity” to ontologically articulating the atheistic premise that “God is dead” — which for Badiou also means “the One *is not*”. Although Badiou famously deploys set theory to develop his “univocal” mathematical ontology of the multiple in *Being and Event*, his most sustained and detailed discussion of the univocity of being is in his controversial critique of Deleuze’s ontology in his *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*.³ While references to (Badiou’s reading of) Deleuze will be made, it is not the purpose of this essay to add to the existing scholarship on the Deleuze-Badiou debate.⁴ Instead, the chief aim here is to apply Badiou’s

¹ Alain Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, trans. Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano (London; New York: Continuum, 2004), 173, my emphasis.

² For example, Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London; New York: Continuum, 2005), 18, 43, 145.

³ Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

⁴ Examples of the literature on the Deleuze-Badiou debate in English include: Todd May, “Badiou and Deleuze on the One and the Many,” in *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, ed. Peter Hallward (London: Continuum, 2004), 67–76; Daniel W. Smith, “Badiou and Deleuze on the Ontology of Mathematics,” in *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, ed. Peter Hallward (London: Continuum, 2004), 77–93; Jon Roffe, Badiou’s

accusations and criticisms of Deleuze's univocal ontology back to Badiou's own ontological project, and thereby consider how Badiou reconciles his "commitment to radical ontological univocity" with his metaphysical position against "the One" most vividly expressed in his critique of Deleuze's univocal ontology.⁵ Put differently, this essay seeks to consider the following questions: What does Badiou mean by "univocity" and how does it differ from Deleuze? How is Badiou's set-theoretical ontology able to maintain a commitment to ontological univocity without becoming a univocal ontology of the One *à la* Deleuze? Is there fundamentally an ontological structure of "oneness" in Badiou's immanentist ontology of the multiple developed under the ontological axiom that "the One *is not*"?

This essay is divided into four sections. Section one lays out Badiou's overall metaphysical commitments by revisiting *The Clamor of Being*, where we find not only his controversial fierce critique of Deleuzian metaphysics, but also arguably Badiou's clearest account of his own immanentist—and indeed atheist—metaphysical position against "the One" which underlies his ambitious project of formulating an ontology of the multiple. This is followed by section two which examines various ways in which Badiou's own set-theoretical approach to ontology in *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds* may be at risk of being yet another metaphysics of "oneness" or "the One". Section three then considers how these tendencies towards "the One" may be reconciled in Badiou's mathematical ontology with a particular emphasis on his understanding of "immanence". Lastly, the final section concludes this essay by considering how Badiou's version of "univocity" is more radical and militant than that of Deleuze's, and consequently how it helps Badiou to fulfil his overall agenda to develop a immanentist "modern" metaphysics which would overcome the traditional—or indeed theological—transcendent metaphysics of "the One".⁶

Deleuze and Badiou

Whether Badiou's controversial characterization of Deleuze is accurate or not, in his very critical account we can observe some of key views and metaphysical commitments of Badiou himself. Firstly, Badiou notes that Deleuze's philosophy is "in no way a critical philosophy", and thus for Deleuze, "not only is it possible to think Being, but there is thought only insofar as Being simultaneously formulates and pronounces itself therein."⁷ In this regard, Badiou finds in Deleuze a fellow

Deleuze (Durham: Acumen, 2012); Clayton Crockett, *Deleuze Beyond Badiou* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013). See also Francois Wahl's preface to Badiou's *Conditions*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London; New York: Continuum, 2008), viii–xxiii.

⁵ Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 144.

⁶ Accordingly, this essay focuses primarily on Badiou's mathematical ontology which is to be distinguished from his philosophy of the Event, as set out in *Being and Event*, 1–20.

⁷ Badiou, *The Clamor of Being*, 20.

colleague who goes against the Kantian ethos of critical philosophy which proclaims the end of metaphysics:

Deleuze's philosophy, like my own, moreover, is resolutely *classical*. And, in this context, classicism is relatively easy to define. Namely: may be qualified as classical any philosophy that does not submit to the critical injunctions of Kant. Such a philosophy considers, for all intents and purposes, the Kantian indictment of metaphysics as null and void, and, by way of consequence, upholds, against any "return to Kant," against the critique, moral law, and so on.⁸

As Peter Hallward additionally remarks: "Badiou's ontology is similar to that of his great rival Deleuze in at least this one respect: both set out from the classical or non-Kantian presumption that thought engages directly with true reality or being, rather than supervise the orderly analysis of phenomena or appearance."⁹

Secondly, and more specifically than the general disposition to return to metaphysics, Badiou holds with Deleuze:

a shared conviction as to what it is possible to demand of philosophy today and the central problem that it must deal with: namely, an *immanent* conceptualization of the multiple.¹⁰

Both Badiou and Deleuze do not simply want to recast a pre-modern metaphysics of transcendence, but instead, develop a "modern" ontology of immanence.¹¹ In this regard, Deleuze and Badiou make similar moves to "overturn" the ontological hierarchies of transcendent metaphysics: Whereas Deleuze proclaims the ontological priority of difference over identity, Badiou "decides" to privilege the multiple or the many over the One.¹² Both of these moves can be seen not only as outright oppositions against the Christian Neo-Platonic metaphysical hierarchy of favoring the one over the many and identity over difference, but more fundamentally an overcoming of metaphysical transcendence.

This anti-transcendent conviction shared by Badiou and Deleuze is crucial to understanding their respective commitments to the univocity of being and indeed Deleuze's reported proposition in a letter to Badiou: "immanence =

⁸ *Ibid.*, 45–46, emphasis in original.

⁹ Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, 55.

¹⁰ Badiou, *The Clamor of Being*, 4, emphasis in original.

¹¹ Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 64; cf. May, "Badiou and Deleuze on the One and the Many."

