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Politics, Truth, and the Event:

“Public Administration” with Alain Badiou

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The primary concern of this paper is the relationship of politics to administration. This is, of course, the most tired and weathered topic in the field of Public Administration<sup>1</sup>. To approach it, I will begin with a topic that is even more tired and weathered: *Love*. With the help of the philosopher Alain Badiou, we may learn something new about the relationship of politics to administration by approaching it from the study of Love (an earlier discussion appears in Catlaw, 2008a).

Badiou is one of the most prominent philosophical thinkers in the world today yet his work has received virtually no consideration in Public Administration (Catlaw, 2007a, 2013). I hope to show not only that Badiou offers some tools for thinking about politics and administration but also for considering a range of contemporary questions relevant to the PA Theory community.

***Love as a Event***

If you have ever “fallen in love” you know love can rupture your being and shred the fabric of everyday life. Love may compel a re-evaluation of your values, priorities, and sense of self and other in the world. It instantiates a strange chronology where there is now only a life before Love and a life that unfolds after. Falling into Love—by tearing at the fabric of your life—creates an opening in life for something new to happen, for a new life to be created.

But being-in-love is a different kind of experience. Being-in-love, as people often say in related veins, takes *work*. I do not mean that the work of being-in-love is necessarily unpleasant or hard, though it can be. What I mean, more generically, is that being-in-love demands *effort* and a *commitment* to pursue Love in the recurrent face of its mundane everyday obstacles. In this sense, being-in-love is certainly different than the effortlessness of the fall. Of course, loves end—though death, betrayal, departure, or disinterest. We may mourn or celebrate; we may sigh of relief or out of grief. Yet we

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<sup>1</sup> Here I use Waldo’s convention and capitalize *Public Administration* to identify by the academic field and public administration to name the professional practice.

often feel that something significant has ended and that a moment in time has been marked; something happened but it is over. And sometimes we ask, “Was I ever in love at all?”

In the lexicon of Alain Badiou, Love is an *Event*. There is a technical definition of the Event in Badiou’s (2005/1998a) work but let’s begin with some a more accessible approach. Contrary to romantic notions of Love as union or fusion, Badiou’s (2010/2009, see parts IV and V) view is that “love involves a separation or disjuncture based on the simple difference between two people and their infinite subjectivities” (p. 27). Love is *the Two* who meet in an *encounter* called an *Event* that “doesn’t enter into the immediate order of things” (p. 28). The Love-encounter as an Event is a “surprise [that] unleashes a process that is basically an experience of getting to know the world. . . . It is a construction, a life that is being made, no longer from the perspective of One but from the perspective of Two” (p. 29). This encounter cannot be arranged or planned for; it arrives or erupts. But, for Badiou, Love is *not* only the Event but also a process that unfolds afterward, the construction, the creation that emerges newly out of the encounter. This aspect of Love Badiou describes as a “tenacious adventure.” “Real love,” he says, “is one that triumphs lastingly, sometimes painfully, over the hurdles erected by time, space, and the world” (p. 32).<sup>2</sup>

### ***Fidelity to the Love-Event***

The creative, ongoing commitment in time and over time to the consequences of the Event, Badiou terms *fidelity* (Badiou, 2005/1998a, pp. 232-239). Of course he does not mean sexual loyalty viz. “adultery.” That a Love-Event demands fidelity is to say that in order for the tenacious adventure to persist, the lovers must commit to the Event; they must demonstrate loyalty and support. Fidelity to the Event requires courage (cf. Foucault, 2008/2011).

In this sense, the Event—here Love—is inconvenient. Fidelity disrupts routine existence as you give yourself over the work of creating a new life and allow for a re-evaluation of one’s previous commitments. So, if the Event creates a rupture in everyday life, fidelity entails a *decision* to be faithful to that Event and to break with a previous way of living. Badiou describes the ethical stance towards the Event in this way: “Do all that you can to preserve in that which exceeds your perseverance. Persevere in the interruption. Seize in your being that which has seized and broken you” (Badiou, 2002, p. 47).

