

BRATISLAVA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

The Anatomy of Decision: *Being and Event* vs. *Being and Nothingness*

BACHELOR THESIS

Michal Sagula

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Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this bachelor thesis is the work of my own and has not been published in part or in whole elsewhere. All used literature is attributed and cited in references.

Bratislava, February 17, 2020

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Abstract

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This thesis aims at defining, comparing and contrasting the concept of decision in Jean-Paul Sartre and Alain Badiou, focusing specifically on their pivotal works: *Being and Nothingness* and *Being and Event*. For this, both philosophical frameworks are described to provide a background for each case. The differences between the cases of decision are accompanied with the differences among other concepts that surround it. Although examples are used, the thesis describes the structure of the decision rather than its possible content. In other words, it does not primarily focus on ethics. The results of the comparison describe mainly the commonalities and disparities of the two ontologies, the decision in relation to time, the role of the subject or the authority behind the decision, the factual reality of this subject, and the necessary consequences of the decision for the subject and the world.

Keywords: Sartre, Badiou, decision, choice, event, situation, subject

Abstrakt

Autor: Michal Sagula

Názov práce: *Anatómia Rozhodnutia: Bytie a Udalosť vs. Bytie a Ničota*

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Zámerom tejto práce je definovať, porovnať a posúdiť koncept “rozhodnutia“ pre Jeana-Paula Sartra a Alaina Badioua. Práca sa zameriava špecificky na diela *Bytie a Ničota* a *Bytie a Udalosť*. Pre oba prípady opíšeme ich filozofickú štruktúru, ktorá poskytne prehľad naprieč tematikou. Vďaka tomuto, rozdiel medzi jednotlivými konceptmi rozhodnutia bude zároveň sprevádzaný analýzou rozdielu iných konceptov ktoré sa rozhodnutia týkajú. Aj keď sú v práci použité praktické ukážky, práca samotná má za úlohu opísať štruktúru rozhodnutia a nie jeho možný obsah. Inými slovami, práca sa nezaobera etikou. Výsledkom porovnania sú predovšetkým podobnosti a rozdiely medzi dvoma ontológiami, rozhodnutie z hľadiska času, roľ a subjektu ktorý vykonáva rozhodnutie, realita ktorá zahŕňa tento subjekt, a dôsledky rozhodnutia pre subjekt a svet ako taký.

Kľúčové slová: Sartre, Badiou, rozhodnutie, udalosť, situácia, subjekt

Preface

For this whole work could not be written otherwise than in a technical language to fit its format, let me indulge myself and steal this space for a little sentiment. It is perhaps because of the theme of this work that I may see the remnants of these concepts washing over my own life situation. The decision to write about the decision came from the place of my indecisiveness, which may seem both obvious and absurd. I don't know to what degree the works of other people reflect the themes in their own lives, but a complete denial of the case seems way more ridiculous. The amount of time and energy spent on a project such as this, and hopefully on anything we choose to do in life, deserves a purpose behind, a meaning that drives you forward. Yet at this point, the momentum behind this work is settled, leaving it to remain only as a reflection.

A child wanders from a place of pure potential to meet with possibilities, before having to choose one in actuality. Anyone who stands at the threshold to a new life has a reason to doubt. The opportunities of our time can overwhelm us with the sense being surrounded by ever-present thresholds. The choice to cross any of them, to open the doors to the unknown, may cost us losing the opportunity to experience what lies beyond another. We are creatures bound by space and time, I suppose we do not create too much of the same.

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Lastly, I want to thank my girlfriend, friends, and family, for all their patience with me at times when I uttered: "...but I have to work on my thesis."

Abbreviations

BE Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013).

BN Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (Washington Square Press, 1956).

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Introduction

Why have you decided to read these lines? Is it that you are expected to read them as part of the situation in which you find yourself? Somehow this happened to be part of your life experience, either through the culmination of your choices or the choices of others. It's not like you couldn't stop right here and do something else, but you cannot really un-read what you have read so far. We may somehow discern between small scale everyday decisions, and decisions with a heavy impact on the individual or even society. Or how about looking into the degree of choice we have in relation to our very being?

Existentialism comes in various modes. Its common notion, though, is that in order to understand human existence, a greater set of defining categories must be considered. The position of the individual as the one who alone chooses the right framework according to which we are to understand ourselves is what makes existentialism closely tied to themes of overwhelming responsibility, existential dread or anguish. Sartre explored these areas through and his subjective take on the matter comes not through only in his literary style in *Being and Nothingness*, but also because of the fact that he employs phenomenology as his mode of analysis. In this work, we will take phenomenology as the study of how consciousness experiences itself and the physical world, described from the first-person perspective. As one may assume, in the combination of existentialism and phenomenology, decision plays a crucial role.

Sartre's approach, however, does not appeal to Alain Badiou, a contemporary philosopher who, in *Being and Event*, as the title indicates, accepted Heidegger's claim that a philosophy should address the ontological question (Heidegger, 1962, p. 21–24), but claims that the take on the subject can no longer be considered as centered or reflective. Therefore, we should not allow human empirical faculties to play a role in our assessment of reality. While existentialism could be seen as a revolutionary movement against the chains of reason, considering rather our human makeup, Badiou sees the evolution of philosophy in its analytical approach. More specifically, he sees it in the mathematico-logical constructs of Cantor's set theory.

Although their different takes on the subject are one aspect regarding the comparison of what the decision is for each philosopher, the main purpose of this work is not to solve this dispute or claim that one or the other approach is outdated or does not serve its function. One is there for the other to provide a contrast helpful to understand the concepts thoroughly and possibly to discover some previously unrecognized aspects. The other concepts surrounding the decision also function in creating a sort of middle ground, or points of mutual reference. In the end, the primary concern is to form a detailed definition of the decision that one might dissect through both of the frameworks of thought, and conversely, in order to highlight what either of the philosophies might be lacking or do not take up.

We will start with Sartre. To fully comprehend his concepts we will attempt to substantially describe his ontology. Afterwards we will move to his notion of time, by which we will begin to understand the dynamics of the process of decision making for him. In the next section, we will analyze the role of action and describe various aspects of motivation behind the decision. From that we will move to situation, understood as the meaning of our circumstances, and its two poles, freedom and facticity. We will finish this chapter by taking decision in relation to the individual, formation of its identity and mentioning the aspect of responsibility.

In the second chapter, we will look to Badiou's ontology and its relation to mathematics. Then we will present his version of the situation, discovering that it could be considered a unit. After that, we will introduce the concept of event and describe how it fits into the situation. Finally, we will meet with the necessities behind the decision for Badiou. We will end with a description of the subject, as it is a very peculiar notion in Badiou's philosophy.

In the third chapter we will highlight some of the aspects of Sartre and Badiou already mentioned by other academics. We will follow that with our own comparison of the concepts relating to decision, as gathered thorough our individual analyses. We will finish this chapter with a concise definition of decision for each philosopher. We will also consider the pragmatic use of each philosophy, or each model of decision.

Chapter 1: Decision for Jean-Paul Sartre

To fully grasp the decision for Sartre, we will start our analysis with his ontology, which is “phenomenological — that is, descriptive... it does not ask why being should be or why there should be consciousness” (Howells, 2006, p. 36). To further reveal the nature of consciousness, we will describe how it relates to time. This will already hint at the process of decision making. Afterwards, we will consider the possible motivations behind the decision which will lead us to the section called “Situation.” There we will answer to what degree our decision is affected by external circumstances according to Sartre, and how much freedom we really have. The last section will describe the end result of the decision. We will touch on the issue of responsibility, but our primary aim will be the formation of our identity.

Ontology: Being, Consciousness, and Nothingness

For Sartre, the act of decision takes place in our consciousness. Although to fully understand this act, we must first go beyond what only appears to us and describe the being through which this is possible. While Sartre may make ontological claims about being or consciousness as such, he is prone to describe it in a sense that relates to humans. We can pardon him this, as this is our primary concern as well. So we may proceed by defining the two types of being he uses to describe plain being or the being of consciousness in an individual.