¹² See Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London; New York: Continuum, 2004), *passim*; Badiou, *Being and Event*, *passim*, especially 23–30. See also Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 41; *Briefings on Existence: A Short Treatise on Transitory Ontology*, trans. Norman Madarasz (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 36.

univocity".¹³ According to the "analogy of being" of the *transcendent* metaphysical tradition stemming from Thomas Aquinas, "being" is said ultimately and most eminently of the transcendent cause or principle of being ("God" or "the One"), but it is also said *analogically* of immanent finite beings ("creation" or "the many"); the many do not exist in the same sense (univocally) as the transcendent, but neither is their existence utterly separated or different (equivocally) from the existence of the transcendent One.¹⁴ In other words, in the analogical outlook of transcendent metaphysics, there exists a supreme source or indeed *transcendent* principle of being, traditionally named "the One" or indeed "God".¹⁵ Contrary to the transcendent—or indeed theological—tradition of metaphysics and the "analogy of being", both Deleuze and Badiou advocate the "univocity of being" as an alternative ontological principle that is fundamentally *immanentist*, anti-transcendent or even anti-theological; it is an ontological principle essential to the construction of a "modern metaphysics."¹⁶

The anti-analogical and indeed anti-theological ethos of Deleuze and Badiou is evident in a passage from Deleuze's *Logic of Sense* which is heavily referenced by Badiou in *The Clamor of Being*:

Philosophy merges with ontology, but ontology merges with the univocity of being (*analogy* has always been a *theological* vision, not a philosophical one, adapted to the forms of God, the world, and the self). The univocity of being does not mean that there is one and the same being; on the contrary, beings are multiple and different.¹⁷

While Badiou has strong reasons opposing Deleuze's views on philosophy, ontology and univocity in this passage,¹⁸ he

¹³ Badiou, *The Clamor of Being*, 56; Badiou, *Briefings on Existence*, 64; Alain Badiou, "Of Life as a Name of Being, Or, Deleuze's Vitalist Ontology," trans. Alberto Toscano, *Pli: Warwick Journal of Philosophy* 10 (2000): 193.

¹⁴ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 28-34; cf. Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), especially 117-314.

¹⁵ For a critique of Badiou (and Deleuze) as well as a contemporary exposition of the transcendent metaphysics of analogy, see John Milbank, "Materialism and Transcendence," in *Theology and the Political: The New Debate*, ed. Creston Davis, John Milbank, and Slavoj Žižek (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 404-425, especially 412-420.

¹⁶ Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 64, cf. 41: "To invent a contemporary fidelity to that which has never been subject to the historical constraint of onto-theology or the commanding power of the One—such has been and remains, my aim." See also Alain Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, trans. Robin MacKay (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 7-9, 13-15.

¹⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 205, my emphasis.

¹⁸ Badiou, *The Clamor of Being*, 20-24.

shares with Deleuze's an anti-theological (anti-analogical) stance in his hostility against the transcendent metaphysics of the One, as Hallward notes:

The only possible ontology of the One, Badiou maintains, is theology. The only legitimately post-theological ontological attribute, by implication, is multiplicity. If God is dead, it follows that the "central problem" of philosophy today is the articulation of "thought immanent to the multiple".¹⁹

For Badiou, the atheist axiom "there is no God" also means that "the One is not".²⁰ His "Platonism of the multiple" is an ontological project that fundamentally presupposes the atheist premise – or what Badiou calls "axiom" – that "God is truly dead, as are all the categories that used to depend on it in the order of the thinking of being."²¹

Although both Badiou and Deleuze share an anti-transcendent or indeed anti-theological emphasis on "immanence" in their ontologies,²² Badiou notes that they fundamentally differ precisely on the issue of "the One". To quote Badiou at length:

whereas my aim is to found a Platonism of the multiple, Deleuze's concern was with a Platonism of the virtual. Deleuze retains from Plato the univocal sovereignty of the One, but sacrifices the determination of the Idea as always actual. For him, the Idea is the virtual totality, the One is the infinite reservoir of dissimilar productions. *A contrario*, I uphold that the forms of the multiple are always actual and that the virtual does not exist; I sacrifice, however, the One. Deleuze's virtual ground remains for me a transcendence, whereas for Deleuze, it fails to hold thought firmly within immanence. In short, our contrasting forms of classicism were to prove irreconcilable.²³

For Badiou, to truly overcome the metaphysics of transcendence and attain a genuine ontological immanence, one must affirm the multiple or the many and eliminate the

¹⁹ Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, 81; cf. Badiou, *The Clamor of Being*, 4.

²⁰ Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (London; New York: Verso, 2001), 25.

²¹ Alain Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. Norman Madarasz (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), 103; see also *Briefings on Existence*, 21–32; *Number and Numbers*, 65; *Theoretical Writings*, 26–27, 36–38; *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. Louise Burchill (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), 113. See also the critique of Badiou's association of the elimination of the One with "the death of God" in Smith, "Badiou and Deleuze on the Ontology of Mathematics," 88–89.

²² See John Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy: An Outline* (London; New York: Continuum, 2006), 1–47, 83–124.

²³ Badiou, *The Clamor of Being*, 46.

One—or indeed any type of Being *par excellence* or transcendent principle of being, for any ontological notion of “the One” or “oneness” is always in danger of succumbing to the “metaphysical temptation” of transcendence.²⁴ As such, Deleuze’s metaphysics still remains for Badiou one of transcendence, as Deleuze’s insistence on the “univocity of Being” resembles the traditional metaphysical regime of the One—what Badiou here calls “the univocal sovereignty of the One”. In opposition to Deleuze, Badiou states: “It was exactly to avoid falling into this kind of predicament that, personally, I have posed the univocity of the actual as a pure multiple, sacrificing the One.”²⁵

But what is this “univocity of the actual as a pure multiple” that Badiou speaks of? What does “univocity” exactly mean for Badiou here? While critics of Badiou’s interpretation of Deleuze have argued that the univocity of being is strictly incompatible with a metaphysics of the One,²⁶ in his *Deleuze* book Badiou precisely sees “univocity”—which he associates with Deleuze’s notion of “the clamor of being” (which Badiou uses for the title of his book)—as that which introduces a strong metaphysics of “oneness” into Deleuze’s ontology. To quote Deleuze’s original passage from *Difference and Repetition*:

There has only ever been one ontological proposition: Being is univocal. There has only ever been one ontology, that of Duns Scotus, which gave being a single voice. [...] A single voice raises the clamour of being. [...] a single “voice” of Being, which includes all its modes, including the most diverse, the most varied, the most differentiated. Being is said in a single and same sense of everything of which it is said, but that of which it is said differs: it is said of difference itself.²⁷

In Badiou’s reading, Deleuzian metaphysics is univocal in that Deleuze asserts that being can only be said in *one* single sense—there is only *one* way, *one* plane of being—what Deleuze describes on the concluding page of *Difference and Repetition* as the “single clamor of Being for all beings”.²⁸

Here one may find several issues arising from Badiou’s association of the metaphysics of “the One” with the univocity of being: How does Badiou himself reconcile his portrayal of (Deleuzian) “univocity” as inherently an ontology of “oneness” with his own ontological commitment to ontological univocity? Does the “univocity” of being always entail a metaphysical “sovereignty of the One”? If univocity does entail ontological “oneness”, and if Badiou indeed

²⁴ Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 37–48; *Briefings on Existence*, 33–43.

