Frank Ruda

**Where is „auprès de nous“? On Our Comradeship with the Absolute**

“Aucune vérité n’est vérité d’un rapport. Au contraire, une vérité est dé-rapporté ou déliée.” (A. Badiou)

In *Immanence of Truths* Badiou refers several times, four times actually, and affirmatively to a formulation, a remark, well, to what Badiou calls a “beautiful formula” of Hegel. This formula has been employed by him before, not frequently, but sometimes, yet it was not referenced and thus did not appear in any of the two previous *Being and Event* volumes, nor on that account did it appear in his *Theory of the Subject*. The remark or beautiful formula that Badiou is referring to reads in its French version as follows: “l’absolu est auprès de nous”³, in English it reads – not unimportantly – the “absolute… is with us … all along”⁴ and in German it reads as follows: “wenn es, das Absolute nicht an und für sich schon bei uns wäre”.⁵ The statement is part of a larger conditional sentence that states that something would not be the case if the absolute were not already “bei uns”, “with us”, “auprès de nous”. And it obviously seems to make a lot of sense that in a book – in the *Immanence of Truths* – which is supposed to argue neither for the universality nor for the singularity but for the absoluteness of truths⁶ – that is something that can neither be derived from its universal that is generic structure alone, nor from its singularity and singular embeddedness into a specific historical situation but only from its truth-ness, so to speak, from its internal infinity – this formula occurs. It seems very pointed and fitting to refer to a formula which seeks to capture nicely what Badiou thus attempts to demonstrate in this third instalment of his philosophical enterprise: namely that the very truth-character of the fragmented product of a internally infinite practice that he calls truth-procedure and that materializes as what he now addresses as an oeuvre – at least in most cases⁷ – entails a claim, an index of its own absoluteness.

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⁶ This series is what brings together the three volumes of the “Being and Event” trilogy. One might recognize in the category of absoluteness a specific way of addressing the complex dialectic between the finite and the infinite in a new way. Cf. Badiou, *Immanence*, 275 and also Alain Badiou, *Le fini et l’infini*, Paris 2010.
⁷ In most cases, since, as almost always on this level, things are different with the practice of mathematics, as Badiou indicates several times in *Immanence of Truths*. 
And this must mean the following: If there is a truth procedure that in most cases will manifests as a finite, singular and specific oeuvre, for this very oeuvre holds, because it is the work of (a) truth, that it will have been absolute from the very beginning. And this is precisely what the reference to Hegel emphasizes.

The passage Badiou refers to is from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and more precisely from its introduction – so, not from the general preface to what Hegel at this point believed will become his system of philosophy. And in introducing the project of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel in this very passage argues that we simply cannot follow what he calls the “natural assumption”9. Since if we just follow our natural belief system, we believe that what is absolute could never be close by (us) but must be located somewhere distant. But even worse, not only does our nature tell us that the absolute is in distance to us, it also makes us believe that the absolute is an object. Naturally, we tend to reify the absolute. So, if we say that we want to access or think something absolute, we in our natural common sense understanding treat it as an object, an object of our thoughts for example. Hegel demonstrates that if we take the absolute to be an object, we assume that it is in a distance from us – and vice versa –, and we thereby cannot but also assume that what we need to do is to bridge the gap that separates us from the absolute. So, if we follow our natural assumption we take cognition or thought to be this very instrument that bridges the gap. And by making all these assumptions, we fall prey to an instrumentalist conception of thought. Thinking is now supposed to function like a tool by means of which we are supposed to be able to catch or capture the absolute, “like a bird caught by a lime-twig”10, as Hegel ironically remarks. Or, like a mouse in a mousetrap. But an absolute that we could easily trick and outwit, does not seem overly absolute.