Sartre calls 'being-in-itself' a being that 'is what it is'. It has no recognition of itself. It is just an object, a piece of matter, an existing thing: "The in itself has nothing secret; it is solid. In a sense we can designate it as a synthesis. But it is the most indissoluble of all: the synthesis of itself with itself" (BN, p. 28).

The 'decompression of being' makes up the quality of the second kind. Sartre views this decompression in a sense of the self questioning or nihilating itself. His definition of consciousness is “a being such that in its being, its being is in question” (BN, p. 120). The second kind of being, 'being-for-itself', therefore carries the qualities of consciousness.

Nihilation¹ gives rise to this kind of being: “the peculiar possibility of being — that which is revealed in the nihilating act — is of being the foundation of itself as consciousness through the sacrificial act which nihilates being. The for-itself is the in-itself losing itself as in-itself in order to found itself as consciousness” (BN, p. 130). This process is what he calls an ‘ontological proof’ of the being of the for-itself, i.e., that the for-itself gets its being from the in-itself.

The last thing to bring to awareness is what nothingness is and how it fits into the picture. Nothingness is this space or distance between the for-itself and the in-itself. Because it is literally nothing, Sartre often puts it in a way that nothingness is “coiled in the heart of the being.” Its dwelling is, however ascribed only to the for-itself, for the in-itself exists as a full positivity which cannot contain negation. The for-itself or “the being of consciousness qua consciousness is to exist at a distance from itself as a presence to itself, and this empty distance which being carries in its being is nothingness” (BN, p. 125). It is because of the nothingness which surrounds the for-itself that we can later make conclusions about its freedom.

The roles of the for-itself, in-itself, and nothingness are going to be described through this whole chapter as an ontological structure behind phenomena or what we call the experiences of freedom, choice, responsibility, temporal realities and so on.

Temporality: The Past, Present, and Future

Another aspect necessary for the exploration of decision for Sartre is time or temporality. Sartre rejects the structure of time which supposes it consists of an infinite amount of now moments, or instants. For him, an instant does not have any duration. Thus, similar to how one could draw an infinite number of points on a line, these points do not say anything about the line itself, as the point has no dimensions. The problem is that time is supposed to have a duration and should consist of a multiplicity of chronologically ordered points. Sartre solves this problem by describing time as made by the temporalizing being of consciousness, or rather as a natural result of its movement (Catalano, 1974, p. 122–123). Thus each temporal

¹ *Negation* or *nihilation* refers to the process of ‘encasing with a shell of non-being’ as consciousness (the for-itself) exists by creating a nothingness between itself and the object of which it is conscious.

dimension — the past, present and future — is an aspect of the for-itself in the act of nihilation of the in-itself.

We talk about the past, then, as the movement of the for-itself away from itself. It tries to be present to itself but, upon failing to do so in totality, it escapes itself. It negates itself as no longer being that self. This left-out part, which was the focal point of the for-itself, upon being left out, upon the flight of the for-itself to a future moment, becomes its past. As its past, it is now a part of the in-itself, a solidified, unchangeable being that lacks an aspect of freedom. As an in-itself, it is now a part of that which constitutes (but only upon being interpreted by the for-itself) an essence for the total being (or the in-itself-for-itself). As Sartre puts it, "the surpassed in-itself lives on and haunts the for itself as its original contingency" (BN, p. 173). The for-itself is condemned to be related to its past. The past fixes its place in the world, or human reality. We will later refer to the past as the facticity of the self when asking how the past relates to responsibility.

To understand Sartre's notion of the present, first his concept of the for-itself as being in 'presence to' something needs to be addressed. As he puts it, "for-itself's presence to being implies that the for-itself is a witness of itself in the presence of being as not being that being; presence to being is the presence of the for-itself in so far as the For-itself is not" (BN, p. p.178). So it is through the for-itself that the total being, the for-itself-in-itself, is in presence to the world as well as to its past and future. The for-itself is itself not, does not have its own being, but rather is a nothingness of its being, and its presence to other beings are possible just because of the dynamics of negation. We can call its presence to something an attempt to gain its own being that is never successful, as it never fully identifies with it. In this failure, the for-itself remains a 'reflection', a permanent possibility to recover its being (BN, p. 216). For this, the present as an instant is not, and as such cannot be grasped. It is rather seen as a constant flight, the temporalization of the for-itself. The dynamics of the for-itself being always in 'presence to' being reveal to us that consciousness must always be *consciousness of something*.

The for-itself as a future is present to an idea of itself which is 'beyond being' or as a self that is not-yet. The future as this 'beyond being' is a 'possible' one of the possible futures which the for-itself strives to become. As the for-itself projects these 'possibles', it finds its own being as a *lack of* the chosen possible. The for-itself therefore always projects itself

towards a Future that it lacks in order to fill this lack with being (of the in-itself which it carries behind itself) in order to re-determine itself as that future. However, Sartre claims that even if the future towards which we are projecting ourselves 'beyond being' ends up being identical to that present in which we realize it, it is never the same, as we projected towards it as to a 'future qua future', and in this we hoped for the fulfillment of the Self (BN, p. 185). In other words, we hoped for the synthetic addition of that which we lack. This addition however, never comes to fruition as the future is always there for us as "the continual possibilization of possibles" (BN, p. 186).

The Mechanics of Decision: From Motivation to Action

So far we have shed light on the temporal movements of the for-itself to give us the notion of the structure of its movements. We can conclude that the act of choosing for Sartre happens through this flight of the for-itself from its past towards the future as the nihilation of the in-itself followed by the possibilization of a possible, an idea of the self beyond being. This process is an act of decision making, ontologically speaking. However, now we must further elaborate on other aspects of the decision as we experience it and find whether they all fit into one coherent definition.

We have already mentioned that the for-itself views its future as something that it lacks. The future idea that the for-itself has of itself is considered a more complete version of itself. It is the self for which the for-itself strives, which it desires but never achieves as it is always in flight towards a new version of itself. This future idea of the self Sartre calls 'value' or the 'Self'. We may conclude that value makes up a direction of our choices or a motivation behind them, as we want to embody it. Another aspect which also guides our choices is the concept of a 'project'. When Sartre described the possibilization of the for-itself, he included that we often create for ourselves a 'hierarchy of possibles' so that we prioritize certain possibles while others become trivial means to achieve them. A project, then, is an arrangement of a meeting with our future self which embodies our primary possible. We still have to make many other choices to get to this specific possible, but these arrange themselves naturally. This partly addresses the question whether we should define decisions as the mere choices revolving from our basic biological needs such as drinking a

cup of water.² While we can imagine a career as a typical example of a project, Sartre also sees project as a choice of our personality trait or behavior.³

Of course, what we value or desire does not take up the full range of our possibilities. We can choose for example to be in avoidance of something: “The choice can be effected in resignation or uneasiness; it can be a flight; it can be realized in bad faith. We can choose ourselves as fleeting, inapprehensible, as indecisive, etc.” (BN, p. 607). Sartre uses the term ‘bad faith’ for a mode of conduct which functions on autopilot keeping us on the same old track or in a cyclical behavior pattern in response to an outward stimulus. In bad faith, we lie to ourselves about the (in)ability to change our circumstances. For Sartre, we are in ‘full possession of the truth’ but ignore this fact and choose rather to believe that we are not free, not capable of choosing freely, by not taking the narrative of being in-itself into account. In this lie to ourselves, we create a sort of dissociation of consciousness where we identify with a part that is unaware of a certain fact and another part that supposedly contains the information we term our subconscious or unconscious.