In more prosaic language, Badiou is saying this: The moment of falling in Love is a kind of doorway into a possibility for something new, a new life in a new world. This is exciting and captivating. But that world does not exist yet; it must be constructed and made by us. What fidelity to the Event entails then is, first, the decision to take the risk and walk through the door, knowing that you are leaving a world behind. In Love, this means saying, “I love you” and giving a name and recognition to the Event. Second, however, fidelity entails the commitment to *making* that new world, a world that is essentially unknown to us when we commit to it. The work of fidelity is hard and

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<sup>2</sup> See also Badiou (2002, pp. 60-61).

sometimes painful, a tenacious adventure. Indeed at times we will feel disappointment, regret, despair; and all we will have left at times is fidelity itself to keep us going.

The world or what Badiou calls a body that comes into existence through Love is *the couple* (Badiou, 2009/2006, p. 74). I'm not aware of any place in which Badiou considers the question of polyamory or consensual non-monogamy in the context of his notion of Love as the Scene of the Two. But insofar the other generic forms of Truth—Science, Politics, and Art—do not seem limited to Two, I see no reason why Love, too, could not admit the Three or Four or more. Using McSwite's (1997) terminology inappropriately, here I will call the world or body created after the Love-Event *Relationship*.

### **Love as a Truth Procedure**

At the core, what really interests Badiou about Love is that it admits human beings access to a *Truth*. Love is a *truth procedure*, of which there are three others: Politics, Art, and Science. Part of Badiou's general philosophical project is to revive a post-Heideggerian concept of Truth. In doing this, Badiou positions himself against both neo-positivist (and realist) and constructivist sensibilities. On the one hand, Badiou contrasts Truth to Opinion as the domain of all constituted knowledge. Truth is not a matter of representation by or correspondence of statements with an extra-linguistic reality. However, in saying this, Badiou does not critique per se the domain of knowledge or propositional veracity. It's just that knowledge that is particular to and located within particular discursive arrangements is not Truth. Indeed Truth is not something we *know* but is something that *happens to us* (Badiou, 2002, p. 51). But Badiou will agree with the realists that Truth is something that exceeds us, though not independent of us.

On the other hand, Badiou breaks from constructivism and coherence models of truth (e.g. Rorty, Wittgenstein, Foucault) insofar as he does not think Truth is simply an effect of power, discourse or language game; it is not just a fancy way to way belief, as Rorty might suggest. More fundamentally, Badiou's ontology does not reduce being to language. Badiou would agree, though, that Truth is situational: Particular Truths emerge from particular situations. But he takes Plato's position that Truth *ruptures* and goes *against* the prevailing discourse and Opinion. However this rupture is, again, not a matter of *knowing* something like having access to a domain beyond Opinion. Like his self-acknowledged "master" Jacques Lacan, Truth is *empty*. It does not hold content (like Opinion or knowledge). Rather Truth is an Event; it *happens*. And in that Event humans are exposed to the timeless, eternal, and transcendental insofar as what we encounter is the very inconsistency of being itself. It is this quality that makes Truth transhistorical even while it is rooted in historical time.

It is at this moment of the Event that Truth requires a *decision* rooted in a question: Did something happen? In this sense, Truth requires a moment of subjective affirmation (ergo it is not independent of us) and a subsequent working out of the Event's consequences, which is the work fidelity.

So in the Love-Event, Truth is not affirmed until there is the mutual declaration, “I love you.” From that moment, Relationship is possible as a rupture that allows a new world to be generated. Truth here is not about certainty that we know what the future will bring, about modeling a discursive representation of truth, or even that we really ever *know* what it is that we are loving. Rather it is about the instability and indiscernability that the Love-Event exposes us. This opens us to the opportunity to engage in the work, the tenacious adventure, of bringing something new into the world.

I have begun with a discussion of Love since it is, I think, a rather accessible way to introduce some of Badiou’s ideas. I shift now to consider the issue of Politics and Administration in relation to Politics as Truth Procedure.