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8 It is clear that this idea has been present in Badiou’s work for longer. One may just think of the very concept of the sequence that he has been expounding for almost thirty years. In what way is it related to issues we are dealing with here? Not only is each new step or each evental progression – if one risks this nomenclature – in politics possible only by measuring the limitations of (the means of) the previously taken political forms available (for example as the October Revolution solved the problems of duration and geographical expendability that occurred with the organizational form employed by and in the Paris Commune). But this measurement must necessarily also imply – if what happened say in the Paris Commune was not simply not part of the truth procedure – that already what manifested in was also infinite and we now proceed to a new type of infinity. In this sense: “an idea is always the balance sheet of an anterior idea.” Badiou, *Immanence*, 480.

9 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 47.

10 Ibid.
And the absolute is neither bird nor mouse. As Hegel himself remarks it would rather laugh at our attempted ruse if – and here it comes – the absolute were not “bei uns”, “with us, in and for itself, all along”\(^{11}\). It does not laugh or look down at us because it will have been with us all along. What the English translation here makes at least difficult to see and hear, if it does not disperse it altogether, in rendering the “bei uns” as “with us”, is the that the German word “bei” has a spatial meaning, a spatial connotation. It thus clearly articulates that the relation that we have to the absolute – if it is a relation at all – is a spatial one. Our relation – if it is one – to the absolute is thus, different from what one might immediately assume from almost all standard renderings of Hegel, not a temporal or historical one. The French translation that Badiou uses highlights this spatial aspect more adequately than the English one and this might actually be one of the reasons why this formula, “l’absolu est auprès de nous”, is so beautiful.\(^{12}\) Because it points to our comradeship with the absolute – a comrade being literally he or she who shares the same room or space.

But one should here immediately ask the following question: where precisely is the absolute if it is “bei uns”, “auprès de nous”? This is a question that one might not only raise when reading Badiou’s *Immanence of Truths* but also when reading Hegel. Where is “auprès de nous”, “bei uns”? This is a true, i.e. difficult question since the being “bei uns” of the absolute does not make it overly easy to locate it. To begin giving an answer negatively, what is clear is the following: being “bei uns” the absolute is for Hegel as well as for Badiou not simply ahead of us, before us, “vor uns”, or “avant nous”. It is not a point or endpoint, because it is not an object; neither target that we aim for nor finishing line that we envisage and that we just would so love to reach. Rather that the absolute is “bei uns”, “auprès de nous” indicates a more complex spatial setting. The “bei” in German rather means that the absolute is beside us, at our side; it is as if it were our neighbour – notre prochain – as if it were neighbouring, nearby, maybe close-by, “près de nous”, or maybe even “proche de nous”, if we want to refer to a formulation that appears in one of the chapter titles of *The Immanence of Truths*.\(^{13}\) Hegel’s own formulation seems to indicate that we are bordering on the absolute as much as it is a bordering on as. The absolute and us – a borderline couple.

\(^{11}\) Ibid.

\(^{12}\) As it points out that the absolute is precisely the space where there are truths or more precisely and metaphorically, the place all possible form of multiple beings. Cf. Badiou, *Immanence*, 295.

\(^{13}\) Cf. Ibid., 391.
In my reading, one of the tasks and impressive achievements of Badiou’s *Immanence of Truths* is to demonstrate from what immanent perspective the absolute can be said to be close-by, “bei uns”. But it might at first sight seem paradoxical to claim that one can only attain a proper insight into this conundrum – where is and how to we have to understand the being “being uns” of the absolute? – if one takes an immanent position.\(^{14}\) What does it mean to be in the immanence of that which is always already “bei uns”, “auprès de nous”? If it is already “bei uns”, “auprès de nous”, how could we not be in it? How could we miss it?\(^{15}\) And if this is possible: how can we get into the immanence of the “bei uns”, of the “auprès de nous” if we missed it in the first place?