We can now zoom in to the process of decision making. As we can refer to the value or concrete project that determines the direction of our action, we may see that for Sartre, “every action must be intentional, each action must, in fact, have an end, and the end in turn is referred to a cause” (BN, p. 563). For this reason he takes intent and action as synonymous. Where in the picture are we then to put the process of decision making? When we decide to execute a certain action, the action becomes the decision itself acted out. By this, we simultaneously imply the meaning of the action, which we could have decided in that moment or of which we have a preconceived notion, described above as the motivation for the decision. The action by no means shows a clear validation of the decision. The question is, how do we conceptualize this pre-chosen meaning, which is our intent, without the confirming portion of the action? The contemplating portion of the decision can take either a moment or a lifetime. However, while caught in this process, we forget what the actual status of the decision is. As chooser, the being of the for-itself cannot not choose as it is its very

² In the primal past, whether we choose to hunt for food at a specific time may seriously shape our life. Compared to that, whether I choose to drink coffee while writing might seem trivial, but it might add or subtract in the parameters of my overall health or whether I’ll be able to finish this work on time.

³ More about this will be discussed in the section, on self-determination.

constitution to always remain in question. The action portion of the decision is always implied. When we then do not express our decision in a particular action, we have in fact decided to remain undecided. Our action is to remain in hesitation. We may conclude then that any kind of decision always includes an action. Not to decide, as with planning to decide, is still an action, still a decision. There is then no fallacy in considering intent and action the same. The true intent is always revealed by the action, which can be a non-action.

Situation: Freedom, Facticity, and Meaning

In our pursuit to fully grasp the concept of decision for Sartre, we have already hinted at the nature of both our freedom and facticity as part of the features of being in-itself and for-itself. Facticity constitutes the being of the in-itself as what we mean by a fact that can be objectively stated about something or someone. It refers to our position in the world regarding our environment, biology, status, pretty much every factor which we consider to constitute our identity as it is presented to the world. The for-itself refers to facticity in the same manner that it refers to its past. The difference is past, as a previous conduct of the for-itself, has been chosen, while facticity is either a materialization of this past (i.e., a scar on our body) or is already implied in our foundation. Freedom is then the nothingness which surrounds the for-itself. It is by nothingness or as freedom that the for-itself is in presence to the world from the state of negation. Sartre sees freedom then as an ‘autonomy of choice’, for the choice of the for-itself is always in negation to the circumstances of the in-itself.⁴ According to Sartre, then, facticity cannot straight-away motivate our choices: “No factual state whatever it may be (the political and economic structure of society, the psychological state, etc.) is capable by itself of motivating any act whatsoever. For an act is projection of the for-itself toward what is not, and what is can in no way determine by itself what is not” (BN, p. 562). The motivation to act, which we can interpret as making a decision is then supposed to emerge from our inner subjective makeup.

The degree of supremacy of the freedom of the for-itself over its facticity is widely questioned. In one of the more recent criticisms of Sartre, Abraham Olivier argues that “choices are not in the first place the manifestation of the nihilating power of consciousness, but rather that they are originally based on and shaped by the options offered in particular

⁴ Freedom is not “the ability to obtain the ends chosen” (BN, p. 622).

situations.” He describes it such that “subjects are [not] directed to objects because of the intended projects of their choice, but rather that subjects are directed by objects towards the intended projects of their choice” (Olivier, 2018, p. 9). In response to Olivier, we must admit that there are cases of objects of our facticity navigating our decisions, but cannot deny the fact that these were agreed upon from the place of our freedom.⁵ In other words, even if we believed we had no other choice, we are still free to believe otherwise.

Returning to Sartre, we must see that he did not disregard the impact of facticity altogether: “the being of fact can not determine the content of my motivations but paralyzes them with its contingency because they can neither suppress it nor change it” (BN, p. 173). Instead of remaining in a dichotomy of freedom and facticity, we should ask about the degree of this paralysis. The answer may lie in how the being of the for-itself relates to facticity as its own foundation. The for-itself is able to “choose itself but is not able not to choose itself,” or that its “freedom is a choice of its being but not a foundation of its being.” The for-itself will always have its foundation in the in-itself which has to be what it is. It always has to “participate in the universal contingency of being” (BN, p. 616).⁶ In our description of a situation we may say that our foundation is the base for our general situation as human beings. Further we may find that everyone has their own situation formed by how each interprets his own individuality.

Situation is neither objective nor subjective, so it can be considered neither as free result of a freedom nor as the ensemble of the constraints to which I am subject; it stems from the illumination of the constraint by freedom which gives to it its meaning as constraint. Among brute existents there can be no connection; it is freedom which founds the connections by grouping the existents into instrumental complexes; and it is freedom which projects the reason for the connections—that is, its end. (BN, p. 704)

⁵ To address Olivier’s argument, he uses a case of Sartre spending a lot of time in his grandfather’s library as to show that this had a profound impact on his life. Of course, this specific case might point towards the effect of facticity, but it is rather an employment of common sense to harvest the fruit of one’s study by engaging in the literary disciplines and not joining the circus in pursuit of becoming an acrobatic artist instead.

⁶ The choice to participate in the universal contingency of being, understood as our physical reality is absurd for Sartre. Not because it is not rational, but because there was never an option of not to.

The meaning or interpretation of our facticity by our freedom gives us our situation. In another possible case, if we freely engage in the world, we may arrive at the limits of our facticity and reflect to ourselves the meaning of our situation. To become aware of the meaning behind our situation is to discover the possibility to change it. If we find we can in fact decide on the meaning, this reveals to us a full potential of our freedom. Sartre believed that upon realizing this, we will find ourselves in anguish,⁷ as we usually “cannot endure the tension of an existence between the poles of facticity and freedom” (Howells, 2006, p. 84). However much this may not be what we prefer, we may get closer to describing the vastness of such a state if we imagine giving up our notions of conformity or even our sanity. With that amount of freedom, we may arrive at the point where we have to decide for ourselves what it means to be a human.

The Aftermath of Decision: Responsibility, and Self-Determination

As we know that for Sartre consciousness is only a consciousness of something, decision (as an act of the for-itself) in this sense can be only a decision about or for something. This something, whether a meaning or an action, ultimately comes back to ourselves. By no means do we want to disregard any impact one might have on the world, but rather to point out Sartre’s focus on the individual. We might question whether this does not lead towards egocentrism or even to a degree of solipsism, as one might see others as immersed in their own consciousnesses. However, in *Being and Nothingness* he also deals with the question of the other (BN, p. 301), which is not our concern here. When we spoke of the motivation behind the decision, we described a project as a mode of a long-term decision making or planning. Sartre pushes the idea even further when he speaks about the original project of the self as a choice which is the blueprint of our identity. This is not a decision about our existence, for we never decided about our foundation. However, as we spoke on the ability to ascribe meaning, we can decide about ourselves as who we are, even considering our origin. The project of the self can be then chosen and fulfilled, but it can also evolve progressively or be completely reassembled. The autonomy of the choice we have in the question of our

⁷ “Anguish is the mode of being of freedom as consciousness of being” (BN, p. 65). It is a the state of uneasy feeling which we experience when we confront the full potential of our freedom. In anguish we realize that by some action we can totally change the course of our life, that we can disregard our past self and become completely new, possibly in a way that would to a great degree contradict our previous mode of conduct.

identity is staggering, but usually not employed unless one finds oneself in a situation which requires one to change. Sartre believes that we are prone to avoid these new situations, and rather “identify with our facticity, resulting in a bad faith.” By this he refuses any deterministic notions about ourselves. However ‘identifying purely with our freedom may result in a bad faith as well, as by this we refuse our responsibility’ (Howells, 2006, p. 33).