²⁵ Badiou, *The Clamor of Being*, 52.

²⁶ See Smith, “Badiou and Deleuze on the Ontology of Mathematics,” 88; Crockett, *Deleuze Beyond Badiou*, 19–20.

²⁷ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 44–45.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 378; cf. Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 205–206.

subscribes to the univocity of being himself, would he then also be a metaphysician of “the One”?

The One and the Many

While Badiou sees Deleuze’s single univocal voice of the “Being of beings” as constituting a metaphysical or onto-theological structure of a transcendent One or oneness, one may question whether Badiou’s own ontology also has a structure of oneness. After making his axiomatic decision to affirm the multiple and that declare that “the one is not” in the opening meditation of *Being and Event*,²⁹ Badiou asserts that: “Ontology, if it exists, is a situation”.³⁰ To quote Badiou’s own discussion at length:

if ontology – the discourse of being qua being – is a situation, it must admit a mode of the count-as-one, that is a structure. But wouldn’t the count-as-one of being lead us straight back into those aporias in which sophistry solders the reciprocity of the one and being? If the one is not, being solely the operation of the count, mustn’t one admit that being is not one? And in this case, is it not subtracted from every count? [...] This may also be also put as follows: there is no structure of being.³¹

But to pose that “ontology is not actually a situation” is actually what Badiou calls “the Great Temptation” which must be resisted.³² For Badiou, it is the wager of *Being and Event* “that ontology is a situation”.³³

While Badiou dedicates the rest of *Being and Event*’s opening meditation to take on “the apparent paradoxes of ontology as a situation” by axiomatically designating ontology as “the presentation of presentation” rather than “a presentation of being,”³⁴ his wager that ontology is a situation – one single situation, i.e. “there is one ontology” seems not dissimilar to Deleuze’s claim that “there has only ever been one ontology.” One may indeed be tempted to describe Badiou’s set-theoretical ontology by paraphrasing Deleuze:

There has only ever been one ontology, that of *mathematics*, which gave being a single voice. A single voice raises the clamor of being – the clamor of *the multiple*. Being is said in a single and same sense of everything of which it is said, but that of which it is said is *multiple*: it is said of *the multiple* itself.³⁵

²⁹ Badiou, *Being and Event*, 23ff.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 25, emphasis in original.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 26, emphasis in original.

³² *Ibid.*, 26.

³³ *Ibid.*, 27, emphasis in original.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 27, emphasis in original, cf. 27–30.

³⁵ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 44–45; cf. Badiou, *Being and Event*, 3, 5: “the science of being qua being has existed since the Greeks – such is the sense and status of mathematics, [...]”

Does Badiou's ontology "situationally" echo Deleuze's single voice of being? One could indeed say that for Deleuze, whilst there are certainly multiples or multiplicities of beings, there is *one* single voice that speaks the Being of beings. Not dissimilarly, for Badiou, whilst being-qua-being exists as "the multiple", the voice or discourse that presents being-qua-being is still situationally *One*—or indeed at least *counted-as-one*.

Here it may be helpful briefly turn to *Being and Event*'s sequel *Logics of Worlds* to consider the possible "oneness" or univocity of Badiou's set-theoretical ontological situation. *Logics of Worlds*, as its subtitle indicates, is *Being and Event 2*. We can thus think of this as Badiou further developing his metaphysical opposition against the One: His ontological project—*Being and Event*—is no longer just "one" but now "two"—it is now multiple rather than one. Such a reading may be further supported by Badiou's assertion in *Logics of Worlds* that there are multiple "situations" which he also calls "worlds", which are transcendently organized by different "logics"—as the book title *Logics of Worlds* suggests.³⁶ The ontology of *Being and Event 1* is thus revealed to be after all just "a situation" or "a world"; it is just one world among *many*—with what Badiou calls "classical logic" in operation as opposed to other worlds of non-classical logics.³⁷

This idea of the multiplicity of worlds is already anticipated in first volume of *Being and Event*, where Badiou explicitly recognizes that if "world" is "conceived as a being-of-the-one", it would merely constitute "an illusory impasse".³⁸ Notably, in meditations 33 and 34 of *Being and Event*, Badiou deploys the two characters of the ontologist and the inhabitant of a situation (world): whereas the inhabitant is immanent to their world or situation, the ontologist can discern things from "outside the world".³⁹ In effect, there is already some notion of multiple worlds in *Being and Event*, *Logics of Worlds* is just an explicit step further towards the "outside" beyond the "one" world or situation of set-theoretical ontology. As Badiou explicitly declares in *Logics of Worlds*:

mathematics writes that which, of being itself, is pronounceable in the field of a pure theory of the Multiple. The entire history of rational thought appeared to me to be illuminated once one assumed the hypothesis that mathematics, far from being a game without object, draws the exceptional severity of its law from being bound to support the discourse of ontology."

³⁶ Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event 2*, trans. Bruno Bosteels (London; New York: Continuum, 2009), 102: "For a world is nothing but a logic of being-there, and it is identified with the singularity of this logic. A world articulates the cohesion of multiples around a structured operator (the transcendental)."

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 100ff. See also Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy*, 87: "That set theory is currently the most adequate discourse of being is Badiou's assertion, but it is a falsifiable hypothesis and not a necessary deduction."

³⁸ Badiou, *Being and Event*, 144.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 359–361, 372–387.

