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Miracles and Militancy: The Evental Origins of Religious Revolution

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Abstract

Utilizing the theoretical framework of philosopher Alain Badiou, this paper will examine the force and movement of religiously fueled, revolutionary politics. Badiou's definition of *event* is read through the theological concept of miracle, put forward by jurist Carl Schmitt in order to elucidate the inauguration of new order. The theological concept of miracle radicalizes Alain Badiou's definition of event by manner of divine authorization. While Schmitt uses miracle to explicate sovereign preservation of the State, and Badiou's interest lies in its erosion, reading both thinkers through miracle, and through each other, conceptualizes the theo-political militant, authorized by event to interrupt orders and enact new law. The first chapter begins with an analysis of Badiou's event, politics and militant fidelity, harnessing his framework while critiquing 'what is not counted' in his recent work *Rebirth of History*. The second chapter will discuss Carl Schmitt's sovereign and its link to the theological concept of miracle. The chapter demonstrates miracle's conceptual similarity to event, excepting that within its interruption is the investiture of divine authorization. The final chapter will examine the case study of Sayyid Qutb and his text *Milestones* to exemplify that Badiou's framework bolstered by the theological concept of miracle accounts for the diverse disruptions of national, economic, and cultural orders along with the prescription for new possibilities.

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Introduction

Utilizing the theoretical framework of philosopher Alain Badiou, this paper will

examine the force and movement of religiously fueled, revolutionary politics. Pairing

Badiou's definition of *event* with the theological concept of miracle, put forward by Carl

Schmitt, allows Badiou's project broader trajectory. The theological concept of miracle

radicalizes Alain Badiou's definition of event by manner of divine authorization. While

Schmitt uses miracle to explicate sovereign preservation of the State, and Badiou's

interest lies in its erosion, reading both thinkers through miracle, and through each other,

conceptualizes the theo-political militant, authorized by event to interrupt orders and

enact new law. This concurrent reading explains the manner by which a recitation given

to Muhammad, or the resurrection of an executed messiah, become *events* propelling

political militants throughout history and across headlines.

In the wake of happenings like the Iranian revolution and the destruction of the

Two Towers in Manhattan, rich and complex forays have been made into thinking about

religion. Bruce Lincoln, in his work *Holy Terrors*, recognizes the manner by which

religious ideology often maintains order and protects the status quo. Yet this definition

alone is inadequate. Lincoln goes on to say that when conditions become sufficiently

abject, religion functions as a force of resistance. While defiance takes diverse forms, it

reflects, in Lincoln's words, "a radically different mode of being… expected in the immediate future."[1] Olivier Roy discusses the transnational trajectory of religion through a detailed analysis of religious fundamentalism, de-contextualization, and globalization. In *Holy Ignorance*, Roy describes the reformulation of religion into 'free-floating' signs circulated through global networks with universal appeal.[2] While Lincoln grasps the potential for religious revolt and Roy recognizes its unbounded reach, I argue that both of these capabilities originate in a religion's evental origins.

This paper joins the complex discussion by arguing that Badiou's event must be thought through miracle in order to elucidate the authorization of religious insurgency. The first chapter begins with an analysis of Badiou's event, politics, and militant fidelity. Harnessing Badiou's framework, I critique 'what is not counted,' as demonstrated in his recent work *Rebirth of History*. The second chapter will discuss Carl Schmitt's sovereign and its link to the theological concept of miracle. The chapter will demonstrate miracle's conceptual similarity to event, excepting that within its interruption is the inauguration of divine authorization. Harnessing Carl Schmitt's discussion of miracle, I return to Badiou's own system and what it disallows, suggesting that the reappropriation of miracle strengthens and radicalizes his project, explaining the evental authorization of theo-political militancy. The final chapter will examine the case study of Sayyid Qutb, the early ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood, to exemplify that Badiou's framework bolstered by the theological concept of miracle accounts for the diverse disruptions of national, economic, and cultural orders as well as the prescription for new possibilities.

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[1] Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 87.
[2] Oliver Roy, *Holy Ignorance*. (New York: University of Columbia Press, 2010), 5.

I
The Event and True Politics: Badiou's Theoretical Framework of Militancy

In order to understand the force and trajectory of religious insurgency and its potential to unsettle political orders, a theoretical framework that addresses the historical occurrence of rupture is needed. History does not present itself in encyclopedic volumes, bound and labeled, with a code designating section and shelving. And while it may submit to being anesthetized, dissected and classified, it does not arrive in this way. History is born from discontinuities, from inconsistencies, from punctures in powers and ideologies. To use Alain Badiou's language, history is born of events.

Alain Badiou is *sin qua non* the philosopher of the event. In *this* historical moment, characterized by riots, resistances and uprisings – unruly occupiers of Wall Street, the 2011 clashes in London, a sequence of revolutions called 'Arab Spring' – a philosophy of event appears most necessary. This chapter provides an overview of Alain Badiou's project, specifically explicating his understanding of *event*, *politics*, and *militancy*. Badiou systematically places events, and the subsequent procedures they generate under four broad categories: art, science, politics, and love. While the central concern of this chapter will be the theoretical structure for revolutionary politics, it is also necessary to examine Badiou's overarching philosophical scheme and further, as this chapter will ask, what he absents from these categories.

What is an Event?

Let us say from the outset that, for Badiou, *an event is the name under which truths are inaugurated within being.*[3] On the whole, Badiou is rigorously consistent in his terminology. Thus, we can lay out functional definitions of the conditions and consequences of evental happenings. Badiou writes:

> A truth is solely constituted by rupturing with the order that supports it, never as an affect of that order. I have named this type of rupture which opens up truths 'the event.' Authentic philosophy begins not in structural facts (cultural, linguistic, constitutional, etc.), but uniquely in what takes place and what remains of a strictly incalculable emergence.[4]

For Badiou, truths emerge by manner of ruptures in existing orders. These ruptures are not an affect of that order but an emergence that is unforseeable, and thus, incalcuable. The happening may be called 'event' insofar as it punctures prevailing knowledge with new possibles. Truths surface from these openings, evading the governing structures, legalities, and axioms on the wake of a singular 'taking place.'

The possibility of event is grounded in Badiou's mathematical ontology of multiplicity. This ontology explains both the structured movement of being and its vulnerability to unsettling. Mathematician Georg Cantor was the first, in Badiou's eyes, to articulate a "discernable concept of indiscernible multiplicity."[5] Cantor's theory proved the existence of perceptible infinite sets, while implying a well of inconsistent multiples from which the sets are drawn. For instance, there is an infinite set of numbers between 0 and 1 (0.1, 0.11, 0.111…). Further, if we list out just a few of those numbers (0.1004, 0.1127, 0.1238, 0.2130….) we can create an infinite amount of new sets from

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[3] Oliver Feltham, Translator's Preface in *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (New York: Continuum, 2007), xvii.
[4] Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (New York: Continuum, 2007), xii-xiii.
[5] Alain Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosphy*, trans. Norman Madarasz (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 80.

the terms in those numbers. Lining up the terms up vertically, as shown below, we can

construct new sets, such as a set of diagonal numbers (0.123, 1130, 028…).[6] And so on.

$$0.1004$$
$$0.1127$$
$$0.1238$$
$$0.2130$$

Badiou seizes upon this theory, recognizing within it an all-prevailing multiplicity, both

in the assimilating movement that allows being to be thought as a unified 'set,' as well as

the unpresentable multiplicity beneath the surface.   This unaccountable multiplicity of

'still more' Badiou terms 'the void.'

The common philosophical conundrum of ontology being simultaneously one and

multiple, read through Cantor's insight, allows Badiou to state, "There is no One, only

the count-as-one."[7] While Cantor's theory of inconsistent multiplicity caused the

mathematician to conclude that God *is*, Badiou's application of it affirms, not only God's

non-existence, but the non-existence of any 'one.' Every 'one' is a formed multiple, a

constructed set, a manufactured fiction. The thought of any unity is the result of an

operational function – inconsistent multiplicity before and a consistent multiple after.

Badiou writes, "Every situation admits its own particular operator of the count-as-one.

This is the most general definition of a *structure*; it is what prescribes for a presented

multiple the regime of its count-as-one."[8] Every presentation of an ordered situation is

constructed, drawn together by a unifying function. Because any 'one' is solely the result

of a situation's count-as-one, Badiou concludes that the 'one' is in fact, not. There are

[6] Amir. D. Aczel, *The Mystery of the Aleph: Mathematics, the Kabbalah, and the Seach for Infinity* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2000), 115.
[7] Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, 24.
[8] Ibid.

only multiples composed of multiples, accelerating beyond a horizon of 'still more.'[9] In Badiou's mathematical parlance, "there is an irremediable excess of sub-multiples over terms."[10]

The excess of unacountable multiplicity conceptualizes the conditions of rupture for any situation. Within every situation, wanders the 'non-one,' unthinkable from the perspective of the situational structure.[11] The 'non-term' belongs to the situation but is not counted by the count-as-one. It is a 'no-thing,' in-consisting, but not included. In the wake of its sudden appearance, the limits of the situational structure and the fictive nature of its totality are exposed. This happening may be termed event.

This is why Badiou defines the event as incalcuable. Its 'taking place' escapes the count. From the perspective of the situational structure, the event has no objective or verifiable content. It is 'void.' Being *understood* as being, is interrupted by an expression of *what-is-not*-being-qua-being. The interruption only becomes legible after the fact, as that which de-posed the order.[12] Badiou writes, "The event… brings to pass 'something other' than the situation, opinions, [and] instituted knowledges… [T]he event is a hazardous, unpredictable supplement, which vanishes as soon as it appears."[13] Comparable to Lacan's 'Real,' the event occurs as a point of impossibility calling into question the situational norms. Simultaneously destructive and creative, it exposes the incompleteness of the count and opens a 'something other,' a new within being.[14]

This rupture of the new is an immanent break *within* the situation. Badiou writes, "The event can only be indicated beyond the situation, despite it being necessary that it

[9] Badiou, *Being and Event*, 146.
[10] Ibid., 97.
[11] Ibid., 55.
[12] Ibid., 204-210.
[13] Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (New York: Verso, 2012), 67.
[14] Peter Hallward, Translator's Introduction in *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (New York: Verso, 2012), xvii.

has manifested itself therein."[15] The structured presentation of being, through event, is suddenly broke *into*. The 'still more' reveals the inconsistency within the situation, and forces thought beyond the situation. Yet, the word 'beyond' must not imply relocation, but a localized delocalization. It is from this puncture, an 'opening' in our original definition, that Badiou describes the beginnings of truth. It is for this reason that Badiou declares truth to be subtracted, or evacuated. Truths escape the situational structure.