### ***Politics Isn’t Love***

In a previous analysis of David Farmer’s (2002a, 2002b, 2005) explorations of Love in Public Administration (Catlaw, 2008a), I tried to theorize Politics and Administration as a *kind of love* and was primarily interested in Farmer’s injunction that the “post-traditional” practitioner be oriented towards a regulative ideal of love. But, I wondered, what kind of love is this? Is it romantic love? Nationalistic passion? I argued that Farmer’s work essentially entails reworking of the Biblical question, “Can we love our neighbors as ourselves?” This “neighbor-love” is close to what the Greek’s called *philia*. Working even then from a Badiouian toolkit, I called it an “in-between love” that

that is neither intimacy or a sexually-charged “fusional” love; not the generalized love of the Other that is, in the end, a love for no one at all. It is a love between family and nation; the sexual and the ablative; a love that is particular and concrete but not intimate. It is a love of the other as *other* rather than a representation of the self, an alter-ego. (p. 324)

From this suggestion, I described the intersection of Politics, Administration, and Love in this way:

Let us grant to conventional politics its passion, life, and lust. Conventional politics is the gaze at the other across the room; the sweaty hands; the trail of rumpled clothes along the floor; the “I do” (or don’t ). Administration is the morning after; it sustains life over the long haul, beyond the fleeting sparks of politics. If the old dichotomy must persist, let it at least speak to something from human experience that politics is falling in love and administration is to learn to love and live together with our neighbors. (p. 326)

I think the effort to grapple with Farmer’s injunction was helpful in trying to work out a kind of *ethical* frame that would link loving practices to everyday administrative practice (see also Catlaw, Rawlings, & Callen, 2014; Rawlings & Catlaw, 2011). And, as I will discuss in the balance of this paper, I still think the broad description of the Politics-Administration sequence is correct. But I erred in forcing Politics and Administration into a general typology of Love(s). For what seems clear enough now is that the effort to distinguish Politics/Administration as a kind of Love is really about distinguishing the

Political Subject-Body from the Love Subject-Body; the political collective from the couple/relationship. Collapsing these different processes into a single terminological frame obscured the work of theorizing how and why they were different.

Badiou's typology of truth procedures (Politics, Love, Art, and Science) opens up another avenue.

### ***The Truth of Politics***

In his early work Badiou supported an insurrectionary paradigm of Politics informed by the party-vanguard and Maoist models. His thinking shifted in the 1980s away from a focus on the party to concern for more complex, subtle forms of political activity. Yet it remains the case that, for Badiou, *Politics* is not about voting or party politics, let alone office politics (Hummel, 1994). *Politics* in a strict sense, too, is definitely *not* about State activity or the activities of what we generally call public administration. Consistent with the general notion of Truth Badiou outlines, Politics is an Event that draws a division within the existing coordinates of prevailing discourses. Politics splits, cuts, and ruptures<sup>3</sup>.

Most fundamentally, Politics actually cuts away from or, in Badiou's terms, *subtracts* from the State. Another way to think about this is to say that real Politics is *indifferent* to the State and its administration. It does not articulate or frame itself in terms of *demands* addressed to the State. Indeed, as Pluth (2010) nicely puts it, a Political Truth procedure "in any situation uses language that is close to being nonsense . . . as far as the state is concerned" (p. 166). The reason for the nonsense is that, generically, Truth Events begin a process of re-articulation and re-evaluation of the existing coordinates of a world. It, in turn, will generate a new world that, from the vantage of the outside, will look unusual and strange.

Finally, Politics is *collective* in a that exhibits the possibility for "a virtual summoning of all" (Badiou, 2005/1998b, pp. 141-142). Its universality is "intrinsic" and "available to all" (p. 142). In contrast, Love only requires recognition by the Two; Love is, Badiou quips, "aristocratic" in this regard (as are Art and Science). However, the Two cannot make Politics; Politics requires a broader, collective form of recognition of and fidelity to an Event. Politics rests on an egalitarian principle that founds fraternity or solidarity. In this sense, it is essentially about the declaration of universality that opens up the possibility for the unfolding of the Truth of the Political Event and not about policies and programs per se.

For Badiou, an authentically Political sequence begins when the status quo begins to break down. During these moments a limit comes into view and people are able to envisage a plausible alternative state of affairs. In turn, the exposure of this limit entails the state's move towards reinforcing it. While Badiou's examples of Political Events

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<sup>3</sup> Badiou does not advocate a total abandonment of engagement with traditional politics but his position is somewhat muddled and open to myriad critiques. See, for a sampling, discussions in: Barker (2002), Bosteels (2014), Hallward (2003, 2004), Johnson (2009), Pluth (2010), and Zizek (Zizek, 2000).

draw from the French Revolution, the Paris Commune, and Russian Revolution, and the Landless Movement in Brazil we can consider this kind of Politics in an illustrative and more recent context: the Occupy Movement (Catlaw & Eagan, 2016; Eagan, 2014).