The German “bei” of the “bei uns” implies that one is not only talking about something to which one stands in a spatial relation, but also about something that is (located) at our side. It thereby indicates a fundamental sided-ness with regard to the place of the absolute, an unavoidable one-sidedness or partiality. And this is what we also see in *The Immanence of Truths* where Badiou’s demonstration of the absoluteness of truth therefore and necessarily can only be a sided, a one-sided, a partisan or militant demonstration of absoluteness.\(^{16}\) This already changes the intuitive concept of absoluteness and Badiou reminds us constantly in the course of his book that in the

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\(^{14}\) Already the first sentence of *Immanence of Truths* clarifies, that this immanent perspective or more precisely: strategy has always been Badiou’s. Cf. Badiou, *Immanence*, 13. Yet, obviously the theory of the “recouvrement” (Badiou, *Immanence*, 233ff.) might give an answer of how one might miss it, obviously also the ideology of finitude with its corresponding ontology of multiplicity.

\(^{15}\) It is always most difficult to see what is right “there”. In a very specific way – too complex to elaborate here – with his emphasis on the being “bei uns” of the absolute, Badiou repeats a gesture that one can not only find in Hegel – who as if being a very specific case of an ordinary language philosopher always emphasized that one does not need a technical language, one simply needs to see the speculative content that is already, well, “bei uns” – but also in Freud. Since Freud always emphasized that we just need to truly see what is right in front of our eyes or, more precisely, ears. In this respect, and one should not underestimate the intricacy of this task, Badiou has been repeating this gesture in a radically new form, insisting that a novel theory of the absolute is right under our noses, namely in mathematics. We just need to learn to see what is obvious – and this is what philosophy, since Plato, can do.

\(^{16}\) I here address something that was also addressed in the intervention of Quentin Meillassoux, even though I would argue – and this might only be a difference of phrasing as well as an actual difference with regard to the argument – the following: what appears as a lack of criteria or “normative” reasons in constructing a certain choice as a forced choice in one of the conditions – Meillassoux was referring to Badiou’s preference for a particular kind of mathematics and his animosity to another one, i.e. to him setting up the choice between Cohen and Gödel–, a lack that is fundamental because neither the respective condition (mathematics) in which the choice is supposed to be a fundamental principle of orientation nor philosophy can provide us with in advance criteria, with a sufficient reason of how or even of why to construct this choice, we seem to rely on a previous decision. But it seems to me that this is not a weakness, but *is* the whole point of the argument, i.e. of the *Immanence of Truths* (italicization intended) – and it might be that Meillassoux ultimately drew the same conclusion. That this must be the case is inscribed into the very concept of decision. For no decision would truly be a decision if it were taken for good or better reasons (because we would otherwise not need to decide, we would just follow a rule, namely that the better reasons always counts). So, where do the criteria of this decision come from? Obviously: from the absolute that is “bei uns” – so if we determine where the “bei uns” is, we know what instructs this decision which is not-normatively grounded (but rather grounds an entirely new framework of one-sided, a-normal normativity).
field of practice from whose immanence he unfolds the concept of the absolute, i.e. mathematics, we do have to leave our intuition, our natural common sense behind, as it simply does not help, quite the opposite, when we try to conceive of the proper concept of infinity. That the absolute is at our side means that we have to choose this side. We have to choose and pick up what is there at our side. And this is a gesture with which Hegel will begin his own “Immanence of Truths” that he called the *Science of the Logic*; where he talks about a gesture of “taking up what is there before us”

17, “aufzunehmen was vorhanden ist”

18. What is implied in Hegel’s gesture as well as in *The Immanence of Truths* is a taking sides of and with the absolute, so that we are “auprès de l’absolu”, “beim Absoluten” as much as it is “auprés de nous”, “bei uns”. To leave aside our intuitive understanding and intuition when it comes to matters of the absolute – in a sense our intuition does not matter to the absolute, it is far a too natural assumption, as Hegel would have scorned it – it is important to create a peculiar indifference, a *creative indifference* as Badiou has repeatedly argued.