We have established that for Badiou every truth is post-evental and subtractive, but we have yet to define the essential quality of truths.   Badiou writes, "The being of truth is… generic…. The infinite work of a truth is thus that of a 'generic procedure.' And to be a Subject… is to be a local active dimension of such a procedure."[16] While the origin of a truth is the singularity of event, the content of truth must be immediately universizable. The universality of a truth allows its transmission from subject to subject, and mirrors Badiou's own theory of pure multiplicity. The truth is anonymous and escapes delineating structures and counts. Its generic content disallows it from becoming the property of any 'one' in particular.[17] This procedure of truth originates in event and pierces through subjects who hold, what Badiou calls, 'fidelity' to the disruption. In fact, the event's only verifiable proof is the declaration of these subjects who enact the continued work of its rupture.

Badiou groups these generic procedures in four categories – science (sometimes referred to as the matheme), art (sometimes referred to as the poem), politics, and love. Badiou writes:

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[15] Badiou, *Being and Event*, 197.
[16] Ibid., xiii.
[17] Feltmann, Translator's Preface in *Being and Event*, xxix.

Poem, matheme, inventive politics and love are quite precisely the different possible types of generic procedures. What they produce (the unnamable in language itself, the potency of the pure letter, general will as the anonymous force of every nameable will and the Two of the sexes as what has never been counted as one) in variable situations is never but a truth of these situations… onto which no knowledge can 'pin' its name, or discern beforehand its status.[18]

Badiou writes again, "A subject exists only in the strict order of one of the four types of genericity. Every subject is artistic, scientific, political or amorous."[19] Badiou is rigorously consistent in the use of these categories. While these categories allow the broad inclusion of evental truths such as Schoenberg's twelve tone innovation, the French revolution, and the poetry of Samuel Beckett, we must ask ourselves to what extent theses categories overlap.[20] Can a procedure be both poetic and scientific, or amorous and political? Further, as this paper asks, 'What is absented from these categories?' What does Badiou himself not count? Is his structure ripe for disruption by a non-term?

Let us summarize. Being is essentially and infinitely multiple, and presents itself through a movement of assimilation. This movement structures situations. Badiou terms this operational function 'count-as-one.' Every situation is inconsisted by a 'no-thing' that escapes the count. The situational disruption and unpresentation caused by the 'non-one' may be termed event. The event is a hole in situational facticity, through which a truth is subtracted. The truth must be a generic procedure, propelled from a singular point with universal trajectory. Subjects holding fidelity to the event unfold its process. Thus, the inauguration of the new within being can be defined as a localized rupture, evacuating a truth, evidenced by subjective fidelity to it. Finally, the generic procedures of truth are grouped in four categories: art, science, politics, and love.

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[18] Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, 107.
[19] Ibid., 108.
[20] Peter Hallward, Appendix in *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (New York: Verso, 2012), 138.

True Politics and the Militant Subject

Having established Badiou's basic theory of event, truth, and subject we turn to its function within revolutionary politics. In the same way that truth voids static structures of knowledge, true politics disrupts the State. Politics *is* revolution. Badiou's politics capsizes governing structures through its proclamation of equality. Yet in defining politics solely as the dissolution of sovereignty, and the militant subject as an a-substantial fragment caught in a tidal wave of 'truth,' Badiou problematizes his own project. Badiou's subject disappears in a wash of multiplicity and the revolutionary collective into an incoherrent 'general will.' The result is that Badiou's theory of event provides a dynamic framework for inventive politics, but one that disappears in its own wake.

Badiou places all regimes of the ordinary – the status quo, static systems of knowledge, and the governing State – under the banner term 'the state of the situation.' For Badiou, the count-as-one operator diagnoses the laws of any State, be it a nation or the globalized regime of capital. In the same way that infinitely multiple being is folded into thinkable sets by a 'one' operation, so the State compounds identities and constructs a unitary political body. Badiou writes:

> The State is supposed to assure itself primarily and permanently of the
> genealogically, religiously, and racially verifiable identity of those for whom
> it is responsible. It is required to define two, perhaps even three, distinct
> regions of the law, according to whether the latter are truly French, integrated
> or integratable foreigners, and finally foreigners who are declared to be
> unintegrated or unintegratable.[21]

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[21] Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 9.

Badiou describes the State as a gradient of non-egalitarian identity, inventorying those who 'count,' those who partially 'count,' and those who 'count for nothing.' The quote recalls Petain's puppet-leadership and the malleability of the term 'French' under Nazi pressure, as well as the current debate in France over undocumented workers (*sans papiers*). Each identification, what Badiou calls "the creation of and cobbling together of identity," produces a fictive and homogenous figure that can be invested in by the market, protected, or policed.[22]

Like all structured presentations, this too is vulnerable to rupture. Badiou writes, "The inception of a *politics*… is always located in the singularity of an event."[23] The event interrupts this localized gradient of identities by revealing a dysfunction in the count and opening up new declarations *for all*. As examples, Badiou offers the French Revolution of 1792, the Paris Commune of 1871, the Russian Revolution of 1917, and the Egyptian Uprising of 2011.[24] The lines dividing 'those who count' from 'those who count for nothing' suddenly appear illusory. In these volatile moments, there is a new recognition of a previously indiscernible *all*. The limit of the State is revealed and its dissolution suddenly can be thought. Thus, Badiou's politics is erosion. It is puncture. While ideologies safeguard the State, true politics withers it away.

Politics occupies one of four of Badiou's categorical truth procedures. Like all truths in his system, it is subtracted from structured representation and 'incalcuable.'[25] Revolution is in every sense novel. It opens within situations and conceptualizes transformations from that singular point. Badiou writes, "Politics springs from real

[22] Badiou, *St. Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, 10.
[23] Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics*, trans. Jason Barker (New York: Verso, 2011), 23.
[24] Jason Barker, Introduction in *Metapolitics*, trans. Jason Barker (New York: Verso, 2011), x.
[25] Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, 107.

situations and what we can say or do in these situations."[26] It is a 'politics-there.'[27]

Further, its implementation is conceivable only as a *sui generis* act of thought. Badiou

continues, "[politics] invents its rule of deliberation as it invents itself."[28] Its constitution

is created in the localized moment of subjective response. So while Badiou's politics can

be described by its occurrence (here and now) and by its trajectory (universal, for all), its

generative nature can only be defined as unaccountable. This act of invention occurs in

the space of Badiou's militant subject.

Badiou's subject is an elusive figure. This is partly due to Badiou's meticulously

consistent framework. The subject, holding fidelity to the event, must, like the event, be

'void' and subtracted from situational definition. Badiou writes:

> "I call 'subject' the bearer of a fidelity, the one who bears the process of
> truth. The subject therefore in no way pre-exists the process. He is
> absolutely non-existent in the situation 'before' the event. We might say
> that the process induces a subject."[29]

The hole punctured in the situation opens through the subject. Badiou's subject is born of

the event, ruptured with herself, 'in the situation' but no longer 'of the situation.' Before

the event she is only a 'human animal,' but on the wake of the event, a subject can be

named as part of an infinite truth.[30] The truth that pierces the subject interrogates the

situation from the inside out. The subject's fidelity to event, and the subsequent resulting

truth, in Badiou's words, "amounts to a sustained investigation of the situation, under the

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[26] Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, 96.
[27] Badiou, *Metapolitics*, 47.
[28] Badiou, Ethics: *An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, 117.
[29] Ibid., 43.
[30] Badiou, *Being and Event*, xiii.

imperative of the event itself; it is an immanent and continuing break."[31] This evental

faithfulness opposes situational structure and is termed militancy.[32]

Yet, under the aegis of all-prevailing multiplicity, Badiou's militant subject

becomes fractured and fragmented, nearly beyond recognition. Badiou writes, "The

contemporary Subject is void, cleaved, a-substantial, and ir-reflexive."[33] And again, "The

subject, [must be instituted] not as support or origin, but as fragment of the process of a

truth."[34] Badiou goes on:

> Infinite alterity is quite simply *what there is*. Any experience at all is the
> infinite deployment of infinite differences. Even the apparently reflexive
> experience of myself is by no means the intuition of a unity, but a
> labyrinth of differientiations, and Rimbaud was certainly not wrong when
> he said 'I am another.' There are as many differences, say, between a
> Chinese peasant and a young Norwegian professional as between myself
> and anybody at all, including myself.[35]

Badiou follows on the heels of Foucault, Althusser, and Lacan who rendered 'the

constituent subject' obsolete.[36] The deconstruction of the subject as a product of history,

the State, and the forces of language and desire opens, for Badiou, true equality.

In order to champion a true indifference to difference, the subject must be

'voided.' The assertion of an any-'one' admits the legitimacy of a count-as-one function

and only further propagates the dismissal of those who 'do not count.' Badiou's 'voided'

subject, fractured, and a-substantial, is the key to his universal proclamation for generic

equality. The 'still more' of infinite multiplicity deposes the tyranny of the count and

becomes Badiou's 'hope of mathematically inferring justice.'[37] By deposing the subject

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[31] Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on Understanding Evil*, 67.
[32] Badiou, *Being and Event*, xiii.
[33] Ibid., 3.
[34] Ibid., 14.
[35] Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on Understanding Evil*, 25-26.
[36] Ibid., 5-6.
[37] Badiou, *Being and Event,* 15.

as a fragment of a truth process, Badiou remains consistent with his own theoretical structure and unpresents any-'one' as a production of the graduated inventory of political States and exclusive communities. Only after being pierced by this anonymous truth procedure, which, in principle, any subject may take part, can Badiou's subject be named.[38] The procedure ruptures, creates and, after the fact, leaves the subject discernible only as an a-substantial conduit of truth.