Viewed as a Badiouian Political Event, Occupy was “Evental” insofar as it, in both a geographical and political sense, sought to create an alternative space subtracted from the routines of liberal democratic capitalism. To do so, it *occupied* physical spaces in urban core in a bid to forge a different way of life rooted in radical democratic practice; out of this would *emerge* or unfold the meaning and possibilities of the Event. Occupy began with a simple declaration, what Badiou calls a primordial statement: “We are the 99%.” This was both a universal declaration and a declaration that cut. Its cut is easier to see: the 99% declare their opposition to the 1% and the institutions of the economy and the State that act in their interests. Tens of thousands of people came to see themselves in the occupations; to hear the declaration. But the 99% was a political category not an economic one. Many 1-percenters came to support and identify with the Occupations. “We are the 99%” was, in fact, universal in its call. It was open to all not just those outside the economic category of the top 1% of incomes.

The criticisms and responses to Occupy represent conventional politics and illustrate the limits of the State that Occupy reveals. Of course, one of the prevailing criticisms of Occupy was that it lacked a program. It did not have concrete policies and programs for existing political and administrative systems to implement. It wasn’t really *practical* in a way that was actionable or discernable from the vantage of the Administrative State. This was the critique found in the Public Administration literature (Roberts, 2012). Occupy also exposed the limits of State tolerance for the construction of alternative spaces within urban cores: the camps, in the end, were swept away by local police forces that framed the camps as public health concerns.

To sum up, Occupy could be viewed as *Political* precisely insofar as it did not offer a program but rather a divisive “empty” universal egalitarian declaration. It positioned itself in the urban core and, through its very physical enactment, began the process of *producing* a new world by working out the consequences of the Event.<sup>4</sup> Its Truth and consequences, though, were misrecognized as “failure” due to its subtraction from the prevailing state of the situation.

### ***Political Sequences***

My primary contention is that if Love is an Event the name of Fidelity to which is Relationship, Politics is an Event the fidelity to which we could hazard to call “Administration.” However I am persuaded by Roy Heidelberg’s (2017, Forthcoming) recent argument that “Public Administration” names a *particular* political project. P/public A/administration is not, then, a generic name. Badiou’s own name for the this Political body is *organization* (Badiou, 2009/2006, p. 72). As I will elaborate below, this is inadequate and reflective of Badiou’s own insistence on thinking in terms of

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<sup>4</sup> Another relevant and long-standing interest for Badiou is the political nature of undocumented immigrants. See Nails (2008/1992, pp. 179-198).

derivations of the “party” or radical group model notwithstanding his commitment in his post-1980s work to “politics without the party” (Pluth, 2010, p. 158). More seriously, though, it is reflective of Badiou’s ontologizing of Politics and consequent neglect of more “ontic” matters like everyday governing.

So, following Foucault (1991/1979, 2008/2010, 2008/2011) and the governmentality approach (Dean, 2010)—and my own formulations (Catlaw, 2007b; Catlaw & Sandberg, 2014a)—I will call a *fidelity to the unfolding of a Political Truth* and the production of a Political body *Government* or *governing*. From the governmentality vantage, “Government” is simply the *conduct of conduct*. In the wake of the Political Event there is a formulation and unfolding of government: the meaning of the Event, the concrete expression of its significance, and the gradual elaboration of a symbolic space within which existing bodies and discourses are re-organized and rearranged. What does Badiou tell us about the work that follows the Event?