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Hegel, by the by, calls this very gesture tellingly a “Beiseitsetzung”

20 in German, a putting, a placing, a positing (*Setzung*) or casting aside of every representation, opinion, or given position. We only enter into the immanence of a truth by “Beiseitsetzung”, by an affirmative form of indifference, by sideways reflection, a look from the side that is a defining characteristic of militancy and partisanship. And it might not come as a surprise that already the simple term “absolute” derives from the Latin *absolvere*, which means to free, to detach and uncouple, to absolve and acquit, to detach and to “deliér” oneself from what seems to be objectively given.

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So, we absolve us from all opinions – there is constitutive act of a *dé-liaison*, of unbinding involved

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18 G.W.F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Vol. 1, Frankfurt am Main 1985, 68. It is crucial that Hegel here does not talk about “aufheben” (sublation) but “aufnehmen”, just taking up. And he repeats this literally throughout the *Logic*, so “aufnehmen, was vorhanden ist” is a crucial element of the method of Hegel. For this also see: Rebeca Comay / Frank Ruda, *The Dash – the Other Side of Absolute Knowing*, Cambridge, Mass. 2018.


20 G.W.F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, 68

21 This is particularly pertinent because Badiou defends the revolutionary potential of a-sociality, of un-binding as (politically) emancipatory against the idea of creating emancipation through emphasizing sociality and participating in social relations. This precisely emphasizes the difference between politics and the social and their mutual non-reducibility: “the State is not founded upon the social bond, which it would express, but rather upon un-binding, which it prohibits.” Cf, Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, London: 2006, 109.
– when we decide to take up what is at our side all along, to choose its side, to side with its side. And it is precisely thereby that the absolute which orients us; by making us chose sides.\textsuperscript{22} The very concept of absolute demands one-sidedness and militancy. Only thereby it offers orientation. No orientation that is not one-sided, no orientation that is not decided, maybe we should risk saying: de-sided.

There is a peculiar resonance of this Hegelian-Badiouan theme of the absolute at our side and the need of siding with it, in what Lacan in his 20\textsuperscript{th} seminar, \textit{Encore}, framed as the crucial task of psychoanalysis. Lacan therein defined it as a way of thinking directed against the pretended ways of thinking – the forms of not-thinking – that he identifies with the name of philosophy. Philosophy does not think – this is Lacan’s reformulation of Heidegger’s famous science does not think. And this is due to the fact that for Lacan philosophy is metaphysics. Or, more precisely the very philosophical practice is metaphysical in a specific sense, notably because it relies on a metaphysical belief in mastery, in self-mastery, in being the master of one’s own being and of being in general. He frames philosophy thus to be the discourse on and of the “m’être”, of the “m’être à moi meme”. Psychoanalysis on the other hand was supposed to replace this strange discourse of faked mastery (philosophy) with a discourse of and on what he called the “par-être” or more precisely: with a discourse of being as par-être, as para-being, as being aside, être à coté\textsuperscript{23}.

As is well known, Badiou has insisted that there is no contemporary philosophy which does not live up to the challenge that is posed to philosophy by the thought of Lacan\textsuperscript{24} – Lacan, who is “our Hegel”\textsuperscript{25}, as he proclaimed in \textit{Theory of the Subject}. It seems not to be a surprise that in the last book of his philosophical triptych, the being “bei uns”, l’être “à coté, auprès, proche de nous”, the para-being of the absolute is given a unique and detailed conceptual elaboration. So, Alain Badiou has demonstrated what it means for philosophy to think its own side, its sided-ness, and why philosophy must para-think, why it must think that which is-para. This does not simply replace

\textsuperscript{22} The repeated insistence on the axiom of the choice in thinking the absolute in \textit{Immanence of Truths} makes this breathtakingly clear.