For Sartre, responsibility is a “logical requirement of the consequences of our freedom” (BN, p. 708). As we can choose freely by our freedom but cannot choose to be free, responsibility is already implied in a similar matter in that we are already responsible for each and every one of our decisions, except for the fact that we are indeed responsible. This again includes even our passivity or hesitation, for it makes us no less responsible for any situation in which we partake only in observation. Sartre defines responsibility as a “consciousness of being the incontestable author of an event or of an object” (BN, p. 707). This leads us to why he claimed ownership of events such as war, for it is through our being conscious about the war that the war as such exists. The notion of responsibility heightens our awareness of the importance of a decision and reveals its functioning through the mechanics of the for-itself or consciousness, as already described. When we become conscious of some phenomenon, we assume our position with regard to it. That is, we decide about how we relate to it. At that moment, we become responsible for that relation. We might try to avoid or resist what sometimes may seem to us a harsh truth, but any ignorance or pretence makes us then ignorant or pretentious. To this, we may respond by assigning it a different meaning in order to reframe the situation. However, even though we may not conform to what might seem as a general truth, we still carry responsibility for that matter, and thus can expect others to respond to it in ways that they find appropriate.

As we are then responsible for everything of which we have consciousness, does this include being responsible for the things we consciously know we are unconscious about? As soon as we are struck with a circumstance, we become conscious of it and choose our reaction to it, for which we are responsible. This circumstance may not be something we have chosen, but in this fact it functions in the same fashion as our foundation. In this sense we are back to freedom and facticity and can see the same mechanics to be solved again by grasping our situation and deciding on its meaning. Whether it is our birth, then, or any later circumstance engulfed by our consciousness, we become responsible for it. That is, we have to give it a response in the form of a choice of ourselves in relation to that thing. This choice becomes a choice of ourselves in general. We choose ourselves in our ability to respond.

However, as Sartre believes we have an 'absolute responsibility, we must conclude that he believes we are able to choose ourselves absolutely' (Howells, 2006, p. 112). To do so, we may argue that we must be absolutely conscious of all aspects of ourselves, even though we in fact know that we are not. We must not forget that, for Sartre, becoming conscious of something occurs through the nihilating power of the for-itself. Thus, to become conscious of a being in an absolute manner means to permeate all of its being with nothingness.

Our consciousness, however, does not seem to possess the ability to grasp an absolute notion of our being in an instant leaving aside that Sartre does not acknowledge the instant. We have to return to the notion of time. Sartre described time through the movements of the for-itself, which seem to be necessary to unwind the solid being of the in-itself. Only in time do we get to experience enough nihilating movements towards our own being to claim an absolute knowledge of it. Yet it appears that, only by the notion that this is in fact possible within the period of an undefined duration of time, Sartre already concludes this means an absolute responsibility for everything that makes up our situation. For this, we can only make choices in a manner as if we already absolutely knew their implications, though to be sure we will only eventually get to know them. Compared to our responsibility, our freedom lacks absoluteness in the dimension of time.

Chapter 2: Decision for Alain Badiou

Looking for the decision in Badiou's philosophy is tricky, although he has been accused of decisionism (Lyotard, 1989, p. 242), for he does not focus primarily on the individual human. Instead, his ontology draws from mathematics and we will find that we need to accustom ourselves to the concepts necessary in order to understand the structure in which the act of decision is posited. We will describe a situation and how our understanding of it in classical terms matches Badiou's mathematical interpretation. Further, we will arrive at Badiou's event, understand how it fits in our scheme so far, and start to break from it; analogically, to how event violates certain notions of his ontology. The decision will get its own section, as the structure of Badiou's thought did not allow us to intertwine it in between the other concepts. We will finish by describing Badiou's subject and what role it plays in the whole picture.

Ontology: Multiplicity, Set Theory and the Void

What we find intriguing about Badiou's ontology is that he starts with a decision on being, a decision that "the one is not" (BE, p. 26). His whole ontological structure is built from this proclamation, as a break from the conception of the one by conceptualizing being as a multiple.⁸ For Badiou, then, any being which we describe as united is a result of the "operation" of the "count-as-one" (BE, p. 26). We should see being as a concise unification of multiples, rather than that which possesses an essence on its own or is part of a single ultimate being. The pure multiples in the form of "being-qua-being" that are not united as anything we could conceptualize as a bound, finite thing, Badiou calls an "absolutely infinite or inconsistent multiplicities." Any collection of multiplicities which we perceive as being "presented" in the world makes up a thing we then render as "consistent multiplicities" or "sets" (BE, p. 45). Badiou therefore sees our reality as built up from infinite amount of multiplicities. The structure of multiplicities goes on ad infinitum, until it consists only of an empty structure that Badiou terms 'the void'.

⁸ This 'axiomatic break' is precisely of the same nature as Badiou's event, which will be described later. Both break from an old way of thinking and introduce a new option, which gets enough attention that it keeps growing in presence.

Badiou takes the void as “proper name of being,” for it represents that from which everything is ultimately built. Its quality “is as much that of structure, thus of consistency, as that of the pure multiple, thus of inconsistency” (BE, p. 58). The void is a gap that fills every seemingly whole being, as we know that any being consists only of the multiples which are counted as one. It can be seen as its suture. It is the name of an inconsistent multiplicity contained within every consistent multiplicity. We may see the void as that which is there but not counted, a place for new potential.⁹

For Badiou, “ontology = mathematics” (BE, p. 14). He finds support for his philosophical claims in set theory, a ‘mathematical theory of the pure multiple’ created by Georg Cantor. In this scheme, a set is a “grouping into a totality of quite distinct objects of our intuition or thought” (BE, p. 41). ‘Set’ thus describes the structure of the multiple. As a code of conduct among sets, Badiou (Cantor) employs various axioms. Axioms are the blueprints for set theory and thus form the possible relations among sets. The basic distinction of the two relations between multiples is “belonging, which indicates that a multiple is counted as element in the presentation of another multiple... [and] inclusion, which indicates that a multiple is a sub-multiple of another multiple” (BE, p. 85). We can say that those sets which are the elements that belong to another set describe something of the same type of existence. While sets that are included, sub-sets, are only constitutive parts of what they describe.¹⁰

Through sets, Badiou can describe any natural phenomenon such as humans, the stars in the sky, the chairs in the room. However, he rather employs these in understanding socio-historical events. Colin Wright summarized the meaning behind the title of *Being and Event* as a “fundamental distinction between ontological natural sets (the realm of ‘being’) and non-ontological historical sets (the realm of ‘events’)” (Wright, 2008b, p. 79). Where the natural sets give validity to the claim that mathematics is ontology, historical sets slightly violate these notions and are prone to change. This is because historical sets “belong to the situation without being included” in it (BE, p. 182). In the following segment on situation, we will

⁹ As a practical example of what we mean by void, Hallward points to Badiou’s example of biochemical structures, like proteins, as fundamental or foundational elements for the sets of living things. If we are then considering just living things, everything which these consist of which we see as ‘not living’ are their void.

¹⁰ Similarly as in the previous footnote, we can depict a cell belonging to the set of living organisms, while the proteins of the cell are included in it but cannot of themselves be described as living.

continue to show how set theory underlies some of Badiou's arguments to understand the implications behind what he considers to be a decision.

Situation and State of the Situation

Situation is "any presented multiplicity... [or] the place of taking-place" (BE, p. 26). In our description we can see it as synonymous with a set, but it is the set which is 'presented' in the world. We consider this a unit of the operation of the count-as-one. However, for Badiou any existing 'normal' multiple must not only be presented in situation, but also 'represented' by the 'state of the situation'. This representation he terms a result of the 'count of the count', an assurance that the multiple has been counted as one. It is, however, not just a replication of the count, but a different operation from what we have already described. So, in mathematical terminology, "a consistent multiplicity, counted as one, belongs to a situation, and that a sub-multiple, a composition of consistent multiplicities, is included in a situation" (BE, p. 100). Thus, everything that belongs to the situation, is presented in the situation. What is included in the situation, and thus is represented in it, also belongs to or is presented in the state of situation.