Truth Procedure	Fidelity/Incorporation
Love	Relationship (Badiou: Couple)
Politics	Government (Badiou: Organization)

### ***Political Incorporations***

Badiou does really does not offer an account of Politics outside of established “revolutionary moments” anywhere in his work. Furthermore, while Badiou may consider a sequence of decisions that constitute critical moments in particular Political sequences, he take up the processes through which decisions are made and pursued. “Obstacles” to Politics always seem to be external to the Political body-subject. This is surprising to me given Badiou’s growing concern for Politics “at the margins, at the grassroots, in everyday practice and everyday community” (Pluth, 2010, p. 172) as well as his own long-standing involvement with *Organisation Politique* in France. As Bosteels (2014, pp. 64-65) suggests, we could intepret this as a regrettable effect of Badiou’s (as well much of Heideggerian inspired political theory’s) ontologizing of Politics. Bosteels writes, “The search for a more radical or a more fundamental level or dimension of politics than the everyday administration of public order thus continues to be what grounds, re-grounds, and de-grounds the politico-ontological need” (p. 65). Thus, Politics is ontological and of interest, whereas politics and everyday governing are ontic phenomena and of less concern. Badiou (2005/1998b) come close to saying as much:

If bourgeois administration is not ‘of the masses’ it is not because it fails to gather people together—on the contrary, it is perfectly proficient at doing so when it

needs to. It is because administration, effective solely on the basis of the power of the state, never concerns infinite singularity, either in process or its aims. Administration, which is homogeneous to the state of the situation, deals with the parts. . . . By complete contrast, politics deals with the masses, because politics is unbound from the State, and diagonal to its parts. 'Masses' is therefore a signifier of extreme particularity, of the non-bond, and this is what makes it a political signifier. . . .

Politics is a mass procedure because all singularity calls for it, and because the axiom, both straightforward and difficult, is that people think. Administration cares nothing for this, because it considers only the interests of the parts. (p. 73)

Badiou sometimes seems incapable of seeing real Political sequences as anything but *failures* or light of how they *end*. For example, he (2005/1998b) considers the question of what comes after the revolutionary mode of Politics in his discussion of the Thermidorian Convention of 1794. He dubs as "Thermidorean" the end of a political sequence, writing: "There is no failure, there termination: a political sequence begins and comes to an end without being able to gauge the genuine intellectual power that either precedes or follows on from it. From this point of view Thermidor cannot be the name for the meaning of the Terror. It is the name for what is arrived at once . . . the revolutionary political mode has been terminated" (p. 127; cf. p. 136). Yet he describes the Thermidorean as "essentially politically corrupt" (p. 130) and marking shift from the Political principle of egalitarianism to a "coupling between State and interest" (p. 133). In the wake of this, the political sequence itself becomes "distinctly unthinkable" or "unintelligible" (p. 137), meaning it becomes hard for people to see how the hopes for changing the status quo were even plausible. He concludes the discussion with the obvious and necessary question: "when a truth procedure terminates, is it *invariably* affected by the production of that which is unthinkable?" Yet Badiou demurs: "Best to leave this question unanswered for the time being" (p. 139).

Elsewhere, in *The Communist Hypothesis* Badiou (2010/2008) appears to return to this question to analyze a set of specific historical sequences. He suggests that political sequences encounter three forms of failure: (1) when revolutionary forces seize power but are crushed by counter-revolutionaries (e.g. Paris Commune); (2) broadly based social movements that retreat when the old order is restored (e.g. May '68); (3) the work to transform the state in line with "the principle of free association" (p. 35) but moves instead towards terrorism of the party-state or capitalism (Badiou, 2010/2008). He does not, though, seem to take up more localized efforts to transform particular situations such as those represented historically by cooperatives, co-ops, intentional communities, larger scale community development initiatives, and so on (see, for example, Day, 2005; de Sousa Santos, 2007; Healy, 2015; Stout & Love, 2016). While his stated interest is to "to define the generic form taken by all truth procedures when they come up against obstacles inherent in any world in which they operate" (p. 38), I'm hard pressed to make sense of what he thinks that generic form is or could be.

But the production of a Political subject and fidelity to the Event must be about more than revolutionary moments and ruptures; Badiou's own philosophy indicates as much.

As the example of Occupy suggests, fidelity to the Event sooner or later shifts out of the ecstatic mood and into the ontic dimensions of real everyday production; these are matters in which fidelity and Truth remain profoundly at stake. In other words, the Political sequence becomes the terrain of government, considered here from the perspective *both* of the internal workings of the Badiouian organization as well as its engagement with external “obstacles.” Having said that, Badiou’s work points in some directions worth considering.