philosophy with a para-ontology – and therein philosophy differs from what Lacan saw a potential realization of psychoanalysis. But, in line with Lacan’s exigency, it means to take seriously that philosophy only thinks if it thinks in a de-sided way; if it thinks what happens at its side, close-by, “bei uns”, “auprès des nous”; it only thinks (if it thinks) what happens in its conditions, in the practices where something might have touched the absolute. And maybe it is not a surprise that to conceive of an event’s internal constitution, of the way in which it implies a breaking up of the normal course of things, one cannot but rely on a para-consistent logic. Philosophy thus thinks para-ontology, para-politics, para-art, para-love and is thus the space of bringing together the fourfold of paras. It is overall a para-normal activity. What we thus get in *The Immanence of Truths*, where we get a philosophical account of what it means for a truth to be absolute and thus of the absolute, a philosophy of the “bei uns”, a philosophy of the “auprès de nous” in an even twofold sense of the term: (Badiou’s) philosophy takes up what of the absolute happens at one of its sides – in mathematics – to allow us to think the peculiar “bei-uns” status, the status of the “auprès de nous” of the absolute itself. Since it is at our side – philosophically speaking – that we find a conceptualization of the absolute – if one has the eyes to see –; a conceptualization which is at the same time a crucial part of the unfolding of a singular truth. We thus find a truth unfolded which in its unfolding provides us with the tools to conceptualize its own absoluteness, i.e. truthness, but also for that of other truths. From the side, and only by taking sides, *The Immanence of Truths* demonstrates the sidedness, the side as much as the sight of the absolute. *Immanence of Truths* is not absolute knowing, but the absolute in-sight /side.

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27 So, what we get here is a generic procedure (mathematics), singularly localized (post-Cantor), within which a conception of the absolute is created that does allow to evaluate the truth-character of all truths – which is a way of further conceiving of the very being of truths, apart from them being generic or singular. So, what seems to be at stake here – and this is what makes the mathematical theory of Kunen so extraordinary – is not only the part of a truth procedure that Badiou calls forcing, but a kind of forcing of forcing. Why does the absolute imply a forcing of forcing? Each truth procedure implies an element of forcing – as an anticipation of its own totalization, of its own completion – but with regard to the mathematics of infinities that provides us with a concept of the absolute, we must not only anticipate the end of the construction of larger and larger infinities, but we must also anticipate that the anticipation of the end of this peculiar “construction” must be different from all other anticipations – as we are not dealing with an imaginary anticipation of the completion of a specific truth procedure but with a anticipation of such a completion which then is supposed to provide us with a measure by means of which we can determine (and force into – a kind of subjective or subjectivizing – knowledge, as it were) the truthness of all other kinds of truths. To render this in more trivial terms, if we want to understand how a truth can force the production of new knowledge, we need an account of the forcefulness of the singular force of a truth, a measure of the force of truth. Cf. Badiou, *Immanence*, 69. *The Immanence of Truths*’ approach to the absoluteness of truths is thus neither metaphorical nor simply metaphysical, but meta-forcical.

28 It would be a longer discussion how these two can be related and differentiated, but I am leaving this aside here.
To end, I want to quickly dwell on only one of the many incredible conceptual achievements of *The Immanence of Truths*: namely that it is able to bring together the concept of the absolute and the idea or concept of a measure. Since measure was one of the crucial and practical categories of, obviously, Aristotelianism. And Badiou may be identified with many things, but he clearly does not seem to be an Aristotelian. So, what is this concept of measure – of the absoluteness of truths? It is as if the general idea can be understood when modifying Kierkegaard’s claim that without courage we do not have any measure in life. Only that Badiou claims that without the absolute we do not have any measure in life and we will never see in absolute clarity that we participated in the creation of not only singularly universal, but truly absolute truths. So, the absolute “àprès de nous” allows us to relate differently to the world around us because it provides us with a measure; it must be “bei uns”, since without it we would be swallowed by the darkness of the cave-ideology that is “the ideology of finitude”. But if the concept of absolute that we get in *The Immanence of Truths* is supposed to provide us with a measure, it is important to specify what kind of measure it is. Since, to begin with, this concept of measure must – necessarily – withstand the harsh critique of the very idea of measure that one can find expressed by Hegel in his *Science of Logics*. I want to end by quickly pointing out why that is. Hegel’s critical – and quite intricate – claim is ultimately breathtakingly simple: the very concept of measure necessarily introduces the concept of the immeasurable, i.e. of that which exceeds all measure.