*there is no Whole, [...] we will call universe the (empty) concept of a being of the Whole. We will call world a "complete" situation of being. Obviously, since we show that there is no universe, it belongs to the essence of the world that there are several worlds, since if there were only one it would be the universe.*⁴⁰

As there are many worlds or situations other than just the single classical logical world of set-theoretical ontology – that there are multiple worlds or situation but no single Uni-verse, Badiou accordingly moves beyond the "one" set-theoretical ontological world of *Being and Event*, and articulates a new "onto-logy" in *Logics of Worlds* that is different – one may say "worlds apart" – from the set-theoretical ontology of *Being and Event*. Whereas *Being and Event's* "onto-logy" is a mathematical theory of "being," *Logics of Worlds* presents an 'onto-logy' that is a logical theory of "appearance" – or what Badiou calls "existence" (as opposed to "being").⁴¹ One can thus say that, for Badiou, just as there is more than one "world," there is also more than one "onto-logy."

However, recognizing ontology as a world of classical logic and that there are worlds beyond the classical ontological world of *Being and Event* in fact reveals another way in which Badiou's set-theoretical ontology possibly remains under the "univocal sovereignty of the One". As opposed to the non-classical logics that Badiou adapts into a "Greater Logic" which gives a "transcendental" account of "appearance" in *Logics of Worlds*,⁴² Badiou's set-theoretical ontology in *Being and Event* relies on a classical logic which presumes the logical law of double negation – which does not apply to the non-classical worlds of logic.⁴³

To put this simply, according to "classical" law, proposition p would be the same as the negotiation of its negation: $p = \neg \neg p$ (p equals not-not- p). Following this is the principle of the "exclude middle"; according to this principle, the proposition p is either "true" or "false" – it is either "true" or "not-true": there is no "between", no "middle" – there are no intermediary "half-truths". The logic of this classical world of set-theoretical ontology can be articulated with binary numbers of 1 and 0:

On the one hand, since $\neg 1 = 0$, we have $\neg \neg 1 = \neg 0 = 1$.
On the other, since $\neg 0 = 1$, we get $\neg \neg 0 = 0$.⁴⁴

There are only two values/options; there is no "half-truths", no intermediary "middle" value of 0.5, or 0.1, or indeed 0.0000001, and so on.

⁴⁰ Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, 102, emphasis in original.

⁴¹ "Existence," according to Badiou's definition, is "a category of appearing and not of being" in *ibid.*, 585, cf. 39, 102, 527.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 101–140.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 169–170, 183–189.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 186.

As Badiou remarks, this classical logic “simply reiterates the founding discrimination of Parmenidean ontology, namely that being excludes non-being.”⁴⁵ This “classical” logical binary is what also underlies his original meta-ontological decision in *Being and Event* between “being is one” and “the multiple is not” – with “one” and “multiple” being binary oppositions: For Badiou, given that “the multiple *is*,” what is *not*-multiple (i.e. one) must be “not,” hence the decision “the one *is not*.”⁴⁶

Now this decision presupposes a type of *uni*-vocity of being: there is only *one* way/value of “being” or perhaps what may be tentatively called “being-ness.” Something either “*is*” (being) or “*is not*” (not-being), there is no “half-being” or “half-way of being” in between – just as something is *either* a multiple (not-one) *or* one (not-multiple), from which one must decisively choose. On the contrary, in a “non-classical” world, as in Badiou’s new “*onto-logy*” in *Logics of Worlds*, existents may have *any* intermediary “degree of existence” between the minimal and maximal degrees – if we call the minimal degree “0” (“non-existence”) and the maximal degree of “1” (“existence”), an existent may be anything between 0 and 1: It could be 0.5, 0.00000001, or 0.99999999, and so on.⁴⁷ Whereas there is a multiplicity (or indeed infinity) of degrees of existence possible in non-classical worlds, in the “classical” world of ontology there can be only be “1” or “0”.⁴⁸ Essentially, *only* “1” (*one*) truly exists in the “classical” ontology of set theory, as “0” (nought/not) is technically not really “existent” and thus not a way of existing.⁴⁹ Thus, *Being and Event*’s set-theoretical ontology only presents us with *one* univocal way of being, as Henry Somers-Hall remarks: “Despite the sophistication of Badiou’s metaphysics, being is

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ See Badiou, *Being and Event*, 23; Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, 82; Christopher Watkin, *Difficult Atheism: Post-Theological Thinking in Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Nancy and Quentin Meillassoux* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 28–29, cf. 45: “Badiou’s decision for multiplicity is secondary, for the way that he handles inconsistent multiplicity relies on a more fundamental decision, namely that the dichotomy of the One and the multiple utterly exhausts the possibilities of being. This is the heart of Badiou’s philosophical atheism: the dichotomy that the One (understood as theological) and the multiple [...] that if being is not one in the theological sense, it must therefore and inevitably be multiple in Badiou’s set-theoretical sense.”

⁴⁷ In *Logics of Worlds*, “existence” is a degree corresponding to the “transcendental indexing of its self-identity” in a world. This is of course an extremely simplified sketch of Badiou’s “Greater Logic” of “existence”, for the full account of this, see *Logics of Worlds*, 207–211, 246ff.

⁴⁸ Here one may recall Zeno’s paradoxes of infinite divisions to illustrate this “infinity” within “one” (or something counted as one), or better – and more faithful to Badiou – Cantor’s work on ‘infinity’, see *ibid.*, 10–16.

⁴⁹ It must be emphasized again that “existence” for Badiou a category of “appearing” and not of “being” (as mentioned earlier in footnotes 41 and 47), however, for our purposes the differences between various logics of worlds are helpful to illustrate the univocity of being in his “classical” set-theoretical ontology.

understood purely according to *one* category: the set."⁵⁰ To paraphrase Deleuze again: "A single voice raises the clamor of being. Being is said in a single and same sense – the sense of the set."⁵¹

Transcendence and Immanence

Does the ontology of *Being and Event* therefore fall under Badiou's own criticism – under his celebrated critique of the univocity of Deleuzian metaphysics? As a self-proclaimed univocal ontologist, is Badiou in fact a metaphysician of the One like (his reading of) Deleuze? Whilst one may say that Badiou can avert the allegations of metaphysical univocity or "oneness" through the developments of his new and "second" ontology in *Logics of Worlds*, a solution may also be found in the axiomatic nature of *Being and Event's* set-theoretical ontology. For Badiou, the ontological concern of set theory is that is not the set – not what would be transcendentally or transcendently counted-as-one, but rather the elements or members *immanent* to the sets.⁵² Contrary to the traditional theological metaphysics of the One that counts from "the top down", Badiou's set-theoretical ontology's "conception of set proceeds instead from *the bottom up*".⁵³ Not dissimilar to how he theorizes in *Logics of Worlds* that "it belongs to the essence of the world that there are several worlds,"⁵⁴ Badiou stipulates in *Being and Event* that "every multiple is a multiple of multiples. [...] The essence of the multiple is to multiply itself in an immanent manner."⁵⁵ It is in this sense that set-theoretical ontology considers "the *immanent* multiple" from the "bottom up" – or in Badiou's own words, "*from within*," – one which Badiou deems more immanentist than Deleuze's ontology of the "top down" crypto-transcendent virtual.⁵⁶