### *Incorporation*

In *The Logic of Worlds* (2009/2006) and *Second Manifesto for Philosophy* (2009/2011) when he asks, “How is this body formed?” (p. 85). By body he means the body of the subject that carries forth and is faithful to the Truth Event. We can rephrase the statement as, “How are worlds faithful to the Event created?” How is a Political collectivity formed or how is a loving couple formed over and within time? His answer begins vaguely: “It depends on the affinities between the other bodies world and the primordial statement” (p. 85), where the primordial statement is the declaration of the Event (e.g. “I love you!” or “We are the 99%!”). The process he calls *incorporation*.

Let’s return to Love to think about what incorporation means as the creation of a Relationship. By way of illustration, Badiou (2009/2011) writes,

Consider . . . for example, the pleasure one of the lovers takes in walks along the beach. . . . In practical terms, what this means . . . is that the lover in question wants to get the other to come along on walks of this kind, to include them in his or her passion for deserted beaches, to re-evaluate his or her love of the sea’s murmuring from the standpoint of love and nothing else, and so on. . . . [The personal affect] enters into the process of truth: the seashore, as a fragment of appearing, is re-evaluated from the point of view of the Two and is no longer immured in the narcissistic enjoyment of the world. (p. 88).

Recall that the Event, by definition, disrupts the ordinary routine of a world that we live in. So, in the example about beaches, Badiou is saying that in a Love sequence, we gradually begin re-evaluating, incorporating, things of the world in light of that Event, thereby creating a new world<sup>5</sup>. Bit by bit, affect by affect, object by object over time, our old world is gradually re-assessed and displaced in light of the primordial statement of “I love you!” Do we not see and talk about this all the time? Saying to a friend, “You *never* used to like to travel or read or listen to music until you met her!” Or, “You sure have changed since you met him!” Of course s/he has changed! That is what Love as a truth procedure accomplishes. It scrambles the relationships of things in the Old World and allows for a re-inscription and reconstitution of them in light of the Event.

The process of incorporation, as suggested above, is not always easy or clear. In Love, we are asked to make difficult choices about careers, families, other loves, and, most

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<sup>5</sup> An interesting issue concerns the how or to the extent to which contemporary neoliberalizing society shapes the opportunity for fidelity to the Event. With colleagues, I have considered various aspects of this in Catlaw and Marshall (2017) and Catlaw and Sandberg (2014b).

fundamentally, are asked to sacrifice that self from the Old World on the altar of the New. So Love from this vantage is exciting but it comes at a cost (cf. Catlaw & Jordan, 2009 on the ethic of collaboration). Further, the enthusiasm for the Event is not easy to maintain. The ecstasy and novelty of Love, in time, give way to the more difficult labor of forging the Relationship. Concerns about passion, sex, and possibility give way to organizing household chores, finances, raising families, illness, and the mundane even deadening experience of work. Sometimes we will question the nature of the Event; we will feel disappointed, betrayed, and sometimes decide that we will not continue. We move, in Love, *point by point*, producing a world that is faithful to the Event. I suggest that real Politics, too, moves, point by point in the incorporation of a Government.

### *Ethic of Incorporations*

While Badiou says little about how incorporations concretely proceed point-by-point, he offers what we could call “marching orders” in his ethic of Truths. Unlike many contemporary Continental philosophers, Badiou not only embraces the category of Truth but also of Evil. Badiou contends, however, that “[w]e cannot be satisfied . . . with overly facile Platonic solution: Evil as the simple absence of Truth. Evil as ignorance of the Good” (see also Badiou, 2002, pp. 60-61; Hallward, 2003, pp. 223-242; Power & Toscano, 2010). Evil entails the belief that an Event evokes not the empty void but the plenitude or fullness of a situation; betrayal or failure to “live up to a fidelity”; and identification of a “truth with total power” (p. 71).

Examples of *Evil in the form of plenitude* are right-wing “restorative” forms of Politics captured in phrases like Donald Trump’s “Make America Great Again.” *Betrayal* entails giving up on the unfolding of the world. But it also concerns retreat from the moment of subjective recognition of the Event itself. So in love we may speak the cliché: “It’s not that I don’t love you anymore. It’s that I never loved you.” Finally, “*Truth with total power*” concerns the insistence on what Badiou calls “naming the unnamable.” The peril here is when we attempt to give a name to the emptiness of the Truth itself and so fold it positively into language. For example, the collective may generically name a political subject whereas as naming that subject “the Americans” does not.