As there is no meta-measure by means of which we could again re-inscribe the measureless into a higher kind of measure – the same problem will always repeat on the next higher logical level –, there is no measure for how to measure measure and hence measure itself becomes identified with the measureless. In a different wording, Hegel’s point is here ultimately that any measure ultimately remains too external to that which it is supposed to measure – simply because it remains strangely external to itself insofar as it can never measure itself. This is why the concept of measure is of no use when we are talking about the absolute for Hegel. Rather, in traversing the concept of measure and working through it critically we ultimately are led to the insight – and for eyes and

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29 “La mesure est donc l’infini, en tant qu’il est l’effet d’horizon, en tant qu’il permet de penser que la chose dont il est question n’est pas circonscrite par une clôture définitive.” Cf. Badiou, *Immanence*, 129 and 288ff.


ears that learnt to see and hear by reading either of these masters, this is quite intriguing – that being itself must be considered to be an “absolute indifference.” Hegel takes this insight also clearly as a fundamental refutation of one main building blocks of Aristotle.

Badiou’s re-conceptualization of the concept of measure by means of providing us with a new concept of the absolute can withstand the Hegelian destruction of the category of measure. Why this is, is easy to see. Because Badiou’s concept of the absolute as measure allows for a fully immanent concept of measure. A peculiar kind of self-measurement, as indicated above. Yet, to the long-term reader of Badiou’s work, this train of thought is clearly reminiscent of a claim that one can find already in some of his earlier work. One may be reminded of his Metapolitics, where one can find the claim that any true political post-evental action allows us to measure the excess, i.e. the power of the state. So, at least politics as truth procedure was already there internally linked to the concept of measure. Why? Because if something happens the state shows its true face, if brutal or ignorant or whatsoever. And only if we measure it, we can take a proper distance to it. But the claim in Immanence of Truths is more far reaching than this: not only does a truth procedure allow us to measure the power of the state. We now are encountering a truth procedure which – in its philosophical, i.e. meta-ontological articulation – unfolds a concept of the absolute that provides us with an immanent measure – and here obviously lies the catch – for evaluating the absoluteness of whatever singular-universal truth that is unfolded in any of philosophy’s conditions. If this very unfolding of the concept of the absolute does thus not end in a failure or disaster, we attain a fully immanent concept of the absolute. In another formulation: we measure what is big “in itself” and not by external criteria or mere comparison. It is already immanent because the concept of the (concept of the) absolute is a part of the truthful unfolding of an absolute truth procedure itself. To reformulate this slightly, the concept of measure – that is the concept of the absolute – is a part of

33 Ibid., 326. I am emphasizing this, because every reader of Badiou knows that being is “nothing but indifferent multiplicity.” Alain Badiou, Logics of Worlds, Being and Event, 2, London 2009, 32
34 I would suggest, to reformulate the argument, that what mathematics does for Badiou in Being and Event 1 with regard to presentation – it presents presentability as such, that is all forms of presentation – it also does with regard to measure. Why? Since to present presentation as such means to present it without representation (i.e. the state), if one seeks to present measure in an immanent way (i.e. as such) one must present measure this measure immanently. 35 “The real characteristic of the political event and the truth procedure that it sets off is that a political event fixes the errancy and assigns a measure to the superpower of the State. It fixes the power of the State. Consequently, the political event interrupts the subjective errancy of the power of the State. It configures the state of the situation. It gives it a figure; it configures its power; it measures it.” Alain Badiou, Metapolitics, London 2005, 145.
36 Cf. Badiou, Immanence, 333. I cannot discuss here the determinate function of this concept of measure; one obviously would have to do this by means of discussing the extraordinary concept of the ultrafilter in all its intricacies. I will do this in another time and place. Cf. for this question especially: Badiou, Immanence, 353ff.
the unfolding of (a sequence of) consequences linked to the name of Georg Cantor, that is, to a singular (absolutely true) truth. The absoluteness of this very truth is linked to truthfully unfolding of the very concept of the absolute itself and reaches a quite interesting state with the work of Kunen and others. The absolute was “bei uns”, already with Cantor; already when embarking on the journey of Being and Event 1, but the absoluteness of this truth becomes clearly visible only after Kunen and others will have unfolded the consequences of this singular thought.