The truth multiplies collectively insofar as it is, *in essence*, the property of no 'one.' While politics originates in singularity, it moves with universal trajectory towards the creation of a community. Badiou writes, "Politics is a creation, local and fragile, of collective humanity."[39] The origin of the collective is the event, and the procedure by which it persists is militant fidelity to that originary coming-together. Calling Rousseau as his witness, Badiou terms this active fidelity 'submission to the general will.' Quoting *Of the Social Contract* Badiou writes, "Each of us puts his person and his full power in common under the supreme direction of the general will."[40] The 'general will,' like the event and true politics, is 'incalcuable.' In Badiou's words, the general will produces "the anonymous force of every nameable will."[41] It is the force of faithfulness. The local collective, acting in fidelity to their evental being-together, does so beyond encyclopedic and structural knowledge. The truth is carried solely by the zeal of the militant subjects and, in Badiou's words, "no form, constitutional or organizational, can adequately express" it.[42]

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[38] Hallward, Translator's Introduction in *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, xxxvi.
[39] Badiou, *Being and Event*, 345.
[40] Ibid., Badiou quoting Rousseau.
[41] Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, 107.
[42] Badiou, *Being and Event*, 354.

While this definition of true politics is consistent with Badiou's broader philosophical framework and proposes a dynamic, and even poetic, theory for the manner by which revolution is inaugurated within being, it disappears into its own incalculability. Jason Barker, theorist of contemporary French philosophy, writes, "[Badiou's] politics evacuates ('voids') the arena of representation by subtracting itself, on a point of principle, from every representative fiction."[43] Because it is subtracted from every representation, we are left scratching our heads as to what *it* exactly is and how *it* might take place. Without representation, Barker suggests, we could follow Jacques Ranciere's suggestion that equality, far from demonstrating the universal truth of the collective, is only the war waged between all and all for a bigger share of jobs, roles, and places.[44] Politics voids, but what can it build? How can it transform without succumbing to statist structuring? Barker concludes, "Without power to bring new worlds into being, politics can only stand opposed, it has *nothing* to fight for."[45]

The problem hinges precisely on this *no-thing*. Badiou's discernible concept of indiscernible multiplicity effectively elucidates the manner by which change ruptures reality. It further offers a strong philosophical basis for generic equality. However, it escapes representation, forever puncturing holes in knowledge. In order to conceptualize the becoming of truths, Badiou points beyond the horizon of 'still more' into 'the void.' It is *that* irreducible excess that deposes the subject and promises the hope of mathematical justice. Rather than offering a straightforward definition, Badiou's politics functions as a radical critique and a call to action. Yet, being authorized by an

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[43] Barker, "Translator's Introduction" in *Metapolitics*, xv.
[44] Ibid., xvii.
[45] Ibid., xxiii. My emphasis.

ambiguous 'collective will' to imagine what is 'incalcuable' causes politics to stutter.[46]

What might it create and what power is available to so? This becomes surprisingly

evident in the differences posed by Badiou's account of the Egyptian uprising and the

actual political outcomes on the ground.

The Rebirth of History?

Badiou's recent work *The Rebirth of History* tackles the sequence of revolts called

'The Arab Spring.' Badiou uses the moment as an opportunity to defend himself against

detractors who cite him as being insufficiently Marxist. Asserting his theoretical

framework of a 'generic communism,' Badiou puts forward a critique of global

capitalism, summoning the recent riots, especially those in Tahir Square, as a sign of a

more meaningful future.   All the while, the text remains silent about the Muslim

Brotherhood. When the dust of revolution settled, the Brotherhood had won a majority

stake in nearly all of the embryonic governments. Like the official EU report that

fumbled with the uncertainty of *what this all meant,* Badiou's silence confesses

something that his own framework failed to count.[47] What does it mean that Badiou's

generic equality is surpassed by theo-political militancy?

Badiou begins *Rebirth of History* with a scorching assault on the progress offered

by modernization, democratic reforms, and human rights. Badiou charges the proponents

of such ends as corrupt valets who hand over a country's resources to Capital's

executives for nothing.[48] Against such progressive change, Badiou argues that the recent

string of popular uprisings mark a true beginning of real transformation. Badiou calls

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[46] Badiou, *Being and Event*, 354.
[47] Amr Elshobaki, "Building Democracy or Confronting the Islamists? The Case of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt," *Egyptian Democracy and the Muslim Brotherhood*, Report No. 10, Nov. 2011, 20.
[48] Alain Badiou, *The Rebirth of History*, trans. Gregory Elliot, (New York: Verso, 2012), 3-5.

this 'a rebirth of History.' In *this* moment the grand 'Idea of Communism' is capable of challenging the 'lifeless version of democracy' championed by the prudent bankers and spokespeople of the international community.[49]

Badiou interprets the Arab Spring as a sign of receptiveness to the forceful critique bearing down upon Capital's prevailing structures. This critique functions within Badiou's own definition of politics, simultaneously eroding governing systems and proclaiming equality. Badiou generically names this critique 'communism.' He writes, "It is… the organized knowledge of the political means required to undo existing society and finally realize an egalitarian, rational figure of collective organization."[50] The shouts of 'Mubarak clear off' that echoed through Tahir Square exemplify the emergence of a new 'people.' Those who had been previously denied of political representation suddenly demanded to be counted as *Egypt.* This cry, 'We are nothing, let us be all,' for Badiou demonstrates the intensification of equal being.[51] While he predicts that the prevailing powers of Capital will publicize the revolts as a victory of democracy and Western inclusion, Badiou holds out hope that this will in fact mark a moment of evacuation, a genuine 'exit from the West.' This he calls his 'daydream' of true impartiality under the name 'communism.'[52] But when the dust settled, and the regimes turned over, the outcome evaded both Western inclusion and Badiou's most hopeful dreams.

After nearly a century of underground organization, sidestepping secret police, imprisonment, and torture, the Muslim Brotherhood had won legitimacy in Egypt,

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[49] Badiou, *Rebirth of History*, 1, 6.
[50] Ibid., 9.
[51] Ibid., 67.
[52] Ibid., 52.

Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Jordan.[53] Far from being a monolithic organization, the

diverse factions of the Brotherhood turned the moment of tumult into political victory. In

Egypt the Brotherhood had demonstrated stunning party organization, discipline, and

professionalism. Throughout the elections the Brotherhood, in sync with their political

faction - the Freedom and Justice Party, commissioned an army of grassroots supporters.

Stationed in neighborhoods with laptops and miniature maps, these volunteers offered

voting assistance to anyone who needed help. The photocopied maps not only pointed

the way to the nearest polling station but proudly displayed the Freedom and Justice Party

graphic.[54] The tactic proved to be a smart and not-so-subtle move to influence an

election conducted by party logo, not party name. The Brotherhood finished with a

majority of the seats and nearly half the vote.

Meanwhile, the group of young, savvy, largely secular, Egyptians responsible for

the Facebook-powered protest, could not organize themselves into new political

constituency. New York Times reporter David Sanger pressed one of the central leaders

of this group regarding the election outcome. The young leader shrugged, "We lost

control." But when pushed about what he could do to regain it, the young revolutionary

went on to say that a majority the youth that had brought about the revolution were 'not

political.'[55] Another activist, Ahmed Maher, who helped launch the Egyptian uprising,

rejected a parliamentary position, expressing his refusal to be bought off.[56] Even the

liberals elected to parliament seemed better suited for protest than politics. During one of

the first sessions, as committee chairs were distributed, liberals stormed out, complaining

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[53] David E. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars And Surprising Use of American Power*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 2012), 305.
[54] Ibid., 317-318.
[55] Ibid., 275.
[56] Ibid., 324.

that the Freedom and Justice Party was dominating the session. As Sanger put it, "The result: the passionate revolutionaries got no chairmanships. They were masters of Facebook and flash mobs, but were paralyzed by the sharp elbows of daily politics."[57]

A month after the Egypt's elections Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated, "Now we're waiting to see what it means…I don't think anyone back in Washington can tell you exactly what it does mean."[58] Perhaps even more surprising than the Brotherhood's victory, was that the radical Islamist Salafis had finished second. As the official EU report noted, "The option of ignoring the Islamist parties is no longer viable."[59] The EU report meanders about, pursuing various viabilities of 'safely integrating' the 'Islamist current.' Through pages of expert analysis, the sentiment oscillates between a conviction that democracy and daily politics will tame the 'Islamists' and the looming question that something else might result.[60] As an American diplomat in Cairo wondered in a sort of post-election stupor, "What else are we missing?"[61] This question might be directed at Badiou. The 'rebirth of History' was neither a triumph of Capital's democracy nor the dream of generic equality. What did Badiou fail to count?

Badiou's project poses two questions regarding any structure. First, 'what is left out?' And second, 'when and where will the non-term appear?' While Badiou delicately details the 'incalcuable' manner by which rupture produces history, his own system neatly compartmentalizes the occurrences into four 'sets.' His precise procedures of truth (art, science, politics, and love) succinctly trace a Western arc of history marking the key heroes and highlights along the way – Plato, the French Revolution, Communism, and

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[57] Sanger, *Confront and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power*, 324.
[58] Ibid., 307.
[59] Alvaro de Vasconcelos, "Introduction – Egypt: Dealing with Unfamiliar Voices," *Egyptian Democracy and the Muslim Brotherhood*, Report No. 10, Nov. 2011, 3.
[60] Amr Elshobaki, "Building Democracy or Confronting the Islamists? The Case of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt," 20.
[61] Sanger, *Confront and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power,* 320.

Cantor. All the while, Badiou champions the quality of multiplicity and its inevitable power to move history towards a rupture of rebirth. While remaining faithful to this 'mathematical hope' of justice, Badiou's system fails to fully account for the authorization of another type of incalcuable revolution. For instance, how did the Muslim Brotherhood operate, by Badiou's own definition, politically? Further, what enabled them to seize the political power abandoned by the Facebook revolutionaries? How did they garner a majority stake in the transformative agenda in, not one, but the entire sequences of revolts?