So, Badiou offers the broad contours of an “ethic of truths” guides work of incorporation (see Badiou, 2009/2006, Book I, for a more formal, extended discussion). This, furthermore, intersects with his discussions of how subject-forms exhibit particular attitudes or orientations towards the Event during the process of incorporation. In addition to fidelity (the faithful subject), Badiou identifies an orientation of *indifference* to a *reactive* subject and *hostility* to the *obscure* subject (Badiou, 2009/2006, pp. 43-78; 2009/2011, pp. 91-104). The reactive subject essentially declares that there was no Event; nothing new or novel happened. It aims to conserve and preserve the existing state of affairs, and contain the Event. It is “reformist.” The obscure subject will seek to destroy the body that is constituted from the Event; it is counter-revolutionary and claims to be the representation, the voice, of Substance or ground, e.g. People, Nation, God. It is “fascist.” The obscure subject’s voice is *restorative* rather than conservative (Reactive) or transformative (Faithful).

## ***Incorporations of Government***

Relationship is the name of the world produced, incorporated, through Love, and Government as the conduct of conduct is the world incorporated through the Political truth-procedure. There are broad applications of this notion. For example, we could frame the development of the administrative state as well as debates within Public Administration in terms of fidelity to Political Events. For now, though, let me return to the example of Occupy to applying these ideas more directly.

My work with Jennifer Eagan (Catlaw & Eagan, 2016) illustrates the Evental quality of Occupy and its beginning work as faithful incorporation. As we have shown, the Occupations began as protests but their physical encampments quickly transformed the movement. Everyday questions of governing became paramount and required that they be assessed and re-evaluated in light of the declarative commitments to inclusion and radical democracy. This is suggestive of the movement point-by-point in incorporation. How will the Occupations deal with noise complaints in light of their egalitarian declarations? How will the commitment to inclusion be handled in light of growing demands for meals from those not engaged in the governing of the occupations? Trash collection? How will sexual violence be handled and policed?

In way, we see both the reactive and obscure subjects in public administration and Public Administration's responses. In the field of Public Administration, we see *reactive indifference*. Occupy, again, is framed as a failure. It offered no policies and provided no programs. It produced no real effects except perhaps to inspire more competent people of genuine action to devise practical policies. In this regard, its transformative declaration is folded into the existing state of affairs. The field generates no scholarship about the movement. By contrast, in the concrete response of everyday public administration, we see, perhaps, shades of *obscurantism*. The encampments, in the end, are destroyed. They are swept away as "public health" problems; the camps are a disease in the body politic that must be destroyed.

## ***Public Administration and the Event***

The final matters I wish to consider are: (a) Can Public Administration/public administration be the site of a truth Event? (b) Can Public Administration/public administration be faithful to an Event?

I contend that these are fundamental questions for what I have termed the *heterodox project* in Public Administration (Catlaw, 2014). Exemplars include McSwite's (1997) Lacanian-infused collaborative pragmatism, Denhardt (1981) and Box's (2004) critical theoretical approaches, Stivers' incisive gender-driven (1993, 2000) and phenomenological/pragmatist studies (1994, 2008a, 2008b), Miller's explorations of postmodernism (Fox & Miller, 1995; Miller, 2002) and narrative (Miller, 2012), Farmer's (1995, 2005, 2010) post-traditionalism and anti-administration, and so on. Many other names belong here (see Stout, 2013 for a terrific discussion of what she calls the "collaborative tradition"). What I take these varied theorists to have in common is the impulse to develop a "public administration/Public Administration" that, in often quite

different ways, radically re-orders the field's and professional practice's existing coordinates.

First, can public administration (as professional practice) be the site of a truth Event? I see no reason, ontologically, why domains within the Administrative State could not serve as Evental sites. For Badiou, generically, the State names “the system of constraints that limit the possibility of possibilities” (Badiou, 2010/2008, p. 243). Ontologically every situation as such has a state (Badiou, 2005/1998b, p. 144)<sup>6</sup>. So while the organization/Government may be apart from or indifferent to the State, say, *qua* apparatuses of public administration, it *cannot* be apart from the state as such. The political organization/Government exists as a situation and, thus, with a “state” that limits the possibility of possibilities. So, theoretically as well as practically, the problem of the state is internal to whatever entity itself as indifferent to or subtracted from the State.