There are also multiples which are not normal. That is, they are neither presented nor represented in a situation. Although if we just consider sets that describe what exists, then we mean only those which are always presented. To show then what Badiou means by not being represented, we may use his own example (BE, p. 182). A family is presented its social situation of living together as a family. It is represented by the State (as a state of the situation), thus recognized as citizens, possessing identity cards, and so forth. However, as long as this family has a member which is not registered but remains clandestine, the family is not fully represented by the State as the unit which it is. This particular member of the family cannot be even counted by itself and thus belong to the State. Badiou's other example (BE, p. 183) is of the family consisting of members who are all clandestine and present themselves publicly as a group. This family multiple with regard to the situation of the State form a place called an 'evental site'. Badiou terms evental site, "an entirely abnormal multiple, a multiple such that none of its elements are presented in the situation. The site, itself, is presented, but *beneath* it nothing from which it is composed is presented" (BE, p. 183). Thus the family only presents itself as a group, but any of its members are only the void of the situation. The evental site is thus said to be located at the 'edge of the void'.

Another classic analogy of the evental site is the formation of the proletariat as representation of the working class from which none of its members were politically recognized as individual workers. By seeing reality as this bi-layered structure of presentation and representation, we might think of removing the gap between these layers as Badiou's ultimate goal. However, "[his] ontology describes, the conditions which must be met in order to move beyond the state with its representation, and toward a situation with pure presentation" (Hallward, 1998, p. 93). We will further describe such a situation in the following section.

The Event and its Forms

To get into the process of the 'normalization' of any un-represented multiples, thus to recognize the void of the situation, Badiou calls on a multiple named the 'event'. The event is composed of elements of the evental site, as well as elements of its own. Badiou calls it an 'ultra-one', because it belongs to the situation but also to itself. Thus, even without yet being represented, it is already counted twice. Unlike the evental site, it does not find itself on the edge of the void, but rather "interpose[s] itself between the void and itself" (BE, p. 192). The event thus reveals the void of the situation, but is not itself endangered by it. If we see event as a template for political revolution, we may understand its dynamics, such as that the event is more than a culmination of unrecognized multiples within a situation. It may appear because of these, but it is itself unique and able to transform the whole situation.

Badiou recognizes four categories in which truth gets revealed in the form of the event: love, politics, art and science. Aside from politics, the event may be a new way of painting or understanding music. It may come as a scientific breakthrough. The smallest case of category of the event, love, includes only two individuals. In falling in love with another person, one completely gives up one's preconceived, pre-planned notions about one's way of living or of future goals. We may see an event as a new, unpredictable way of thought or action that arises in a situation, completely changing the paradigm of that situation. It cannot be predicted or calculated, neither in its implications nor consequences. It appears out of nowhere and disappears in the very next moment – which brings us back to the possibility of an event not being recognized as a part of the situation, as "its belonging to the situation of its site is undecidable" (BE, p. 190). The existence of an evental site is not itself enough to guarantee the happening of the event. If it is not recognized then we would say that "nothing

has taken place except the place” (BE, p. 191). The decision whether an event belongs to the situation is partially what we mean by decision for Badiou.

Decision about the Event: Intervention and Fidelity

Before we speak explicitly about the decision, we must first discuss two more operations significant to the event. When we ask ourselves whether the decision even took place, we are looking on these two aspects. We introduce the ‘intervention’ as both the “recognition of the eventual form of multiple, and decision with respect to its belonging to the situation” (BE, p. 213). If we were to return to our example of the undocumented family as an eventual site, we can think of a police officer who finds out about them as they are walking in public as an event. For the officer, there has arisen the option to intervene. They are then to recognize the family’s presence and decide how to proceed. They can lock the family into the cell and prosecute them, thus deciding that the event belongs to the situation and needs further attention, or to ignore the case and let the family go, as this had never even taken place. However, intervention is paradoxical as it means deciding upon an essentially undecidable event. We would like to grant intervention the full status of a decision, although we may see that it lacks firmness. It is the recognition of a rupture, but lacks the other aspect of decision. As we have already found that everything considered to be a normal multiple for Badiou must both belong and be included, intervention also has to be reinforced. It gains validity from the second function.

The function of fidelity “is the apparatus which separates out, within a set of presented multiples, those which depend upon an event” (BE, p. 245). As the event now belongs to the situation, in order to remain further recognizable from the latter, fidelity discerns between the multiples of the situation and those of the event. We can “think [of] fidelity as a counter-state: what it does is organize, within the situation, another legitimacy of inclusions” (BE, p. 251). It is thus similar to a state of the situation, but is concerned only with the event. Whether the officials then recognize the undocumented family mentioned above is just one part of the puzzle. If it is decided that the family belongs to the situation of the country, it has to follow such procedures as being registered and so on. It is by the procedure of fidelity which actualizes the decision about the event. Without the function of fidelity, intervention will be forgotten, as if it had never taken place. We may see that when we decide about the event, we require both intervention, which recognizes and decides upon

belonging of the event, and fidelity, which connects the event to the situation by creating its own state. Again, a state in this sense means that they will be in some way, shape or form represented in the situation of a country.

There exists another option in which fidelity gains importance: “[If] we suppose that there is no relation between intervention and fidelity, we will have to admit that the operator of connection emerges as a second event” (BE, p. 253). That is, if by our fidelity or faithfulness to the event, we vastly differentiate from the approach of what could be thought as closer to the official state of the situation, we may consider this fidelity to be exceptional to the degree that it is considered to be of the same importance as the event itself. In our family example, we can think of a situation in which the family would fight for a special status or privilege to be recognized as its own unit, maybe create an underground organization that would help people of similar status. Badiou called this a ‘non-institutional fidelity’, “a fidelity which is capable of discerning the marks of the event at the furthest point from the event itself” (BE, p. 250). Other, perhaps more accurate case where fidelity to the event surpassed the event itself may be Christianity. If we consider the event of Jesus dying on the cross, this would by itself not lead to the religion as we know today. The circumstances of that era were of many religion-based communities with their own messiahs. Badiou is interested in the case of St. Paul because, thanks to the belief that ‘Jesus was resurrected from the dead’, he unified Greeks and Jews as Christians.

The decision about the event is really between remaining in the same old form of existence or going for a new way of living, which is in the form of the unknown, the yet unrealized. It is the decision to change without any guarantee of a peaceful tomorrow. We leave other cases of events, in the realms of science, art, or love to the reader’s own imagination and now address what role we play as individuals.

Subject of the Event: Who Is Making a Decision?

In Badiou’s philosophy, we may drop the classical assumptions about a ‘subject’ being always a human individual. Strictly speaking, the subject is “the process itself of liaison between the event (thus the intervention) and the procedure of fidelity (thus its operator of connection)” (BE, p. 252). As we have shown above, the decision for Badiou has two ends. It starts with intervention and ends (or rather continues) with fidelity. The subject as a process

thus fills everything between these two ends of the decision. We may well see it as Slavoj Žižek puts it: “For Badiou... the subject is consubstantial with a contingent act of Decision” (Žižek, 1998, p. 159). The existence of a subject is thus dependent upon the event.¹¹

What Wright (2008a, section III.) supposes is the two-ness of the event is the emergence of the unrepresented multiple and the decision of being a faithful subject of this truth. This appears to us as what we have already described as non-institutional fidelity. Wright however seems to see the subject’s decision as only whether to remain in fidelity to the consequences of the event. We argue that the decision has already begun in the moment of the intervention of the event and that it has to prolong itself by the process of fidelity. This is because any notion of decision is contingent upon the event, and the recognition of the event which befalls us as the subject necessarily follows with a decision whether it belongs to the situation. Saying “no” to that decision therefore ends the case for the subject, and upon that moment one loses such status. The “yes” has to be followed by a process of fidelity, as it means to commit oneself to carry the truth. Otherwise, it would lose its validity.