This critique does not dismiss Alain Badiou's project, but radicalizes it. Alain Badiou's project, should be pushed farther than it is willing to go. While Cantor's discernible concept of indiscernible multiplicity turned the mathematician into 'a theologian,' Badiou himself dismisses the concept of God.[62] Although this allows him to construct a salient project that unpresents fictive presentations, what does this failure to count cost him? Badiou's politics can tear apart structures, but what worlds can it build? In turning to jurist Carl Schmitt, who defined sovereign authorization by the theological concept of miracle, we see a hole through which Badiou's own project might rupture with itself. The concept of miracle bears implicit similarity to Badiou's theory of event, excepting that it is a *Something*, rather than a *nothing*, which interrupts reality. And it is this disruptive *Something,* let us say in Badiou's own mathematical phrasing – a *One*, that authorizes the imagination and invention of the new.

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[62] Badiou, *Being and Event*, 42.

II
Rupture and Authorization

The question that lies before us is, 'What happens when a *One*, rather than a no-thing, interrupts history?' What does the thought 'God intervenes in reality' allow? The theological concept of miracle has been buried along with a bygone era of sentimentally and obfuscated by centuries of scientific discoveries. Yet, in light of Badiou's framework it is necessary to revive it and examine the authorization under which theo-political militancy operates. While Badiou provides a provocative theory for the evental erosion of the State, his politics escapes representation. As Jason Barker asks, "What can it fight *for*?"[63] The theological concept of miracle mirrors Badiou's event, yet provides the symbolic framework necessary to authorize and inaugurate the new within being.

This chapter will define miracle, demonstrate its similiarity to Badiou's event, and trace its historical disappearance as a thinkable concept. Surprisingly, the 'resurrection' of the concept is credited not to a theologian, but an obscure jurist writing from the midst of the Weimar republic. Political theorist Carl Schmitt recognized the theological nature of the political and applied the concept of miracle to explicate sovereignty. For Schmitt, the miraculous suspension of order elucidated the necessity of individual intervention against the disruptions of history. While Schmitt's sovereign functions to preserve the

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[63] Barker, Translator's Introduction in *Metapolitics*, xxiii.

State, Badiou's politics revolts. By reading Badiou through Schmitt, we can begin to *imagine* what lies beyond event and theorize the force and movement of a religiously fueled, revolutionary politics.

<center>*The Miracle as Event*</center>

We are not afforded the space to detail the various definitions of miracle throughout history. The central task at hand is to ask whether a miracle may be thought of eventally, and if so, what innovation this introduces into Badiou's system. Let us begin by defining miracle as a singular act of divine intervention. Divine power may create and uphold the natural order, but miracle signals a divine 'breaking into.' While Aquinas classifies miracle as occurring outside the natural order, and Hume describes it as the transgression of natural law, our central concern must be thinking of miracle as the *interruption* of the order and the *inauguration* of something new. To that end we will briefly enlist Kierkegaard, Pascal and most importantly Badiou. Badiou himself offers the best defense of miracle's eventual nature. Yet in the same way that the concept of miracle disappeared from serious consideration in Western thought, its presence within Badiou's own writing is treated with conflicted sincerity and outright dismissal.

The Danish writer Soren Kierkegaard, famous for his caustic critiques of cultural Christianity, showed little interest in the traditional definitions of miracle put forward by the likes of Aquinas and Hume. For Kierkegaard the miracle was neither outside, nor transgressive. It was rupture. Its happening demanded an utterly new order of things.[64] He writes, "The miracle can make you aware – now you are in the tension and it depends

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[64] Jolita Pons, "Jesus' Miracles: Kierkegaard on the Miracle of Faith" in *Kierkegaard and the Bible: New Testament*, ed. Lee Barrett and Jon Stewart (Lancaster: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 19.

upon what you choose, offense or faith."[65] Like Kierkegaard's iconic potrayal of

Abraham trudging up Moriah with Isaac in tow, the miraculous encounter confronts with

command. No reasonable justification remains. The miracle's impossibility can only

settled in the individual decision to 'leap' in faith.   Kierkegaard captures this sentiment

writing, "We should either abandon miracles entirely or act accordingly."[66] The miracle

is not the fodder of doctrinal debate or reasonable proofs. It is an unthinkable beginning.

Blaise Pascal, the French mathematician, seemed to anticipate Kierkegaard's

argument in his own treatment of miracle. On a November evening in 1654, the physicist

and philosopher had his own encounter. In a simple note referring to that night, Pascal

wrote, "Fire. God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of Philosophers and

Scholars."[67] This moment marked a religious turn in his work, and the beginnings of

what would have become a grand apologetic for the Christian faith. Cut short due to his

death, the roughly outlined *Pensees* remains a landmark of French literature. In this

fragmentary text, Pascal prefigures Kierkegaard's conclusions. Regarding miracles, he

writes, "It is *not* possible to have a reasonable belief against miracles."[68] Isn't it precisely

possible *to* have a reasonable belief against miracles? The cryptic statement follows

another fragment, "Had it not been for the miracles, there would have been no sin in not

believing in Jesus Christ."[69] Pascal's miracle eludes reason and commands decision.

Escaping prevailing knowledge and the situational expectations, 'the happening'

demands a 'yes' or 'no,' faith or refusal.

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[65] David Law, *Kierkegaard's Kenotic Christianity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 254. Quoting Kierkegaard.
[66] Soren Kierkegaard, *Provocations*, ed. Charlie Moore, (Pennsylvania: The Plough Publishing House, 1999), 272.
[67] Deborah Flannigan, "Pascal and the Art of Persuasion" in *Ploughshares,* Vol. 38, Number 1, Spring 2012, 69.
[68] Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, trans. M. Leon Brunschvicg, (New York: Everyman's Library, 1954) 240. My emphasis.
[69] Ibid.

This brief examination of Kierkegaard and Pascal demonstrates the feasibility of miracle being thought of as event. The miracle interrupts situational knowledge and inaugurates action. This 'leap of faith' escapes the regimes of reason and invents a 'new' within being. The new 'truth' is not the material for logical abstraction, but an individual decision, a subjective break inspired by event. Finally, the universal trajectory of this decision is evident in the conviction that the intervening God is God of all. Yet, the best defense for miracle's evental nature is Badiou himself. In tucking the *Pensees* within his own defense of mathematical ontology, and in soliciting St. Paul as a revolutionary contemporary, Badiou provides a sincere, yet cautious, defense for miracle's evental quality.

Inserted within *Being and Event*, Badiou's *tour de force* of event, is a small chapter on Pascal. Pascal holds a special place for Badiou as a fellow mathematician-philosopher. More importantly though, Pascal functions as an evental thinker. Pascal understood that the advent of scientific conditions would ruin the rational structures defending Christian faith, and resituated the Christian God at the center of subjective experience. Badiou writes, regarding Pascal, "The 'proofs of the existence of God' were abandoned, and… the pure evental force of faith… restituted."[70] Pascal does this through an argument based upon miracles. Badiou goes on:

> Why does this open-minded scientist, this entirely modern mind,
> absolutely insist upon justifying Christianity by what would appear to be
> its weakest point for post-Galilean rationality, that is, the doctrine of
> miracles?[71]

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[70] Badiou, *Being and Event*, 214.
[71] Ibid., 215.

Answering his own question, Badiou states, "The miracle… is the emblem of the pure event... Its function – to be in excess of proof – pinpoints and factualizes the ground from which there originates… the possibility of believing *in truth*."[72] This 'excess of proof' is the essence of Pascal's famous wager. For Badiou, the wager has little to do with the necessity of weighing various arguments, counting costs and benefits, and electing the most reasonable choice. Quite the opposite. Confronted by the miracle, beyond bounds of rationality, all that is left for one to do *is* wager. One *must* wager.[73]

This fascination with miracle does not stop with Pascal.   Badiou, the avowed atheist of infinite multiplicity, goes on to champion a strange hero of revolutionary politics – Saint Paul. In his text *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, Badiou revives the ancient apostle as our contemporary militant.   He writes:

> What interests me in St. Paul is the idea very explicit in his writings – that the becoming of truth, the becoming of a subject, depends entirely on a pure event, which is itself beyond all the predictions and calculations that our understanding is capable of.[74]

Badiou confesses his aspirations to crush the 'clerical infamy' of his family tree and makes it clear from the start that the resurrection must be treated as a fable. Nevertheless, Badiou's Paul functions as our revolutionary contemporary precisely because his politics originates from this impossible point. The singularity of the miracle 'Jesus is resurrected' evacuates Paul from any structural legitimization and exposes the fictions of Greek wisdom, Jewish ritual, and Roman Empire.[75] Moving with universal trajectory, Paul is able to declare, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is

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[72] Ibid., 216.
[73] Badiou, *Being and Event*, 221.
[74] Badiou, *Ethics*: *An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, 123.
[75] Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, 4.

neither male nor female…"[76] Badiou's Paul is no philosopher, and his faith is no

opinion. The resurrection happens not as 'proof' of anything, but as the pure beginning

of a universal proclamation.[77]

Badiou is primarily interested in the procedural form of Paul's declaration. Yet,

because it is Paul that is summoned as our 'revolutionary contemporary,' and not Mao,

Marx, or Lenin, Badiou is forced to offer a sincere, yet conflicted account of miracle. At

the forefront of *St. Paul: The foundation of Universalism*, Badiou writes:

> Let us be clear: so far as we are concerned, what we are dealing with here
> is precisely a fable… A 'fable' is that part of the narrative that, so far as
> we are concerned, fails to touch on any Real… In this regard, it is to its
> element of fabulation [*point de fable*] alone that Paul reduces the Christian
> narrative, with the strength of one who knows that by holding fast to this
> point as real, one is unburdened of all the imaginary that surrounds it.[78]

While there is a beautiful turn in this statement, enlisting the fable to unpresent fictitious

imaginings, ultimately, for Badiou, the miracle functions as metaphor. It fits perfectly

within his framework of event, truth, and subject, excepting that it must always a no-

thing that interrupts reality. Rupture remains the infinite work of pure inconsistency.