Here we can see how Badiou's version of univocity of being is more radical and "militant" than Deleuze's. Whereas the one and the multiple *can coexist* in a univocal way of being in Deleuze's ontology of multiplicity and difference, for Badiou the one and the multiple *cannot* and indeed *must not* coexist: They are utterly and antithetically incompatible.⁵⁷ It is because there is only *one* way of being – a radically militant univocity of being, one must decide and choose between "the One" and "the multiple": Because of what Badiou calls "the absolutely univocal character of being," the ontologist must choose to sacrifice "the One" or "the many." As Hallward points out, it

⁵⁰ Henry Somers-Hall, "Deleuze's Philosophical Heritage: Unity, Difference, and Onto-Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze*, ed. Daniel W. Smith and Henry Somers-Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 353, my emphasis.

⁵¹ Cf. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 44–45; Badiou, *The Clamor of Being*, 24ff.

⁵² Alain Badiou, *Mathematics of the Transcendental*, trans. A.J. Bartlett and Alex Ling (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 55–56.

⁵³ Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, 333, my emphasis.

⁵⁴ Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, 102.

⁵⁵ Badiou, *Being and Event*, 29, 33, my emphasis; cf. *Theoretical Writings*, 42; *Briefings on Existence*, 36.

⁵⁶ Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 79.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 67–73.

is Badiou's insistence on "the *univocity* of the actual" that leads to "the exclusion of any virtual One."⁵⁸

Here we may briefly re-consider Deleuze's ontology to highlight the two different accounts of univocity held by Badiou and Deleuze. Whereas Badiou, in his own words, "sacrifices the One" in order to affirm the immanent multiple, Deleuze ultimately still leaves room for the existence of the One.⁵⁹ For Deleuze (at least according to Badiou's reading), the One *qua* the virtual Being of beings can co-exist univocally with the multiplicity of actual beings—as evident in the "magic formula" of *A Thousand Plateaus*: "pluralism = monism".⁶⁰ As Deleuze further explicates his monist-pluralist ontology of immanence in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

A plane of immanence or univocity opposed to analogy. The One is said with a single sense of all the multiple. Being expresses in a single sense all that differs.⁶¹

Thus, in comparison to Deleuze's ontological univocity, Badiou's univocal ontology is in a sense much more immanentist or indeed "anti-transcendent": "Being" must never be "said", "expressed" or indeed "counted" as one. Rather, since "being" is *univocal*—there is only *one* way of being—and that beings exist, there can be no Being of beings that exists as a transcendent principle—there can be *no transcendent* One or supreme source of being.

This is not to say that Badiou forgets the Heideggerian ontological difference between being and the Being of beings, or eliminates the Being of beings from ontology. Instead, it is the case that in his ontology, the Being of beings is not a *transcendent principle* of being but rather an *immanent presentation*—this is precisely why Badiou decides to opt for "what presents" instead of "*what* presents" at the outset of *Being and Event*: The ontological difference between beings and the "Being of beings," as Badiou declares in *Being and Event*, is precisely the one between "presentation" and "the

⁵⁸ Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, 177.

⁵⁹ "But," Badiou also remarks, "all in all, if the only way to think a political revolution, an amorous encounter, an invention of the sciences, or a creation of art as distinct infinities—having as their condition incommensurable separative events—is by sacrificing immanence (which I do not actually believe is the case, but that is not what matters here) and the univocity of Being, then I would sacrifice them." *The Clamor of Being*, 91–92.

⁶⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2003), 20.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 254, translation modified. The original French reads: "*Plan d'immanence ou d'univocité, qui s'oppose à l'analogie. L'Un se dit en un seul et même sens de tout le multiple, l'Être se dit en un seul et même sens de tout ce qui diffère.*" Following Paul Patton's translation of *Difference and Repetition* and Mark Lester's translation of *Logic of Sense*, "d'univocité" and "sens" are translated as "univocity" and "sense" here instead of "univocality" and "meaning" as in Massumi's translation.

presentation of presentation.”⁶² It is for this reason that ontology is precisely “the presentation of *presentation*” rather than the presentation of the “*what*.”⁶³

Underlying Badiou’s formulation of ontology as “the presentation of presentation” is in fact again the univocity of being: A *univocal* identity between “being”, “the multiple” and “presentation”. “The multiple” is not only referred to as the “general form of presentation” throughout *Being and Event*,⁶⁴ Badiou explicitly writes in the dictionary of its appendix that: “Presentation is multiple-being such as it is effectively deployed.”⁶⁵ Indeed, given that ontology for Badiou is at once “the presentation of the multiple” and “the presentation of presentation”, and that “being is multiple”, we may then deduce that for Badiou, “being = presentation = multiple.”⁶⁶ As such, according to Badiou’s ontological axioms, “being”, “presentation” and “the multiple” are to be understood *univocally*:

if an ontology is possible, that is, a presentation of presentation, then it is the situation of the pure multiple, of the multiple “in itself.” [...] Ontology, insofar as it exists, must necessarily be the science of the multiple qua multiple.⁶⁷

⁶² Badiou, *Being and Event*, 187, cf. 187–188: “This difference comes down to the following: the ontological situation originally names the void as an existent multiple, whilst every other situation consists only insofar as it ensures the non-belonging of the void, a non-belonging controlled, moreover, by the state of the situation.” The nuances of Badiou’s conception of the void and the inconsistent multiplicity are beyond the scope of our current discussion; for an exposition on this, see Hallward “Introduction: Consequences of Abstraction,” in *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, ed. Peter Hallward (London: Continuum, 2004), 8–10.

⁶³ Badiou, *Being and Event*, 23ff.