To destroy any remaining confusion as to why we are not always regarded as subjects, for Badiou our primary drive is simply our own preservation. Otherwise, he views us only as beings which mingle among each other, exchanging our opinions. For him “no ordinary situation ever really counts its members as thinking beings, i.e. in terms that respect those undefinable or inconsistent qualities that allow them to think” (Hallward, 2004, p. 7). When talking about our individuality, it needs to be stressed again that Badiou does not believe that we are anything more than the sum of multiples: “According to Badiou, [any] individuality can only be the result of an operation, a being-counted-for-one” (Hallward, 1998, p. 90). Whatever part of us then wills, is exactly that part that wills to decide (to decide). But the sort

¹¹ It seems, however, that the opposite is true as well. Although we talk only about appearance of the event rather than an appearance of the subject we may further describe how the conception of this subject differs from a mere human individual:

Whilst Badiou will of course retain the language of subject and subjectivation, it is imperative that this subject not be understood as an individuated thinking or doubting entity, i.e. as classically ‘Cartesian’. For Badiou, it is clear that some subjects are not conscious (the subject of a truth in art is an artwork, for example), some are collective (the political subject) and some are dyadic (the truth of the amorous couple is their separate two-ness, not the romantic ‘fusion’ itself). (Power, 2006, p. 188)

In cases where the status of a subject does not belong to the human, we can hardly talk about the process as about a decision. This may be difficult to grasp since we can still conceive of many human interactions surrounding the artwork. We do not have the space here to answer this for Badiou, and so will focus on the question of the individual human being.

Sagula: The Anatomy of Decision

of creative, lateral, coming-up-with-something part of the decision, is left to the circumstances of the situation. If we consider the event, he sees us as biological conduits of the truth. As something flows through us, we can dump it, but we cannot, so to speak, generate it. We are only channels that can be turned on or off, hence is our “decision” to embrace the event or not. All of this leads us to the question whether we make decisions at all.

Chapter 3: The Clash of Minds

Before diving into our own findings, we will highlight some of the claims made by Peter Hallward, Nina Power, and Colin Wright comparing the philosophies of Sartre and Badiou. Hallward points out their similarities. First is the eye-opening use of nothingness and the void: “as Sartre himself understood with particular clarity, truly radical change can in a certain sense only proceed *ex nihilo*, from something that counts apparently as nothing, from something uncountable” (Hallward, 2004, p. 4). There are also their similar notions of the space for a new potential. Such is the “inconsistent multiplicity [which] plays a role in Badiou’s philosophy that is comparable, in certain respects, to that of... radical freedom in Sartre’s philosophy, and it evokes elusive and undefinable qualities (such as absolute indetermination, indefinite potential, infinite excess, and so on)” (Hallward, 2004, p. 6). Badiou’s framework, built on mathematics, would otherwise be too solid and unable to change. Finally, Badiou “agrees with Sartre, that whenever I make a genuine choice it is always a choice that commits not only myself but humanity as a whole” (Hallward, 2004, p. 2). Any choice of the individual validates that option for the whole world, as anyone can see that option manifested in the form of that individual. Badiou makes this claim by his fidelity, in which a subject shows confidence about the event in its confidence about itself being a subject.

We have Nina Power to point out the differences. Her claim about Badiou’s subject, could already tell us about his difference from Sartre’s notion of the human individual. In addition, “Badiou does take on board one aspect of the Althusserian claim that there are no extant ‘subjects’ qua autonomous agents *alongside* the seemingly opposing Sartrean idea that subjectivation is possible and, indeed, desirable” (Power, 2006, p. 186). We can see that, although Badiou’s focus is rather on the situation as a whole, he leaves space for the subject as well, even if the nature of this subject differs from that of Sartre’s subject. More specifically:

[Badiou] does not take up a notion of history, as Sartre would do, as a way of *placing* this subject. In fact, Badiou aligns ‘history’ on the side of the objective, structural, reactionary drive *to place* in the negative sense: ‘it is always sin the

interest of the powerful that history is mistaken for politics — that is, that the objective is taken for the subjective'. (Power, 2006, p. 198)

By this we can see the weight to carry for the subject differs greatly between Sartre and Badiou. There is no notion of responsibility for the latter, nor can one lay claim to any praise or acknowledgement. This does not mean that we should not consider people as accountable, but rather that the role they play in a situation belongs to the situation.

Finally, Wright reaffirms the previous claim of similarity. Here, we look at a subjective decision behind the creation of the entire structure of set theory. We generally do not concern ourselves with the decision behind Badiou's philosophy, but we may point out, as we did above, that in fact any claim about the entire structure such as 'the one is not' could be taken as his own decision. He places the subject of that decision inside this decision, making it appear as the decision about the structure has already been made. This co-existence of the structure and of the subject deciding about the structure seems paradoxical, but Badiou allows it as long as it not entirely attributed to the subject:

While there is a subjective decision behind the claim that 'mathematics is ontology' and behind the explorations of this statement's implications for philosophy, the subject that makes the decision is nonetheless unleashed by the radical contingency of the event itself (Cantor in this case). This event is, in turn, the pre-condition for the subsequently conditioning decision which is the subject. Conversely, the faithful subject is the finite support for the infinite truth carried by the event which, lacking such a subject, could not be said to 'happen' at all. While in the tradition of dialectical materialism, subjective decisionism seems like the idealistic denial of historical determination because of the implicit transcendence of the deciding subject (an accusation Badiou himself has levelled at Sartre). (Wright, 2008b, p. 81)

Badiou thus decided that the manner of a true decision must come through the codependence of the event and a subject. This violates both Sartre's subjective decisionism, which mostly rejects dependence upon objective factors, and his dialectical materialism, which would on the contrary count only with the notion of objective determination. In a simpler terms, Badiou has put himself and Cantor in a position where they had created (decided upon) something which was also "supposed to be created." The mode of the argument is "this and that," rather than "this or that." The following section will deal with showing the similarities and differences of these as they pertain to the theme of decision. We will touch again on

nothingness and on subject as a perspective from which a decision is considered. We will focus also on the notion of the situation, as this makes a great portion of both frameworks. Other aspects such as what can we consider to be a decision, as well as time, range of possibilities, or its aftermath, have already been to some degree described. This section then specifically categorizes them. We will finish chapter 3 with a final definition of decision for Sartre and Badiou.

Comparison of Concepts

The shared notions revolving around decision for both philosophers are: 1) the employment of the concept of nothingness or void as a potential place for the emergence of previously unknown knowledge for a mode of being or experience, and 2) the situation or an event as a structure from within which a decision is made, and its relation to meaning.

The basic differences between Sartre and Badiou's notions of decision are: 1) the perspective from which a decision is posited or the role of a subject that makes a decision; 2) the commonality, originality or rate at which it occurs so that we can recognize it as a decision; 3) the creative aspect of the decision or its supposed range of possibilities; 4) the temporal placement of the decision or the process of decision making in time; and 5) what necessarily follows after the decision to maintain its content.

Near Similarities

1) Nothingness or Void

Both philosophers appear fascinated by a seemingly identical idea. Badiou's *void* and Sartre's *nothingness* share some similarities in their relation to decision. Both represent the hidden potential of being that can never be fully revealed, for it is infinite in possibilities. Through nothingness we can see ourselves as separate from being and thus be aware of it, question it and make changes to and within it. Similarly, through (the edge of the) void, a new original situation can emerge in previous, seemingly entirely known circumstances. Given all of this, however, we can hardly compare the 'negation of being' to an 'empty set'. Their position in the presented ontologies makes them as different as the ontologies.

For Sartre, nothingness is a part of our consciousness. We can negate or question the being which is already whole and then reassemble it in a different way, decide on its

meaning. Badiou's void comes first as the emptiness of being that has a structure, and then only upon being recognized by us as consciousness grants this structure a name. The void does not then itself deal with consciousness, but exists already as a potential that can be discovered. This continues to draw a difference between Sartre and Badiou, that it is either ourselves who make a change in the world or that it is the world of which we are a part of that is changing. This insight remains with us in the description of a situation.

2) Situation or Event

As already mentioned, the situation is where the decision takes place. Let us start with Badiou, for his *situation* is more graspable. It is basically a set, a structure of multiples that carry a specific meaning in the world. Badiou's situation is a constitution, an assemblage, a body. Its examples can be literally governmental or human bodies. Every situation always contains a void. Thus, in its very completeness, there is a potential for change. So it is a *situation* in which the *event* emerges from the *void* and makes up what we decide about as a *subject*, all counted as part of the situation.