That is why in this text, as well as in the chapter on Pascal, Badiou finds it necessary to

equate miracle to chance. It must occupy the undecidable space of an arbitrary 'dice-

throw.'[79]

Badiou is not alone in treating miracle with a measured aloofness. The concept is

an archaic relic, a pre-modern fantasy dripping with superstition and dupable subjectivity.

It offends the scientific systems of observation, analysis, prediction, and control.

Philosopher Franz Rosenzweig, wittingly captured the fate of 'miracle' in his work, *The*

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[76] Galatians 3.28.
[77] Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, 49.
[78] Ibid., 4.
[79] Badiou, *Being and Event*, 216, and *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, 85.

Star of Redemption. Rosenzweig allegorizes 'miracle' as a capricious child that, upon the imminent death of its old man, is murdered by its wet nurse. The humorous parable details the manner by which the concept had become such an embarrassment to modern theology that once 'God was sufficiently dead' it would be done away with for good. Rosenzweig goes on to chart the concept's disappearance through a genealogy of enlightenments culminating in a historical method critical of experience and testimony – the necessary companions of any miraculous happening.[80] All that remained of 'miracle' was a popular idiom, a sentimental phrasing for any wonderfully mediocre happening.

So, while the concept of miracle may be thought of eventally, there remains a significant point of differentiation. Kierkegaard and Pascal recognized within miracle a divine disruption – it is a God that intervenes in reality – yet Badiou, following the mainstream of post-Enlightenment rationality, reduces miracle to chance disorder. Badiou's evental interpretation of miracle offers the beginnings of a theory linking the miraculous and the revolutionary, but it does not go far enough. What does this reluctance cost him? The answer is found in a jurist writing from the midst of the Weimar Republic.

The Reappearance of Miracle

The reappearance of miracle as a significant, thinkable concept can be credited to a legal theorist from reparation era Germany. Carl Schmitt's slow rise from the tumults of the Weimar Republic to his broad notoriety among thinkers like Jacques Derrida and Giorigio Agamben can be traced to his pivotal writing on 'political theology.' Under a work bearing the then-novel name, Schmitt presents his case for the inseparability of the

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[80] Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. Barbara E. Galli (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 104.

two fields. Every *polis* is governed by a symbolic order that bears surprising likeness to the conceptual contents of theology. Schmitt uses this general basis to ground his theory of sovereignty in the theological concept of miracle. In the same way that the miracle signals sudden divine intervention, Schmitt's sovereign is the authorized individual whose action creates law *ex nihilo*. The sovereign symmetrically elucidates Badiou's political militant. In reading the two together we can begin to see a framework for the authorization and efficacy of theo-political militancy.

Schmitt reintroduces the seminal notion that all political concepts are ultimately secularized theological concepts. Quoting Leibniz, Schmitt writes, "We have deservedly transferred the model of our division from theology to jurisprudence because the similarity of these two disciplines is astonishing."[81] He continues:

> All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development – in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver – but also because of their systematic *structure*, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts.[82]

Through both intentional application and implicit sociological structure, the *polis* is always governed by the theological. Like contemporary political theorist Claude Lefort, who argues that a *symbolic order* is necessary to generate society and mediate human coexistence, Schmitt recognizes a radically systemic identity that structures the political.[83] Schmitt writes, "The metaphysical image that a definite epoch forges of the world has the same structure as what the world immediately understands to be

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[81] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, trans. Georg Schwab, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 37.
[82] Ibid., 36. My emphasis.
[83] Claud Lefort, "The Permanence of the Thelogico-Politcal?" in *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, ed. De Vries and Sullivan, (Fordham University Press, 2006), 152, 156.

appropriate as a form of political organization."[84] This 'metaphysical image' negotiates

the world and allows for collective association. Understanding the transferable

relationship of the two fields elucidates the prevailing identity that mediates social

consciousness. After proposing this theory of correspondence, Schmitt presents a parallel

arc of Western political and theological history.

Schmitt points out that the transcendent God that characterized the seventeenth-

and eighteenth-centuries became manifest in a State governed by a transcendent

sovereign. The nineteenth-century's immanent God was evidenced in Rousseau's

'general will,' a democratic theory of State, and the interchangeability of the terms

sovereign and citizen.[85] As an example, Schmitt offers the God of the French

Revolution's liberal bourgeoisie and the concurrent retention of a token monarch,

disabled by 'the people.'[86] He writes, "Although the liberal bourgeoisie wanted a god, its

god could not become active; it wanted a monarch, but he had to remain powerless."[87]

This transmutation of the governing symbolic order became further accentuated until at

last the mechanized God of the deists and the ambiguous God of the theists were both

discarded. The machine could run by itself, and 'the People' floated pleasantly above the

polis.[88] In the wake of this shift Schmitt concludes, "Conceptions of transcendence will

no longer be credible to most educated people."[89]

Schmitt's view that the political necessitates a symbolic order to negotiate social

reality implies that any decision about whether or not something is political will always

be a political decision. This includes, as he puts it, "the question whether a particular

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[84] Ibid., 46.
[85] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 49.
[86] Ibid., 59.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid., 48.
[89] Ibid., 50.

theology is a political or unpolitical theology."[90] The exclusion of transcendence was a

political necessity for the sake of preserving the immanent regime of 'the people.' Yet,

pushing God out had, in Schmitt's mind, simultaneously paralyzed the State. The

cataclysmic ruptures of history were now placed in the hands of incompetent committees,

pandering politicians, and the slow, mathematical process of the vote. The political had

been evacuated of force.[91] Tapping his hammer upon the pillars of calculative democracy

and the committees of general will, Schmitt found only political relativism and the

absence of any decisive element.[92] Literally no 'one' was there.

Schmitt recognized that this contemporaneously validated legal order, at its

highest point, was only a system of norms, duplicable ascriptions and uniformities.[93]

Yet, a functioning theory of State needed to encompass more than general rules, and it

could not withdraw when faced with extreme cases or exceptions.[94] What Schmitt called

'the power of real life' would inevitably break through, exposing the system's limits and

confounding its structure. In regards to the State, these exceptions would prove to be

unanticipated cases of 'extreme peril,' threatening the persistence of its order. Like

Badiou's event, the exception would not conform to law, and it is precisely this quality

that drew Schmitt's attention to 'the *whole* question of sovereignty.'[95] While

constitutional liberalism had failed to grasp the independent meaning of choice, the

exception required, in Schmitt's mind, appointing a *single person* to decide.[96]

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[90] Ibid., 2.
[91] Georg Schwab, Introduction in *Political Theology,* trans. Georg Schwab, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), xxv.
[92] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 48.
[93] Ibid., 19.
[94] Ibid., 15.
[95] Ibid., 8, 13.
[96] Ibid., 6.

"Sovereign is he who decides on the exception," runs Schmitt's now-famous definition.[97] Facing the potential dissolution of the State, the sovereign is the *individual person* authorized by the State to act beyond law in order to maintain its coherence. Schmitt categorizes the sovereign as a 'borderline concept.' The sovereign functions in the liminal space both inside and outside of the State. By deciding firstly that an exception exists, and secondly, what will be done in regards to it, the sovereign is the licit means to enact law in a situation beyond law. The sovereign is the State exceeding itself. As Schmitt writes:

> What characterizes the exception is principally unlimited authority, which means the suspension of the entire existing order. In such a situation it is clear that the state remains, where the law recedes. Because the exception is different from anarchy and chaos, order in the juristic sense still prevails even if it is not the ordinary kind.[98]

The sovereign possesses limitless authority and is capable of suspending the entire order to preserve it. Schmitt writes elsewhere, "Authority proves that produce law, it need not be based on law."[99] The office is no mere construct, but the very means by which the entire system is held together.

The theological concept that links Schmitt's definition of sovereignty to his critique of constitutional liberalism is miracle. Schmitt writes, "The exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology."[100] The dismissal of miracle as a thinkable concept paralleled the mechanization of government into a system of norms, generalities, and mathematical calculations. The rationalism of the Enlightenment had rejected every exception while simultaneously eliminating the 'one' who could suspend

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[97] Ibid., 1.
[98] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 12.
[99] Ibid., 13.
[100] Ibid., 36.

the political order.[101] Schmitt writes, "All the tendencies of modern constitutional

development point towards eliminating the sovereign."[102] And again:

> This theology and metaphysics rejected not only the transgression of the
> laws of nature through an exception brought about by direct intervention,
> as found in the idea of a miracle, but also in the sovereign's direct
> intervention in a valid legal order.[103]

The concept of miracle authorizes Schmitt to restore force to a hollow State. The

miracle, as direct intervention, permits Schmitt to secure the State on a moment of

individual decision. As Schmitt describes it, "A pure decision not based on reason and

discussion and not justifying itself, that is… an absolute decision created out of

nothingness."[104] The State hinges on this act of situational invention. And although the

sovereign verdict generates law *ex nihilo*, it arises not from generic chance, but from

individual volition. Critiquing Locke, Schmitt writes, "The law gives authority, said

Locke… But he did not recognize that the law does not designate to whom it gives

authority. It cannot be just anybody."[105] Applying the symbolic order found in the

theological concept of miracle reveals, for Schmitt, the necessity of a singular, decisive

identity to preserve the State.

In reading Badiou through Schmitt we can begin to theorize the force of

religiously fueled revolutionary politics. Both of Badiou's and Schmitt's theories are

based upon the eventual moment that confounds the unity and order of the rationalist

scheme.[106] While Schmitt's sovereign intervenes in the exception to secure the State,

Badiou's political militant is propelled by event to revolt. Both individuals are suspended

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[101] Ibid., 9, 37.
[102] Ibid., 7.
[103] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 36-37.
[104] Ibid., 66.
[105] Ibid., 32.
[106] Ibid., 14.

by a two-way gaze. Schmitt's sovereign looks from the State towards the exception. Badiou's militant looks from the event towards the new. And while Badiou proposes a compelling theory of insurrection, a politics of pure multiplicity can imagine no-thing. It possesses no identity to generate a new world.