To end on another note and final brief remark on the “bei uns”, “auprès de nous” status of the absolute: a distinction that was introduced in Being and Event 1 and then not really taken up in Being and Event, 2 now makes a peculiar return. This distinction is the distinction between nature and history. Why? Because what the absolute in The Immanence of Truths is supposed to do and does, namely to provide us with a measure (of the absoluteness of truths) was precisely assigned to the concept of nature in Being and Event 1. It thus also seems to be no coincidence that Spinoza, who explicitly equates the absolute and nature becomes a crucial partner of the debate. In Being and Event, Badiou defended the crucial and far reaching (and surprisingly rarely discussed) thesis that on the one side one can claim: history can be naturalized – this is to say that there can be a transformation of the very structure of a historical situation into another kind of situation. This transformation is accounted for in terms of naturalization. If a set that has an evental site, i.e. contains elements that have elements that are not counted as elements of the original set, these elements can become elements of the set. The set is thereby not only naturalized, but normalized; it is turned into a transitive set, into an ordinal, into a set so that holds that all elements of the elements of a set are also elements of this very same set. There can be thus be change in history. In Being and Event 1, history can be naturalized and normalized. But Badiou there also insisted that nature cannot be historicized.

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37 Obviously this does not at all mean that everything that Cantor believed or claimed is true, especially including the continuum-hypothesis. It is precisely the latter that must be rejected so that what is absolutely true in Cantor can be identified – otherwise we would end up with a repetition of the structure of the natural numbers on the level of infinites, and we would thus finitize it – more specifically, this may then have only proven the existence of one infinite set, notably that of natural numbers – which is why Badiou explicitly rejects it. Cf. Badiou, Immanence, 310ff.

38 It seems to be possible to defend this claim on a conceptual level only by elaborating the following idea: if being is inconsistent multiplicity that to be truly inconsistent must be infinite, it can only be truly infinite if the infinite is also inconsistent and hence be not only a quantitative but also a qualitative notion (we need drastically qualitative different versions of quantitatively infinite sets) that must be expressed in terms of quantity (there must be infinitely many versions of these qualitative jumps), in the end there must be a weird coincidence of quality and quantity.

39 It is there explicitly (cf. Badiou, Immanence, 520f), but also in a modified form.

a natural multiplicity into a historical one, simply because there are no evental sites in nature, there
is no possible change imaginable to a form of structure in which all elements of the elements of
the set are also elements of the set. There can thus be no events in nature.

Why this distinction is relevant in the present context is that in *Being and Event I*, nature provided
therefore a stable measure for (the size of) a historical situation, and as such “the backbone of all
ontology”\(^1\). It was a form of presentation of multiplicity wherein we start from the void and
construct infinite transitive sets – and because there is can never a totality of these sets, nature does
not exist.\(^2\) But because this type of structure (and relation between what Badiou called
presentation and representation) can never be changed, it is not as history relative, but it is
absolute.\(^3\) If one can hence read the concept of nature as providing a measure, the concept of
measure changes profoundly from *Being and Event I* to *Being and Event III*.\(^4\) Even though, in
*Immanence of Truths* one may see a twofold claim articulated: On one side it holds that truths can
be absolutized and they even do this themselves. But this also means that the absolute can never
be, if that were a word, truthized.\(^5\) But as much as any situation in Being and Event I, even
historical ones, can have natural parts, now all possible types of multiples share the same space,