Sartre's *situation* is neither subjective nor objective. It is tailored specifically to a person as an expression of their struggle between their own *freedom* and *facticity*. As an individual makes choices employing their freedom, they may soon approach the limitations represented by their facticity. In their freedom, they may freely assign meaning to any conduct and decide accordingly. But upon arriving on the shore of their facticity, they experience the most solid, unavoidable circumstance within which meaning appears to be crystallized. This circumstance, which can be a particular object, individual, or event, then reflects back onto them the meaning of the relation they hold towards it. This is the *situation* for Sartre. In a failure to change their facticity, the individual experiences the same dynamics which Sartre describes when he talks about us as 'condemned to be free' or to always decide, but that we could never actually not decide to decide. To surpass the situation, we may in fact believe we are deciding about it, but we are really deciding about ourselves as that situation. We may have a *project*, following the path leading to fulfill our *value* or become the *Self*, but upon arriving at our situation, we are struck with our facticity to the point where we either identify with it or change ourselves. We can decide on a different project or at least accustom ourselves to it. We always have to decide, so that when we cannot change our facticity we must change our relation to it. This new relation becomes our new reassembled identity. In this sense, our facticity, our past, our identity is a result of our failure(s) to be ultimately free.

Sartre's situation resembles Badiou's event as a meeting point of human freedom and worldly facticity in a moment full of anguish. The overlap of the terms is confusing. For Sartre, a situation is both a structural unit in which we make decisions as well as a set of circumstances in which we are forced into having to make a decision. However, this is also because decisions are happening all the time. So to speak, every situation is 'eventful'.

If we are to compare the decision of Sartre and Badiou according to what they conclude to be the *situation*, we can clearly see the end result of their decision. For Sartre, the decision is the way we engage with the world in order to manifest our identity or *Self*. For Badiou, the matter of a decision is already pre-set in the world in the form of an *event* with a substantially larger magnitude of relevance and we can only further decide to allow it to become of the given situation.

Differences

1) Subject and Perspective

Whether it is an individual, collective or otherwise, the subject is a substantial link in the chain of the total event. Indeed, Sartre's focus is the human individual, and his whole notion of a decision described in his ontology, comes back to how it is experienced by a human individual. Even though his description of consciousness seems sometimes as if he would like to describe the phenomenon itself, he leaves that to the metaphysicians and focuses rather on the human perspective.

For Badiou, it *can* be ourselves who *can* recognize the moment of rupture or break of a situation as a decision, but for this we cannot claim any ownership over it. Rather, we should feel a sense of being part of the situation. Badiou's smallest case of a subject is a pair of individuals who change their lives by committing themselves to form a loving relationship. In other cases Badiou's subject is not even a human being. In art, it is the art form, not the artist. In science, it is the discovery, not the scientist. The political subject, best describes the mechanics for which Badiou argues. Any individual, as a voter or a rioter, by their acts contributes to the total cause, which is then the result of common efforts as well as of other factors in the situation. We could say that their decision to be there is already enough to be counted as participating, and their function as votes or physical bodies present in the street is assigned by a larger structure.

These two approaches can coexist and we can recognize the meaning of both applied to a case of decision making analyzed after it has happened. We can look at the situation of where the individual takes part in elections and see it from his perspective or as pertaining to the whole multiple of the situation. However, in the moment of the decision itself, the difference between these is in the motivation behind the decision, which can affect the decision itself. We will describe this difference in one of the last sections, concerning the possible utility of each perspective.

2) What Can Be Recognized as Decision

The difference in perspectives makes it so that the frequency at which the act of decision occurs differs to a great degree between Sartre and Badiou. For Sartre, the temporal movement of the for-itself is a synonym for both choice and action. Every action is thus simultaneously a decision, can be pondered upon and thought of as affecting the reality of that person. There can be larger schemes describing a decision of a larger impact. Yet even in this Sartre still talks about the impact on the individual. The frequency of decisions is then determined by individual's ability to consistently act. Any conscious actions are then considered decisions by Sartre.

Badiou's form of decision occurs rarely through the rare events. He thinks of them only in the fields of politics, science, art, and love. When we talk about an event as a rupture of a situation which brings forth something heretofore unknown and unrecognized, we can certainly disregard everyday human conduct. For Badiou, our daily interactions are mostly nothing but chatter. The immense frequency of Sartre's decision and stunning rarity of Badiou's are the most apparent differences between the two.

3) Range of Possibilities

The perspective again dictates what is now the inevitable difference between the range of possible choices. As for Sartre, the decision-making process happens so to speak within us. We may talk about the possibilizing nature of our conscious mind in always looking outward and beyond the present moment. It is able to generate so many possibilities that it has to arrange for itself a hierarchy in terms of its values and goals in order to navigate in the world. The possibilities are then only cut down in terms of facticity, the circumstances which create

a situation. However, since the choices being made are negations of facticity, Sartre's for-itself becomes a machine that always escapes the old to create a new possibility.

Badiou's range of possibilities are limited insofar as, upon being recognized, they have already almost left the status of existing in possibility. By the time they get to be fully actualized by the subject, we can think of them not really as a range, but as a binary option. Possibilities are already implied in Badiou's version of the situation. They are already manifested in present actuality. They are, so to speak, structurally determined as multiples of multiplicities with an already fixed, mathematically describable relation among each other. A subject is thus, upon recognizing the *event*, expected to accept or reject the presented scheme.

In these cases, we can think of the difference between the range of possibilities as the different placement of meaning or significance. Sartre's for-itself constantly negates everything around it and thus constantly questions, assigns and re-assigns the meaning of everything and the in-itself which it is part itself. Sartre believes consciousness possesses the superpower of re-framing a majority of situations in which it is situated. His decision is considering a creative human faculty. Badiou's structure on the other hand entraps us with meaning. Our surroundings are of meaning that can be analogically seen, measured and counted with mathematics. It is for our inability to see all of the connections that we believe in deciding freely and originally, while we may just repeat the old patterns of already outlived human behavior. In the moment of deciding about the event, we may not have much possibility for creativity. However, we may find some through his concept of the non-institutional fidelity, which we will describe further in 5) below, "The Aftermath of Decision."

4) Decision in Time

As for the matter of describing the decision in relation to time, we must note that Sartre and Badiou have different conceptions of time. Sartre views it as a temporalization of the movements of the for-itself as it goes from a past which it nihilates toward a future which it projects and actualizes in order to repeat the same movement over and over again. The choice is a constant mode of the for-itself's being to the degree that it cannot not choose, but only choose not to choose. In other words, decisions are constantly occurring phenomena until the very last moment of the individual's life.

Badiou goes with a different notion of time as an infinite number of instants. In one such moment, by taking a specific structure of the situation like a frozen snapshot, we can see it as a set with particular elements and parts. In one such instant an event might appear, allowing it to be recognized at that moment as belonging to that situation. Badiou specifies that when a subject considers the intervention of the event, he is unsure whether someone has not already intervened in it. It is as if the subject were exposed to a beam of light which is now only in his memory and can decide about its relevance. From that point on, the subject can either remain in fidelity to it or let it disappear in the next moment. By this, we can conclude that if we were to project a time sequence of such moments, the structure of multiples is always changing, until a specific structure of multiples is attained for the option of an event to occur. The functions of intervention and fidelity point towards the continual nature of occurring instances.

5) The Aftermath of Decision

As the breaking point of decision does not ensure it to remain, so to speak, written in stone, we must explain how this newly achieved state lasts in a progression of time. Sartre's decision is elicited by the for-itself, as it becomes a part of our in-itself. However, this can always be again negated by the for-itself. The only time we could conclude the decision to be our final affirmation, is upon reaching our finitude, that is to say, our death. Until then, we can make the decision a part of our project, constantly reaffirm it as a part of our identity. In this, we can state that we are deciding both to remain in the same mode of being in the progression of time and not to decide upon the possibility of being different. We must also address our responsibility, which is, as already described, implied in each and every one of our decisions. We have also found that in comparison with our freedom, which goes with our consciousness and together thus reveal the effect or result of our decisions as we experience it in time, responsibility is already implied at each point a decision is made, regardless whether we are aware what this means to us or to the world.