I admit that that I do think Badiou would share my conclusion. For him, Politics as Truth subtracts from and keeps a distance from the field of the State (institutional public administration). In this regard, then, how could there be spaces *inside* the State that would serve as sites for truth-Events? And anyway, what practical chance would there be for a faithful sequence to unfold? I think Badiou would be very doubtful indeed (Badiou, 2010/2008, pp. 103-104). Still I would contend that, ontologically, Badiou leaves the door open and it remains an empirical matter as to whether concrete instances of transformative Political activity can be led or sequenced from within domains of the Administrative State today.<sup>7</sup> This suggests the possibility to examine situations that split *within* the State but to understand these domains as uniquely dominated by it—almost like how a gravitational field exerts increasing force as one nears its central mass.

Can Public Administration and public administration be faithful to an Event? Here, I think about the question in terms of whether discrete individuals inside professional and academic p/Public a/Administration can become incorporated into the body of a Political Truth. With regard to the professional field, it seems clear that the entire ideology of the modern State (including the politics-administrative dichotomy) is designed to prevent such explicit incorporation, though, perhaps “guerilla acts” occur (O'Leary, 2006). We

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<sup>6</sup> The complex reasoning for this is rooted in Badiou's appropriation of set theory for his mathematical ontology and the relationship of three key terms: representation, presentation, and void. In brief, situations are always structured twice: First, as presentation (as consistent multiplicities belonging to a situation) and, second, as representation (as parts composed of consistent multiplicities included in situations). Badiou's claim is that not every element *presented* in a situation is *represented* because, according to set theory's power-set axiom, the number of possible sub-sets or *parts* always exceeds what is represented. Thus there are always parts that are *present in or belong to* a situation but are not *represented or included*. This representation that cannot capture all that is represented is the *state of the situation*. This gap between them is the source of perpetual disruption, suppression, and anomaly for all states. A discussion appears in Catlaw (2013) and Badiou (2005/1998a, Mediation 8). A commentary on this particular passage of *Being and Event* appears in Norris (2009, pp. 79-96).

<sup>7</sup> To me a suggestive example is the growing development of city government led comprehensive Welcoming Initiatives that seek to join the tasks of building socially inclusive communities with economic development. See Ahn (2017).

could stipulate to the conclusion that it seems likely that *some* public employees participated in Occupy and in other Political sequences. Yet public administration tends to act, using Badiou's terms, reactively by absorbing Politics into the State in the reactive form of representation or demands; or obscurely, acting in the form of destruction.

Similarly, the internal constitution of the *academic* field marginalizes such radicality with its reactive subject stance of reformism and practicality (Catlaw, 2008b). But certainly we can see evidence of fidelity to recent Events; for example, Brandi Blesset's and Tia Sherée Gaynor's columns in *PA Times* that forcefully and clearly call for recognition of Black Lives Matter as, in my terminology, a Political Event (Blesset & Gaynor, 2014). Stout has explored the revolutionary elements in threads of some PA thinking (Stout, 2009, 2010) that propose to re-orient Public Administration around an alternative moment. There are rather distinctive efforts in that they announce an explicitly *Political* challenge to the field rather than, as I have contended, the primarily methodological and epistemological critique advanced, historically, by heterodoxy (Catlaw, 2007a).<sup>8</sup>

Finally, and while it is beyond the scope of the current paper to explore, this discussion offers some suggestive directions for thinking about the heterodox project and the PA Theory community generally. For example, is it worthwhile to think about the arrangement of the academic field in terms of reactive, obscure, and faithful subject positions? To what extent could the distinction between the Theory Community and "mainstream" be considered in light of concerns with Truth versus Knowledge? With the Event versus the State? To what extent *must* Public Administration's project be oriented, then, towards a reactive subjectivity oriented towards the building the Encyclopedia of Knowledge of and for the State?

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<sup>8</sup> An excellent discussion of the historical contingencies that linked certain epistemologies with certain politics appears in Bevir and Rhodes (2010).

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