⁶⁴ See, for example, *ibid.*, 24, 100, 173.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 519.

⁶⁶ See *ibid.*, 58. Here we may contrast Badiou’s “being = presentation = multiple” with Deleuze’s magic formula “pluralism = monism”. In Deleuze’s Spinozist outlook, “the whole of Nature is a multiplicity of perfectly individuated multiplicities” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 254). Just as one may formulate Spinozist pantheism as “creation/nature = God”, following his magic formula “pluralism = monism”, one can similarly formulate Deleuze’s immanentist ontology as “the whole of Nature = a multiplicity of multiplicities” or indeed more simply as “the One = multiple” – and conversely “the multiple = the One”: For Deleuze, the One and the many not only co-exist, they co-exist univocally. The One must necessarily exist if the existence of the many is ever to be asserted or affirmed according to Deleuze’s comparatively less “militant” conception of univocity, whereas there is sharp binary and opposition between “the One/what presents” and “the multiple/what presents” according to Badiou’s militant univocity, from which Badiou “decides” to opt for the later and thus affirms that “being = presentation = multiple.” For Badiou’s critique of Deleuze’s attempt to overcome the opposition between “the One” and “the many” through the notion of “multiplicities,” see *Theoretical Writings*, 67–80.

⁶⁷ Badiou, *Being and Event*, 28.

In other words, ontology is precisely the *presentation-of-presentation* in that it is the science of *the multiple-qua-multiple* and indeed of *being-qua-being*.⁶⁸ As “every multiple is a multiple of multiples”,⁶⁹ inter-multiple or inter-set relations in set theory are always univocal and never transcendent: Precisely because “being” is univocally identical to “the multiple” – whose essence (as already mentioned) is “to multiply itself in an *immanent* manner,”⁷⁰ the “Being of beings” is in Badiou’s ontology *not* transcendent but intrinsically *immanent*.⁷¹

This *univocity* between “being,” “presentation” and “the multiple” is precisely what motivates Badiou to designate mathematics as ontology. If ontology is the science of “being qua being”, and if “being” is indeed identical to “thought” (i.e. being = thought [qua presentation]), ontology must then also be the science of “thought qua thought”: The *thought of pure thought*. In light of this, we may revisit the epigraph with which this essay began:

Mathematics is a thought, a thought of being qua being. Its formal transparency is a direct consequence of the absolutely univocal character of being. Mathematical writing is the transcription or inscription of this univocity.⁷²

For Badiou, mathematics is the only discipline that can be *thought* “purely” or “transparently”: With its “formal transparency,” mathematics is *the science in which “being in itself attains to the transparency of the thinkable.”*⁷³ Ontology as mathematics is pure thought that “has no other concept other than itself,”⁷⁴ it “relates to *its own thought* according to its orientation.”⁷⁵ Badiou thus puts it in the style of Parmenides: Being and thought are “one and the same” in mathematics.⁷⁶

The meta-ontological task of philosophy is to enable “pure” ontological thinking: It is “incumbent upon philosophy to

⁶⁸ “Pure presentation as such, abstracting all reference to ‘that which’ – which is to say, then, being-as-being, being as pure multiplicity – can be thought only through mathematics.” Badiou, *Ethics*, 127.

⁶⁹ Badiou, *Being and Event*, 29; *Theoretical Writings*, 42; *Briefings on Existence*, 36.

⁷⁰ Badiou, *Being and Event*, 33, my emphasis.

⁷¹ Relatedly, see Ray Brassier, “Nihil Unbound: Remarks on Subtractive Ontology and Thinking Capitalism,” in *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, ed. Peter Hallward (London: Continuum, 2004), 243, note 4: “Whereas Heidegger’s ‘Being’ is in transcendent exception to everything that is because it is more than anything, Badiou’s void is in immanent subtraction to everything that is because it is less than anything.”

⁷² Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 173.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 171, my emphasis; cf. *Briefings on Existence*, 163.

⁷⁴ Badiou, *Briefings on Existence*, 41; cf. *Theoretical Writings*, 36.

⁷⁵ Badiou, *Briefings on Existence*, 54, my emphasis; cf. *Being and Event*, 8: “Mathematics is rather the sole discourse which ‘knows’ absolutely what it is talking about” (emphasis in original).

⁷⁶ Badiou, *Briefings on Existence*, 95; *Theoretical Writings*, 54.

maintain that mathematics *thinks*.⁷⁷ For Badiou, “the recognition of mathematics as a form of thinking” is “Platonic” – and specifically a peculiar Platonic-Parmenidean form of *immanence*:

Plato’s fundamental concern is to declare *the immanent identity*, the co-belonging, of the knowing mind and the known, their essential ontological commensurability. Were there a point on which he is Parmenides’ son, it would be when asserting, “the same is thinking and being.” In so far as mathematics touches upon being, it is *intrinsically a thought*. Reciprocally, if mathematics is a thought, it touches upon being itself. The motif of a knowing subject that would have to “aim” for an outer object is entirely inappropriate to the philosophical usage Plato makes of the existence of mathematics.⁷⁸

The meta-ontological designation of mathematics as the ontological “situation” where being and thinking become one and the same is fundamentally a Parmenidean gesture: “mathematics assumes what Parmenides himself said: ‘The Same is both thought and Being’.”⁷⁹ As Badiou declares in *Logics of Worlds*:

I have established that “mathematics” and “being” are one and the same thing once we submit ourselves, as every philosophy must, to the axiom of Parmenides: it is the same to think and to be.⁸⁰

As such, Badiou’s “Platonic-Parmenidean” designation of mathematics as ontology is not only rooted in the “essential ontological commensurability” or indeed “*immanent identity*” between thinking and being, but also an outworking of “the absolutely *univocal* character of being.”⁸¹

Conclusion

⁷⁷ Badiou, *Briefings on Existence*, 43; *Theoretical Writings*, 48.

⁷⁸ Badiou, *Briefings on Existence*, 90, my emphasis; cf. *Theoretical Writings*, 49–50. Badiou further contrasts this “Platonic *immanence*” of identity between the knower and the known with the “*transcendence*” of the subject/object distinction which Badiou sees as “firmly established” and “fundamental” in “contemporary epistemology” (*Theoretical Writings*, 49; *Briefings on Existence*, 90).

⁷⁹ Badiou, *Briefings on Existence*, 52.