Schmitt argues that the metaphysical image governing an epoch *structures* the theological and political mediation of the world. It is a generative process, literally ordering reality. Badiou is not unaware of this. Badiou's count-as-one operation functions in the same manner. For Badiou, every 'one' is a 'unity that gathers together.'[107] It is simultaneously limiting and productive. The 'one' constructs identity around itself. Further, for Badiou, every 'one' is *theological*.[108] While this statement is intended to criticize and fictionalize every 'one,' Badiou correctly recognizes the manner by which the situational count-as-one symbolically structures being. Badiou's politics lacks force is because it is authorized by a symbolic order of pure generality. By counting out every 'one,' Badiou creates a metaphysical image that can only be termed 'void.' The image is – meticulously, intentionally – *unpresented*.

For Schmitt, the necessity of the 'one' is inescapable. The 'one' legitimates the political, and by necessity the theological, order within social consciousness. Schmitt antithetically anticipates Badiou's project, asserting the propensity of every *polis* to be defined by a singular identity. He points out that Hobbes had, "despite his natural-scientific approach and his reduction of the human to an atom," reified his State as *Leviathan*, "an immense person," and thus jumped "point-blank straight into

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[107] Badiou, *Being and Event*, 42.
[108] Feltman, Translator's Preface in *Being and Event*, xxx. See also Badiou, *Being and Event*, 42, 69.

mythology."[109] Further, Schmitt calls Descartes as his witness, who by doubting all things, began to reason from the thought, "The works created by several masters are not as perfect as those created by one… The best constitutions are those that are the work of a sole wise legislator, they are 'devised by only one.'"[110] Reading Badiou through Schmitt demonstrates that in order for an event to authorize politics – that is, containing the force to enact *something* new – it must be thinkable as an act of *singular* volition. The event must be infused with sovereignty, that is, it must be a 'One' that interrupts reality. It must be *miracle*. The direct intervention of miracle provides the symbolic authorization for disruption along with the concept of a God from which to construct a new political order. Thinking miracle through Schmitt and Badiou provides a theoretical framework for the authorization of radical theo-politics.

Miracles and Militants

The concept of miracle, when read through Badiou's framework, elucidates the evental manner by which religious miltancy may erode the State. Pursuing miracle through Schmitt's concept of sovereignty confers authority on Badiou's politics and demonstrates the ways in which it may enact something new. As Schmitt scholar Tracy Strong puts it, "Sovereignty [is]… the locus and nature of the agency that constitutes a political system"[111] By infusing the event with the symbolic imagery of a transcendent and intervening 'One,' the theo-political militant possesses a fecund identity to assemble a society. Allowing the concept of miracle within Badiou's system transforms his militant into an authorized insurgent, commissioned by the event to suspend the existing

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[109] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 47.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Tracy Strong, Foreward in *Political Theology*, trans. Georg Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), xi.

orders and enact a new law. This immanent occurrence may be excessive and irreducible, but it is not 'void.' It's very definition *as miracle* reveals the identity of a sovereign 'One.' This locus of identity allows for the constitution of new worlds that can be demonstrated by manner of a few religious revolutionaries.

We have already touched on Paul, but let us return to him briefly. Richard Horsely's collection of essays *Paul and Empire* argues that Paul leveraged the language of the Roman imperial cult to cast his gospel as an opposing politics to Caesar's. The antagonistic moment pitting the two *evangelion* against one other is the death and resurrection of Jesus. This evental rupture marks the termination of one empire and the inauguration of something new. Neil Elliot, writing alongside of Horsely, states, "It is the resurrection… that reveals the imminent defeat of the Powers, pointing forward to the final triumph of God."[112] The event marked a termination of the situational authority and authorized Paul to construct *ekklesia*. These small local gatherings formed an alternative society transcending the boundaries of empire. Each community operated independently from the dominant culture. Struggling to imagine the consequences of the event within the here and now, the *ekklesia* resolved disputes outside of local courts, substituted imperial feasts with a ritualized communal meal, and experimented with egalitarian economic relations. This included a collection for fellow assemblies worldwide.[113]

Or consider the transformation of a respected Arab businessman into a persecuted prophet and military commander. Muhammad descended from an influential Meccan

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[112] Neil Elliot, "The Anti-Imperial Message of the Cross" in *Paul and Empire*, ed. Richard Horsley, (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1997), 181.
[113] Richard Horsely, *Paul and Empire*, ed. Richard Horsley, (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press, 1997), 244-252.

family and married the most affluent, desirable woman in the city.[114] Yet, one moment

catalyzed a break between this up-and-coming socialite and the economic and political

milieu of Mecca:

> Recite in the name of your Lord who has created, created man out of a
> germ-cell. Recite for your Lord is the Most Generous One who has taught
> by the pen, taught man what he did not know![115]

This sudden command, received during a retreat on Mount Hira, marks the central

miracle of the Islamic tradition. This series of recitations, beginning in the cave on Hira

and continuing throughout the development of the early Islamic community, compose the

Qur'an, recognized as the miraculous, and complete, revelation of God. As Sura 26:192

explains, "Truly, this Qur'an has been sent down by the Lord of the worlds."[116] This

revelation of a singular 'Lord of the worlds' sounded an alarm among the Meccan elite in

the throes of an economically viable polytheism, urbanization, and social stratification.[117]

Muhammad and his burgeoning band of converts were soon subjected to significant

persecution and forced to flee to Medina.

The reestablishment of the Muslim community in the Northern oasis of Medina

demonstrates Muhammad's inventive genius, creating political concord and military

power from his miraculous revelation. This is best documented in a composite

constitutional charter known as the Medina Accords. This series of pacts is one of the

earliest, most authentic sources of emerging Islam, recording Muhammad's arbitration

over a fragmentary settlement on the brink of civil war. In this document, Muhammad

draws up pacts between his refugee Meccan followers and the various local, feuding

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[114] Alfred Gillaume, *The Life Of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 82.
[115] John L. Esposito, Islam: The Straight Path, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6. Quoting Sura 96:1-5
[116] Sura 26:192-3
[117] Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, 5.

clans.[118] The primary concern of the document is to establish boundaries of security and to organize the frenetic tribal groups. Muhammad accomplishes this by subjugating all factions into a localized universal *umma*. While this *umma* recognizes differences, including the powerful Jewish communities living in Medina, all are incorporated and subjected by the 'One' of his revelation. As he writes in the charter, "Whatever manner of dispute among you should be brought before God, great and glorious, and Muhammad" (Article 13 and 22.b).[119] Within six short years the Medina coalition had grown strong enough to broker a peace treaty with Mecca. Two years later Muhammad marshaled an army and conquered his former persecutors without resistance.

Or lastly, consider the French theologian John Calvin. Michael Waltzer argues in *The Revolution of the Saints* that revolution as an organized political phenomenon parallels the rise of the modern State in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries.[120] The destruction of the old orders of power in Switzerland, the Dutch Netherlands, Scotland, and England can be credited to groups of radicals who found the grounding for their independent action in Calvinist ideology. Calvin, who Waltzer describes as an "inexhaustible source of sedition and rebellion," was a politically pragmatic man of action, unconcerned with divine speculation, emotional mysticism, or invisible kingdoms of heaven. Calvin was convinced that a politics must be a this-worldly endeavor. It involved organization, legislation, and warfare.[121] God's will was not a passive providence of secondary causation and natural law, but decision and command. As

[118] R.D. Sergeant, "The Sunnah Jami'ah, Pacts with the Yathrib Jews, and the Tahrim of Yathrib: Analysis and Translation of the Documents Comprised in the So-Called 'Constitution of Medina'" in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 41. No. 1 (1978): 2.
[119] Said Amir Arjomand, "The Constitution of Medina: A Sociolegal Interpretation of Muhammad's Acts of Foundation of the Umma", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 41, Is. 4 (2009): 563.
[120] Michael Waltzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 2.
[121] Ibid., 28.

Calvin put it, "Providence consists in action."[122] Waltzer writes, "This same omnipotent and everactive God could at will violate the patterns of nature and at his command his saints might do the same."[123] Calvin's theology was a theology of intervention.

This is why Waltzer credits Calvinism as the revolutionary interruption of the hierarchal Anglican and Aristotelian social order of the sixteenth-century. What Waltzer describes as 'the great chain of being' was governed by a beneficent God down through a cosmic echelon of intermediaries to the smallest stone.[124] The 'harmonious' inequalities within human society mirrored the structure of the universe, demonstrating the necessity of mutual recognition, subordination, and monarchial respect.[125] One might assume that Calvin's exalted view of providence would vindicate every secular authority and reinforce this cosmic chain. However, Calvin's sense of God's sovereignty was so pronounced that every deed was viewed as an act of divine volition.[126] This included the actions of insurgent groups pursuing revolt. Institutions of government, as well as revolutionary organizations, were instruments of God's will. The 'generic' mark of this divine willfulness was the human conscience, signaling the need for intervention and justifying progressive political action.[127]

The divine willfulness of the Calvinist consciousness *levels* the Anglican hierarchy of intermediate powers. Waltzer writes:

> Calvin's God…reigned over a single, unified domain; all powers held from him directly and owed nothing to nature. All men where his instruments, and whether they allied themselves with his sovereignty or rebelled against it, he imparted to them some of his own willfulness.[128]

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[122] Ibid., 35.
[123] Waltzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics*, 35.
[124] Ibid., 153.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid., 23.
[127] Ibid., 58-59.
[128] Ibid., 152.