\(^{1}\) Badiou, *Being and Event*, 133.
\(^{3}\) Or one might also say that nature is being qua being ontologically and history is ontic being(s). Why can history
then be naturalised? Because while nature is on the side of being-qua-being, and history is on the side of ontic
beings, if something happens (i.e. an event) within a historical multiplicity, it becomes possible to measure what was
previously immeasurable, namely what Badiou calls the excess of the state (see the point on Metapolitics, I made
above). History can be naturalised because it can be measured, where measure is an effect of evental happenings that
make it possible to relate a historical situation through the perspective of the well-structured order of belonging that
is established by conceiving nature. One might say for Badiou in *Being and Event I*, without nature there could be
no orientation in history; nature is that which organises thought because it orients thought and provides it with a
measure.

\(^{4}\) Because now we not only get a stable organization of infinitely many multiplicities as measure, but we get a place
which allows for an internal infinitization of not only infinities but of types of infinity, as if the famous dialectic of
quantity and quality itself meets infinitely new forms of the dialectic of quantity and quality. This transformation in
the concept of measure is philosophically achieved in my understanding through the discussion with Spinoza. Cf.

\(^{5}\) Badiou therefore claims that all philosophy whose job it is to think truth, thinks the being-“almost-absolute” of
truths. Cf. Badiou, *Immanence*, 392. And to return to the point made in the footnote above: if we delineate within
one truth procedure (mathematics) all possible forms of types of infinite multiplicities and move in the space that is
created between and by them from one to the other, we actually almost attain a model, almost create a cartography, a
map of the place that is the absolute. It is in this very precise sense that it is comparable to the Plato’s idea of the
good (or true) which, as Badiou has argued elsewhere in greater detail, names the precisely the, let’s risk, multi-
differential space between the ideas that makes each individual idea conceivable without simply being a prior
Ontology”, in: The Adventure of French Philosophy, London 2012, 309-320. One might say this place or space
spans in between what Badiou calls the unique (the void) and the ultimate (cf. Badiou, *Immanence*, 498ff.).
as it were. The absolute – as place of all possible forms of multiplicity – makes us aware, not only of our comradesship with the absolute, but of the comradesship of all forms of multiplicity as well as the comradesship of all truths. The absolute is thereby not the truth of all truth – the measure is not identical with the measured –, not only because the absolute (as well as nature beforehand) technically does not exist\(^{46}\); but also because this does not at all mean that the measure is simply external to the measured.\(^{47}\) Badiou invokes the cave allegory as a unavoidable condition which we have to work through – and it is precisely this what the being “bei uns” of the absolute indicates as if it is the place outside the cave wherein we cannot dwell, but without which could not life properly. We work through the ideology of finitude and exit it by grasping our comradesship with the absolute. This hurts, not only our eyes, but also our head\(^{48}\); and after we then return to the realm of finitude and get a theory of the oeuvre, because we are now siding with the absolute: so finally, and even though sometimes it is difficult to accept, we should force ourselves to see that we are always in beautiful, just, lovely and very numerous company.

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\(^{46}\) This is not a sophism obviously. If to exist means to exist as multiple, the absolute as place of all possible forms of multiplicity cannot exist. It is, but does not exist. Pretty much the same can be said of the void in Being and Event 1. The absolute spans between two forms of nothing.

\(^{47}\) Obviously, the reverse is also true: a truth is not the absolute. Cf. Badiou, Immanence, 416.

\(^{48}\) There is the proof: thinking hurts. This was already Plato’s point with the cave allegory. Badiou has shown this, too, confronting us with the heights of the mathematical theories of infinity.