⁸⁰ Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, 99; cf. *Being and Event*, 38; *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*, 30–31; *Theoretical Writings*, 49–50; *Briefings on Existence*, 90, 177.

⁸¹ Whilst one may again raise concerns here over Badiou’s language of “one and the same” in his “*immanent*” or indeed “*univocal*” ontological identity between being and thought or *meta-ontological* identity between ontology and mathematics, we shall not repeat here the ways in which Badiou can address or indeed resolve the situational “*oneness*” of mathematics as ontology as they are already presented in the previous section.

Following Deleuze's formula "immanence = univocity", Badiou's commitment to "the absolutely univocal character of being" is intrinsically connected to his shared conviction with Deleuze to construct a *modern* metaphysics of immanence or indeed anti-transcendence.⁸² To quote Badiou's remarks on Deleuze's philosophical legacy one last time as we conclude:

I consider the work of Gilles Deleuze to be of exceptional importance. [...] He courageously set out to construct a *modern* metaphysics, [...] Deleuze was the first to properly grasp that a contemporary metaphysics must consist in a theory of multiplicities and an embrace of singularities. He linked this requirement to *the necessity of critiquing the thornier forms of transcendence. He saw that only by positing the univocity of being can we have done with the perennially religious nature of the interpretation of meaning.* [...] This bold programme is one which I also espouse.⁸³

But whereas Deleuze defines the task of "modern" philosophy as "overturning Platonism",⁸⁴ Badiou gives an alternative task and definition to what it means to be "modern":

Modernity is defined by the fact that the One is not (Nietzsche said that "God is dead", but for him the One of Life took the place of the deceased). So, for we moderns (or "free spirits"), the Multiple-without-One is the last word on being qua being. Now the thought of the pure multiple, of the multiple considered in itself, without consideration of what it is the multiple of (so: without consideration of any *object* whatsoever), is called: "mathematical set theory." Therefore, every major concept of this theory can be understood as a concept of ontology.⁸⁵

⁸² Contrasting himself with Deleuze's (alleged) "non-principled identity of thought and Being", Badiou argues: "The intuitive identification of thinking and Being is realized, for Deleuze, as the topological densification of the outside, which, as such, is carried up to the point that the outside proves to envelop an inside. It is at this moment that thought, in first following this enveloping (from the outside to the inside) and then developing it (from the inside to the outside), is an ontological coparticipant in the power of the One. It is the fold of Being. [...] Thinking coincides with Being when it is a fold" (*The Clamor of Being*, 80, 87, 89). See also Roffe's analysis of "thinking" and "being" in Deleuzian ontology, which concludes that "The Parmenidean equation of thinking and being [...] is [...] far more appropriate for Deleuze's philosophy than it is for Badiou's" (*Badiou's Deleuze*, 128-159, quote 147).

⁸³ Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 67, my emphasis.

⁸⁴ See Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 71; *Logic of Sense*, 291. In direction opposition to Deleuze, Badiou describes his project as "to redress Platonism rather than overturn it." *The Clamor of Being*, 17.

⁸⁵ Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, 65.

In the issue of “(the death of) God” we find the key difference between Badiou’s and Deleuze’s respective accounts of univocity.⁸⁶ Deleuze is fundamentally informed by what he calls the “the great tradition of univocity”, which namely consists of Duns Scotus and Spinoza as chief representative thinkers of the univocity of being.⁸⁷ While it is beyond the scope of this present essay to evaluate Deleuze’s interpretation of Spinozist metaphysics or to further explicate the differences Deleuze finds between Spinoza and Duns Scotus,⁸⁸ it is important to note here that the two thinkers whom Deleuze holds as the chief ontologists of univocity both develop their ontologies from a theological vision of a monotheistic *God*—be it Duns Scotus’s *God* who participates in a univocal common being with his creation or Spinoza’s self-causing *God* as *the One* substance which underlies the infinity of (the many) attributes.⁸⁹

As Philip Goodchild points out: “The danger of Deleuze’s use of Spinoza and Scotus is that the concept of God may be smuggled back in.”⁹⁰ If Deleuze is correct in his diagnosis that “analogy has always been a *theological* vision”,⁹¹ as we saw above, then one might wonder: Despite his insistence on the univocal character of being and all his polemics against the analogy of being and theological transcendence, with his reliance on the theologically construed ontologies of Duns Scotus and Spinoza, is Deleuze ultimately adherent to a theologically-oriented ontology of univocity? Is Deleuze’s ontology in the end at risk of becoming another “theological”

⁸⁶ Although he praises Deleuze’s efforts to secularize the Christian tendencies of Bergsonian philosophy (*The Clamor of Being*, 99), Badiou notes in “Of Life as a Name of Being,” 198: “Just like Nietzsche, Deleuze, in order to hold to the postulate of univocity, which is the condition for deciding on life as a name of being, must pose that all things are, in an obscure sense, signs of themselves; not of themselves as themselves, but of themselves as provisional simulacra, or precarious modalities, of the power of the Whole. [...Whereas] I have had to sacrifice the Whole, sacrifice Life, sacrifice the great cosmic animal whose surface Deleuze has enchanted with his work.”

⁸⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 48–49; cf. *Difference and Repetition*, 377–378.

⁸⁸ For a critical discussion of Deleuze’s adoption of univocity, constructed from the basis of a reading of Duns Scotus, see Philip Goodchild, “Why Is Philosophy so Compromised with God?,” in *Deleuze and Religion*, ed. Mary Bryden (London: Routledge, 2000), 159–164. For a detailed overview of Deleuze’s account of “univocity”, see Daniel W. Smith, “The Doctrine of Univocity: Deleuze’s Ontology of Immanence,” in *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 27–42.

⁸⁹ Nietzsche, another one of Deleuze’s main philosophical heroes, obviously does not invoke “God” in the same way as either Duns Scotus or Spinoza. However, as we saw from Badiou’s quote earlier, Nietzsche fundamentally replaces the dead Christian God with a new metaphysical God-like structure of the One—that which Badiou calls “the One of Life” (*Number and Numbers*, 65).

⁹⁰ Goodchild, “Why Is Philosophy so Compromised with God?,” 161.

⁹¹ Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 205, my emphasis.

metaphysics of analogy as opposed to univocity, of transcendence as opposed to immanence—what Badiou ultimately characterizes as the metaphysics of the One?