This reciprocal relationship between God's will and individual willingness interrupts the cosmic chain and refashions history as a product of divine rupture and human action. With a 'God of fearful shakings and desolations' upon their conscience, these Calvinist revolutionaries embodied an ideological commitment to, as Max Weber might put it, *political* asceticism. This ultimately culminated in events such the judicial murder of King Charles I, the English Revolution, and, as Waltzer argues, the ordering of an epoch of chaos and the preparation of the modern political State.[129]

These three examples illustrate that miracle – that is, the idea that '*God* intervenes in reality' – possesses the force and trajectory to inspire political insurgency. Miracle infused each of these militants with a conviction of alternate sovereignty that interrupted Roman Empire, the Meccan elite, and the 'natural' hierarchy of English society. To borrow Badiou's turn-of-phrase, the impossibility of miracle unburdened reality of all else that was imaginary – in each of these cases, the dominant social orders. And because these miracles exceeded situational knowledges and structures, their declarations had unbounded reach. The intervening God was God *for all*. Yet, we should not rush to the universal 'for all' as quickly as Badiou. It is precisely because miracle is defined, not by arbitrary chance, but by the singularity of an intervening 'One,' that these happenings are infused with a generative identity to construct a new society. Paul, greeting the Galatians, writes, "Paul, an apostle, not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the father who raised him from the dead."[130] Paul's authorization (an apostle) originates in event (the resurrection) *with* identity (God who

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[129] Ibid., 10.
[130] Galatians 1:1.

raised Jesus from the dead). To finish the proclamation that Badiou only introduces,

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor

female, for *you are all one* in Christ Jesus."[131] This can be also been seen in the advent

of an ideology that culminated in the Muslim Brotherhood's victories across the Arab

Spring.

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[131] Galatians 3:28 and Badiou, *St. Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, 9.

III
Concluding with the Case of Sayyid Qutb

Up until this point we have charted Badiou's framework of event, politics, and subject, revealing what his system disallows, and radicalized it through the theological concept of miracle. By examining the boundaries of Badiou's system we have exposed the manner by which he is able to offer a profound politics of demolition, but not the power to create new worlds. In pushing his project farther through miracle, we have authorized his framework by the concept of a sovereign 'One.' While Badiou correctly gauges the capacity of miracle (infinite, unbounded), and the quality of miracle (inconsistent, unforseeable), he ignores *the identity* of miracle. In returning to *Rebirth of History* and what Badiou fails to count, I enlist an evental thinker in his own right, Sayyid Qutb, the leading ideaologue of the Muslim Brotherhood.

This concluding chapter offers the specific case of Sayyid Qutb, the militant apostle of the Muslim Brotherhood. Sayyid Qutb should be chronologically placed at the beginnings of the Brotherhood and not as an active militant in the recent uprisings. Although his Brotherhood has diversified and persisted, culminating in the series of recent victories, Qutb is primarily significant because he, like Badiou, is a theoretician of revolt. In reading Qutb alongside of Badiou's most political writings, stark similarities emerge, including a framework built upon evental fidelity and a *sui generis*, subtractive militancy. Qutb's revolutionary text *Milestones* brings Badiou's theory dramatically to

life in a way that diverges from Badiou's own four categories of expertise: mathematics, poetry, politics, and love. Further, Qutb's fidelity to the miracle of the Qur'anic revelation infuses his text with a notion absent from Badiou's text – sovereignty. This concept of sovereignty grounds Qutb's denouncement of the Egyptian State and the proposition of new political possibilities. By revealing the clear similarities between Qutb's and Badiou's thought, this chapter will demonstrate that Badiou's framework, when radicalized through the concept of miracle, accounts for a broader spectrum of political disruptions, theorizing the sovereign authorization to inaugurate new worlds.

The Militant Subject: Born in 1951

After the death of founder Hasan al-Banna on February 12, 1949, the Muslim Brotherhood was thrown into an ideological vacuum.[132] Left with only trace records of their charismatic leader's theory, the Brotherhood stood at the brink of incoherence. Many Muslim Brothers attempted to capture al-Banna's doctrinal trajectory in their own writings, but it was Sayyid Qutb who stepped into this void and gave the movement renewed definition. The symbolic value of his life pitted against the Egyptian State, combined with his lucid writing style, gave the Brothers a hero and a *procedure* to implement an Islamic regime.[133] This procedure (*manhaj*) comes to the forefront of Sayyid Qutb's late prison writings, specifically his work *Milestones* (*Ma'alim fi al-Tariq*).

Born in 1906 in Musha, Egypt, Sayyid Qutb was raised in an intellectually engaged, politically active family. His father, a delegate of Mustafa Kamil's nationalist

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[132] Gilles Kepel, "Signposts," in *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh* (University of California Press, 2003), 36.
[133] Ibid., 37.

party, held frequent political meetings at home, exposing Sayyid to Egyptian nationalist sentiment from a young age.[134] Sayyid was a bright child with a penchant for reading. He memorized the Qur'an by age ten and loved both the popular press and classic literature.[135] Due to this intellectual bent, the family moved him Cairo where he lived with his uncle, a journalist and supporter of the Wafd party.[136] There he began academic study of the education system, earning a bachelors degree from Dar al-Ulum Teachers College.[137]

In 1948 Qutb was sent to the United States on behalf of the Ministry of Public Instruction.[138] There he earned a Masters Degree in education.[139] This trip to America marked an intensification of Qutb's ideology and political assertiveness. Qutb wrote later that this journey began in him a profound sense of destiny and moral purpose.[140] He returned to Egypt in 1951, renouncing American society so vehemently that he was forced to resign from the ministry that had commissioned his overseas study.[141] It was at this point that he began frequenting the Brotherhood meetings. The change was so significant that Qutb later described it as a type of birth, saying, "I was born in 1951."[142]

In the moments before the 1952 Egyptian revolution, Qutb met regularly with Gamal Abdel Nasser and brushed shoulders with, in the words of political scientist Gilles Kepel, "everyone who was anyone" in revolutionary Cairo.[143] Qutb was elected to the Brotherhood's leadership council and was made head of the Department for the

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[134] Ibid., 38.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid., 39.
[137] Albert Bergesen, "Sayyid Qutb in Historical Context," in *The Sayyid Qutb Reader: Selected Writings on Politics, Religion, and Society*, ed. Albert Bergesen, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 3.
[138] Kepel, "Signposts," 40.
[139] Bergesen, "Sayyid Qutb in Historical Context," 3.
[140] John Calvert, "'The world is an undutiful boy!': Sayyid Qutb's American experience," in *Islam & Christian Muslim Relations* 11.1 (Mar 2000) ProQuest Full Text, 87.
[141] Kepel, "Signposts," 41.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid..

Propagation of Islam. The Society of Muslim Brothers wholeheartedly backed Nasser and the 1952 revolution. However, Nasser moved quickly to consolidate power, wary that the popular Brotherhood might soon become his competitor.[144]

After an assassination attempt on Nasser in 1954, the State struck to eliminate the Brotherhood. Sayyid Qutb was arrested and tortured, along with thousands of Brotherhood militants. A farcical trial on July 13, 1955 sentenced Qutb to twenty-five years' imprisonment in Tura concentration camp.[145] It was here, from his cell, that Qutb began work on *Milestones*. In 1964 Iraqi president 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif negotiated Qutb's release. Qutb's *Milestones* was banned the same year.[146] A year later Nasser announced a new Brotherhood conspiracy, and Qutb was arrested as the supposed ringleader. He and two other defendants were delivered to trial, broken by torture, and sentenced to death. Qutb was hung on August 29, 1966.[147] His late writing *Milestones*, is credited as being one of the most influential Arabic texts in the last century, inspiring multiple radicals such as Osama bin Laden, Dr. Abdullah Azzam, and Anwar al-Awlaki.[148] The Muslim Brotherhood, provoked by his texts and the symbolic value of his martyred life, would outlast persecution in Egypt, evolving and exporting the Society abroad before surging to power in a string of recent revolts.[149]

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[144] Ana Belen Soage, "Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb: Continuity or Rupture?" *The Muslim World* 99.2 (Apr 2009) ProQuest Full text, 294-311.
[145] Kepel, "Signposts," 41.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid., 42.
[148] For instance: Oliver Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Umma* (New York: Columbia 2004), 250.
[149] Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, 181.

Milestones is the seal of Qutb's life and literary work.[150] The book reflects a

departure from the secular, nationalist leanings of his youth, and reveals the culmination

of a more rigorous Islamic viewpoint developed alongside his political involvement in the

1950s. In this text Qutb rouses his readers by accusing all existing societies, including all

Muslim societies, of ignorance (*jahiliyyah*). Qutb then prescribes revolution. His

procedure (*manhaj*) for revolt is particularly fascinating, and mirrors Badiou's evental

framework. In reading Qutb through a bolstered theory of event, politics, *and*

sovereignty, we can recognize Qutb as an enduring example of theo-political militancy.

Qutb, like Badiou, describes societies as being structured by competitive systems.

The terms Qutb emphasizes are *nizam* and *manhaj*. *Nizam* can be translated as 'system,'

'order,' or 'regime.'[151] In light of Badiou, it functions as 'State.' It includes the idea of a

'unified whole,' or 'set of connected parts.'[152] For Qutb, *nizam* refers to a societal

structure, such as the political and economic systems of capitalism and communism.