Contrary to Deleuze's reliance on the theologically inspired ontologies of Duns Scotus and Spinoza, Badiou's understanding of univocity is firmly rooted in the "modern" atheistic premise that "God is dead".⁹² Whereas Deleuze's ontology of the multiplicity seeks to reconcile the One and the many by expressing their ontological interrelation as one of "univocity", Badiou's ontology of the multiple assumes a *militant* conception of univocity: There is only one *univocal* way of being—being-multiple. To put this in theological language, whereas Deleuze's ontology is one of the univocal *co-existence* of God and creation (the One and the many) *à la* Duns Scotus and Spinoza, Badiou's ontology is not only univocal but even "kenotic"—akin to Žižek's hyperbolic Hegelian reading of the death of God: God (the One), through his own death, empties himself or indeed *becomes nothing* to make way for the immanent existence of creatures (the many).⁹³

Although his reading interpretation of the Pauline message is not cast in set-theoretical ontological terms and the theological phrase "kenosis" is not explicitly mentioned in Badiou's book on *Saint Paul* which also assumes that Paul did not identify Christ as God,⁹⁴ we can nonetheless find glimpses of a "kenotic" account of the dynamics between immanence and transcendence in Badiou's depiction of the death of Christ:

Death here names a renunciation of transcendence. Let us say that Christ's death *sets up an immanentization of the spirit*. [...] Through Christ's death, God renounces his transcendent separation.⁹⁵

In light of this, we find in Badiou and Deleuze two different accounts of not only ontological univocity but also immanence: Badiou's univocity is rooted in an immanentist

⁹² Badiou, *Briefings on Existence*, 21–32. However, as Milbank points out, Badiou "seems to prefer the thinkers of transcendence to the thinkers of immanence: Paul to the stoics, Descartes and Pascal to Spinoza, Kierkegaard to Nietzsche." John Milbank, "The Return of Mediation, or The Ambivalence of Alain Badiou," *Angelaki* 12, no. 1 (2007): 134–135.

⁹³ See Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2013), 96–120, see especially 115 for some remarks on *kenosis* with reference to Badiou.

⁹⁴ Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 102: "Paul's thought does not base itself in any way on the theme of a substantial identity of Christ and God, and there is nothing in Paul corresponding to the sacrificial motif of the crucified God."

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 69–70. We must however bear in mind that for Badiou, Paul the thinker of resurrection is ultimately "anti-dialectical" for he believes that "Resurrection is neither a sublation, nor an overcoming of death," but "an unqualified affirmation of life against the reign of death and the negative." *Ibid.*, 71–72.

“renunciation” of transcendence, as opposed to Deleuze’s univocity which designates the co-existence of immanence and transcendence. Whereas Deleuzian immanence seeks to *encompass* transcendence, Badiou’s immanence is one which seeks to *eliminate* transcendence.⁹⁶ According to Badiou’s militant univocity of being, the transcendent is to make way for the immanent—they cannot co-exist (*à la* Deleuzian univocity): “the One” must become *not* so that “the many” may have being.⁹⁷

To conclude, insofar as it is an ontology of immanence, *Being and Event*’s set-theoretical ontology assumes a *militant* univocity: Unlike Deleuze, it does not posit a univocal co-existence between one and many, but rather by way of the complete renunciation of the transcendent One.⁹⁸ As the presentation of presentation, Badiou’s mathematical ontology postulates that being is univocally identified with the multiple—being is *univocally* multiple, it is multiple “all the way down.” Badiou’s ontology does not assume Deleuze’s alleged univocal sovereignty of the One, but rather the *univocal sovereignty of the multiple*. Whereas Deleuzian univocity reconciles transcendence and immanence as well as the One and the many, Badiou’s militant univocity not only eliminates the transcendent One to affirm the many but to the extent that it insists that there is only *one* immanent way of being: Being is always—univocally—multiple. Badiou’s ontology, or indeed what he calls indeed “set-theoretical immanentism”,⁹⁹ is thus more radically and indeed militantly univocal and immanentist than Deleuze’s not simply because

⁹⁶ Cf. Roberto Esposito’s characterisation of Deleuzian immanence as “an immanence that fills the transcendence to the point of removing it as such” in *Two: The Machine of Political Theology and the Place of Thought*, trans. Zakiya Hanafi (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 197.

⁹⁷ In his recent study on Deleuze and “God”, Daniel Barber remarks: “Immanence, when it poses itself against transcendence, must not assume transcendence’s oppositions. [...] Immanence can be theological, but it can simultaneously be secular; in being both, it breaks down their opposition.” *Deleuze and the Naming of God* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 212–213. However, according to Badiou’s militant univocity, immanence can never be theological—it was theological, it would no longer be immanence but transcendence. Badiou’s immanence may still break down the immanent/transcendent opposition, but it would do so by simply eliminating transcendence.

⁹⁸ As mentioned earlier in footnote 6, our focus here is Badiou’s “ontology” as opposed his “philosophy”, his doctrine of “Being” as opposed to “Event”. Ontology, as Hollis Phelps emphasizes, is only one component of Badiou’s project, “serving in large as a propaedeutic to philosophy proper,” in which many theological elements and notions may be found (*Alain Badiou: Between Theology and Anti-Theology* [Durham: Acumen, 2013], *passim*, quote 51). Cf. Smith, “Badiou and Deleuze on the Ontology of Mathematics,” 93: “Though Badiou is determined to expel God and the One from his philosophy, he winds up reassigning to the event, as if through the back door, the very characteristics of transcendence that were formerly assigned to the divine.”

⁹⁹ Badiou, *Mathematics of the Transcendental*, 63.

it insists on an antithetical incompatibility between the One and the many, but moreover that beings and the Being of beings are univocally multiple: The Being of beings and beings themselves are *univocally* multiple and thereby completely immanent to each other. This ontological univocity of the multiple is the ultimate outworking and affirmation of Badiou's militant atheist "axiom" that "God is dead" and thus "the One *is not*." For Badiou, the death of God does not signify the end of metaphysics, but rather the possibility or indeed beginning of ontology.¹⁰⁰

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¹⁰⁰ Badiou, *Briefings on Existence*, 21–32; *Theoretical Writings*, 36–37.