While *nizam* signifies the objective existence of a system within society, *manhaj* is the

ideational procedure that creates such a system.[153] *Manhaj* could be defined as 'method,'

'program,' or 'procedure.'[154] Qutb writes:

> Every 'religion' is a *manhaj* for life in that it is a doctrinal conception – or
> more precisely, in that it includes the doctrinal conception and what issues
> from it in the way of a social system (*nizam ijtima'i*)… Now, if the *manhaj*
> that controls the life of the group is of God's making – i.e. issuing from a
> divinely given doctrinal conception – then this group *is* 'the religion of God.'
> And if the *manhaj* that controls the life of this group is of the making of the
> king, or the prince, or the tribe, or the people, the this group *is in* 'the religion

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[150] Kepel, "Signposts," 42.
[151] William E. Shepard, "Islam as a 'System,' in the Later Writings of Sayyid Qutb." In *Middle Eastern Studies* 25.1 (Jan 1989), 32.
[152] Ibid., 34
[153] Ibid., 33.
[154] Ibid.

of the king' or 'the religion of the prince' or 'the religion of the tribe' or 'the religion of the people.'[155]

Here it is important to note that religion is described as synonymous with *manhaj*, and that this procedure may empower existing regimes as well as construct a new system. Just as Schmitt recognized within every political system a productive symbolic order, Qutb theorizes that it is political *religiosity* that codifies regimes. The political identity, which Qutb terms 'the religion of,' fixes the limit of the group, signaling the count-as-one operation. Like Badiou, Qutb laments that by manner of these procedures, individual identity is reduced to the whim of national chauvinisms, economics, and race relations.[156]

Qutb demonstrates that these structures are ultimately vulnerable to rupture through his innovative use of the term *jahiliyyah*. *Jahiliyyah* is commonly translated 'the age of ignorance, or barbarism,' and arises from the Qur'anic description of pre-Islamic Arabia.[157] In its Qur'anic appearances, the term does not indicate an innocent lack of knowledge, but a voracious, systemic ignorance. Qutb's takes the term designating a historical epoch and applies it to all contemporary societies. By Qutb's measure, "All societies existing in the world today are *jahiliyyah*."[158] He continues, "*Jahiliyyah* is based on rebellion against God's sovereignty on earth. It transfers to man one of the greatest attributes of God, namely sovereignty, and makes some men lords over others."[159] As noted above, Qutb argues that all societies are governed by an operational function (*manhaj*) that confers sovereign power upon the system. This ideational procedure

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[155] Ibid., 35. Quoting Qutb.
[156] Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, (New Delhi: Islami Book Service, 2011), 63.
[157] William E. Shepard, "Sayyid Qutb's Doctrine of *Jahiliyya*," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35 (2003): 522.
[158] Qutb, *Milestones*, 80.
[159] Ibid., 11.

vigorously strives to preserve its credibility. Anticipating Badiou's theorem: "The State pursues the integrality of the one-effect,"[160] Qutb writes:

> *Jahiliyyah* is not an abstract theory… It always takes the form of a living movement….It is an organized society… there is a close cooperation and loyalty between its individuals and it is always ready and alive to defend its existence consciously or unconsciously. It crushes all elements which seem to be dangerous to its personality.[161]

Qutb's trans-historical use of *jahiliyyah* levels a dramatic judgment against every regime. This judgment, *in toto,* lays the foundation for a theory of evental rupture. Because every State is governed by a self-preserving system, what Badiou calls the count-as-one, it is permeable for disruption by a non-term. In the same way that Muhammad's recitation eventually burst upon pre-Islamic Arabia, Qutb proclaims the miracle of the Qur'an as the sole point of departure for rupturing every *jahiliyyah* system.

Qutb's entire politics is built around reorienting his readers to the Qur'anic event. Qutb writes, "Without a doubt, we possess this new thing which is perfect to the highest degree, a thing which mankind does not know about and is not capable of producing."[162] This 'new thing' is the Qur'anic revelation given to the first Islamic generation. Qutb rejects the possibility that the early Islamic community can be accounted for as merely a moral, social, or economic movement. It was pure event. Qutb continues, "[The Qur'an] took the form of a direct confrontation, with the determination to rend the curtains which had fallen on the hearts and minds of people and to break into pieces all the walls which were standing between man and the truth."[163] Qutb goes on to

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[160] Badiou, *Being and Event*, 109.
[161] Qutb, *Milestones*, 46.
[162] Qutb, *Milestones*, 11.
[163] Ibid., 37

argue that even Muhammad himself was, to borrow Badiou's words, an inessesential 'fragment' suspended by this eventals vector.[164]

The gradual manner in which the Qur'an was revealed demonstrates for Qutb a inventive, localized confrontation with the Meccan and Medinan States.[165] Qutb argues that God intentionally withheld the laws and regulations needed for Medina until the early Islamic community actually *encountered* Medina. God does not reveal 'ready-made' systems, Qutb writes, "Islam is *more* practical than this and has more foresight; it does not find solutions to hypothetical problems."[166] Amidst the circumstantial realities of life, *revelation* enacted its consequences through militant action. It was a politics-there, a *sui generis* response.

This evental, subjective response Qutb calls the divine *manhaj*. As stated previously, *manhaj* is the ideational procedure that generates human society. Qutb explicitly fixes his divine procedure to the birth of Islam. The miracle of the Qur'an and the contextual manner in which it was revealed is the inception of revolt against every *jahiliyyah* State. The nascent community in Mecca, the initial persecution, the journey to Medina, and the subsequent return to Mecca all become Qutb's prescription for social change. Small vanguards (*tali'a*) respond to the Qur'an as miracle, reordering their communal life around its revelation. This results in conversions *and* persecution. Ultimately, like Muhammad returning to Mecca, these believing communities confront *jahiliyyah* society in open struggle and transform it.[167] Qutb argues that this would culminate in the dissolution of chauvinistic and nationalistic identities and the beginnings

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[164] Ibid., 15.
[165] Ibid., 32.
[166] Ibid., 34. My emphasis.
[167] Shepard, "Islam as a 'System,' in the Later Writings of Sayyid Qutb," 33.

of egalitarian relations under one God. He announces, "Islam is a universal declaration of the freedom of man on earth from every authority except God's authority."[168]

Qutb, like Badiou, recognizes that change begins, not in dialectical reversal, but dramatic rupture. It is unanticipated. He writes, "[The miracle] comes into existence from God's will, it is not expected by any human being or taken into consideration by anyone, and in the beginning, no human endeavor enters into it."[169] Further, Qutb's politics, like Badiou's, is evacuated from the situational structure. The revelation of one God amidst the pantheon of polytheisms and misallocation of sovereignties, opens up a new, universal truth. Qutb's 'vanguard' forces are propelled by this truth, faithfully persisting its consequences within the 'here and now.' This militant fidelity becomes Qutb's sole method for political transformation.

The central difference between Qutb's *manhaj* and Badiou's politics is that Qutb's *manhaj* is defined by *divine* disruption. Qutb writes, "The initial impetus for the movement… comes from outside the earth and outside the human sphere."[170] The miracle possesses an identity (one God, "He is the Real Sovereign") that vies for position against the ideational procedure governing the State.[171] This identity does not simply dissolve its competitors; it moves to seize power. Qutb writes:

> They knew very well that the proclamation, "there is no deity except Allah," was a challenge to that worldly authority which had usurped the greatest attribute of God, namely sovereignty. It…was a declaration of war.[172]

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[168] Qutb, *Milestones*, 69.
[169] Ibid., 102.
[170] Qutb, *Milestones*, 102.
[171] Ibid., 47.
[172] Ibid., 25.

The assertion of an intervening 'One' declares war on all national, geographic, and economic ideologies, while issuing a new, universal proclamation. This miraculous beginning marks the injection of a concurrently disruptive *and* constructive ideational procedure. The authority latent within this idea eclipses the State and inaugurates a new identity to mediate human relationship. There is some-'*One'* to fight *for*. In Qutb's own words, "The religion of God is not vague and His *manhaj* for life is not formless."[173] That is to say, it is not 'void.'

Examining Sayyid Qutb in light of a bolstered theory of event, politics, *and* sovereignty demonstrates the force and efficacy of theo-political militancy. Qutb's recalcitrant *Milestones* deposes all States by reorientating his readers to the evental occurrence of the Qur'an. Suspended between that foundational event and the subject's immediate localization enacts a militant fidelity to the universal authority of God. This injection of an alternate *manhaj* works against the dominant social ideology, what Qutb called 'the religion of the State,' by asserting a new sovereign. This intervention of sovereignty announces the termination of the old order while organizing and compelling the creation of the new.

Although Qutb was executed as a conspirator against the State, his theoretical framework has persisted, outlasting bans, policing, and torture. Olivier Roy, scholar of globalized Islam, points out that Qutb's revolutionary texts continue to exert significant influence over contemporary Islamic militants.[174] Further, the Muslim Brotherhood, into which Qutb stepped at a moment of near-incoherence, has diversified and multiplied, exceeding Egyptian borders and the recent expectations of Western pundits. And as the

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[173] Shepard, "Islam as a 'System' in the Later Writings of Sayyid Qutb," 38. Quoting Qutb.
[174] Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Umma*, 250.

recent 'spring' of revolution has demonstrated, the Egyptian State that once struck to eliminate the Society has now been overrun by a Brotherhood majority.

Conclusion

The force of religious insurgency has become the unsettling banality of daily headlines. Acts by religio-political collectives and the formation of faith-fused, genre-bending governments increasingly drive the experts of Western liberalism to confess – as Clinton did regarding the Brotherhood – a certain ignorance. Concerning this daunting resurgence of monotheist militancy, religious theorist Carl Raschke writes, "Something else is coming, but is not yet visible on the horizon. It remains, as the French say, a *je ne se quoi*, and an I know not what."[175] Although this impulse's end is hidden beyond the horizon, its origin can be pinpointed within the theological concept of miracle. Miracle gives this impulse the capacity to exceed national boundaries and the authorization to revolt.

The enduring genius of Badiou is, as he puts it, the optimistic conviction that "the space of the possible is larger than the one we are assigned."[176] Being faithful to his spirit, this essay has pushed Badiou's project beyond its own categorical limits, narrative arc of history, and mathematical multiplicity through the concept of an intervening 'One.'[177] Badiou waxes poetic about 'the void' touching upon a "sacred region, rivaling the theologians," yet ultimately a 'voided' politics lacks identity to empower authorization and imagination.[178] In reading Badiou through Schmitt, and through

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[175] Carl, Raschke, "Global Monotheism in the Aftermath of 9/11: 'Theo-politics' and the Revival of Religious Exceptionalism," Unpublished article, University of Denver. (Distributed February, 28, 2013), 2.
[176] Badiou, Apendix in *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, 115.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Badiou, *Being and Event*, 69.

miracle, the theo-political militant becomes clear as the replication of divine interruption.

Reviving Cicero's statement from *De re publica*, we might say, "There is really no

human activity in which human *virtus* approaches more closely the divine power of the

gods than the founding of new states."[179] The divine, "Let there be!" becomes the

inauguration for action and the identity for creating new worlds.

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[179] Horsely, *Paul and Empire*, 14. Quoting Cicero.

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