For Badiou, if we speak of the latter portion of the decision, it comes through the concept of fidelity. In fidelity, the subject remains loyal to the matter that was revealed by the event. As the event happened in an instant, if the decision was to recognize the event, the subject must rearrange its whole conduct around it, become a channel through which it can fully manifest its outcome. We showed that, without fidelity, the event can be forgotten but

also that it can play a crucial role even to the degree that it is considered a second event. Badiou called such a possibility non-institutional fidelity, in which the subject seriously takes on whatever came through the event and transforms it into something exponentially larger. We already hinted above that non-institutional fidelity can be the only way in which we consider the role of the subject as somehow creative or innovative. It is unclear whether Badiou would agree with this, as he might argue that the significance of this so called “second event” is also already implied in the structure.

If we then compare the aftermath of each breaking point of decision, we can see almost opposing dynamics. For Sartre, we are free in making decisions. We do it all the time. These decisions then stick to us, in the form of the in-itself. They become a part of who we are and in the form of responsibility. We become accountable for them. In Badiou’s case, we are a part of the decision about something external which has arisen and, in order to not let it disappear, we have to become what is often referred to as ‘militants of truth’. Whatever has happened is still so fragile that it would fall apart if we did not display confidence in it.

Decision for Sartre vs. Decision for Badiou

The decision for Sartre is an attribute of the for-itself, an ontological concept which stands for the conscious part of the human individual. It is the nihilating movement of the for-itself, in regard to a change of meaning of the in-itself, our self as being, and/or its circumstances. Its form of ‘cision’¹² is then this movement, which is inevitable as long as a person is conscious. The range of possibilities of this movement makes up the number of possibilities of a different decision. As long as the nihilating movement is simultaneous with the action, which can be in fact non-action as long as it is conscious, verification of the decision is automatic. It is the embodiment or identification with the decision in the form of the in-itself.

The decision for Alain Badiou is the subject as a process between intervention and fidelity.¹³ All of this is only possible in the presence of the event, a unique form of the multiple which arises in the situation, as the manifestation of the potential for changing the paradigm of that situation. Its form of cision is then the intervention, which is a recognition of

¹² From the Latin *caedo*: “To cut, hew, lop, cut down, fell, cut off, cut to pieces.”(Lewis & Short).

¹³ Wright has already made point of Badiou’s use of the word cision: “The evental/exceptional decision must be a de-cision, a cut, or rupture, with everything calculable and knowable” (Wright, 2008a, section II.). However, for us the cutting-off part of the decision is only that, a part, as we explain below.

the event and “decision” about its belonging to the situation. This “decision” however, has to be played out, verified, by fidelity. The subject’s yes or no to the intervention has then no effect if it is in fact not confirmed by a yes or no in regard to remaining in lasting fidelity.

This comparison reveals the major aspect of our definitions. That is, we conclude that decision has two parts, the cutting away or “cision,” which indicates the change, and the verification, which is the confirming action. These are simultaneous for Sartre, while for Badiou verification must be maintained over time.

This difference is the mirror-image of the difference in their notions of time in the opposite fashion. Sartre rejects present instants and sees time only as a movement. However, his decision is solidified in the in-itself in the moment that it is made. Meanwhile, Badiou’s time exists as an infinite amount of instants, in which the (positive, innovative) result of the decision must be maintained through a sequence of these verifications in order to become fully manifested. To get to our evaluation, we now proceed to the final chapter.

Conclusion

Before proceeding to our conclusion, we consider the practicality of what we have learned. We can see that the differences between Sartre and Badiou can be grasped by understanding the thematic background for each. Sartre's perspective is existentialist, with a strong sense of the individual's identity, and his argument is constructed mostly on the binary relation between being and consciousness. Badiou employs set theory, structuring being as a multiple of multiplicities which are (supposed to) hold strictly logical relations to each other. Neither philosopher provides a step-by-step guide on how to decide, but rather describe the dynamics of decision. When we speak then about the utility or pragmatism of each model, we speak not of a guideline but rather a mindset or perspective.

The Utility of Each Model

Sartre's model can be used as a template for the work on our own character. We can scan through the story of our own lives through the filter of "it was my decision to..." or "by this decision I am responsible for..." finding fallacies we have made or lies we have told ourselves. Another aspect of it is to be aware of our ability to reframe the meaning of any situation, and thus of the ultimate freedom to choose ourselves as closest to what we may desire. Perhaps the more humbling aspects of the model involve the acceptance of our facticity or awareness about the fact of our responsibility. The degree to which these may affect our decision-making process is precisely to one's willingness to look at the structure of previously made decisions. The full grasp of Sartre's notions may thus create states of understanding which in turn may lead individual towards what might be seen as adulthood, by considering the removal of the unfounded expectations about themselves and the world around them. The ability to see our lives as a result of our choices can assist in the removal of the tendency to blame others. However, it is upon the full acceptance or integration of these choices that one then may not in turn be ashamed of oneself.

Badiou's model does not tell us much regarding the implications for the individual. It could be briefly put that whenever we are in a position to make truly impactful decisions, we may see ourselves rather as part of a greater whole, as an individual who gets to be affected.

We may want to see this humbling perspective whenever we think about decisions done in art, science, history, politics, or love, concluding that these are always greater than us and that we should treat them as such. This could come down to a question of what would be most beneficial for humankind. Put this way, Badiou seems quite utilitarian. However, as the event deals with something which is there but as yet undiscovered, going with it means agreeing upon a revealing of truth. Because of this, saying yes to an event is rather a question of whether the subject is able to handle the new truth. It is then a dilemma whether this truth should be revealed at all, for this is already assumed under agreeing on the general benefit of human progress. At the very least, Badiou's response can be summed up under the phrase, "keep going."

Comparing these models may seem unfair as they deal with intrinsically different environments of the decision. We may try to see the value of each if we put one inside the context of the other. For example, in Sartre's case, we may think of an individual who may find it hard to commit to a certain cause if they do not look at it from a higher perspective, but rather measure it against their "comfortable life." In Badiou's case, we cannot really think of the benefits an individual gets upon employing Sartre's model, for Badiou is not especially interested in the individual. We might still reap some benefits for the individual if we consider Badiou's set theoretical structure for an individual to think of multiple aspects that make up the situation instead of their individual perspective alone. We may even play with the analogy of an event as a new idea in our head, and see whether there are enough values or reasons for us to remain in fidelity to this idea which would persuade us to actualize it.

Conclusion

In the first chapter, we came to understand the main aspects of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* as they relate to our topic of decision. We explained his ontology which is simple in a number of major concepts but rich in the complexity of their relations. Through temporality, we showed the dynamics of the movements of our consciousness, the for-itself. In describing the mechanics of the decision we focused specifically on the aspect of action and what can be our drive or motivation. We then described the dyadic relationship of freedom and facticity and found the meaning behind of what can be seen as our situation. We ended this chapter by finding the end in the individual and described the role of responsibility and the formation of one's identity.

The second chapter took similar steps in investigating Badiou's *Being and Event*. However, we had to describe a greater portion of his concepts to arrive at the decision. In the section on his ontology, we analyzed the concept of multiples and how it translates into the realm of set theory. Our description of the situation revealed for us that under any normal condition, a state of the situation must be also present. We got closer to describing decision in our encounter with the event, in which we found other categories of truth, the full analysis of which lies beyond the scope of this work. We finally uncovered the dual dynamics of decision for Badiou by introducing the concepts of intervention and fidelity and provided examples for each. Analogous to the chapter on Sartre, the last section dealt with Badiou's subject, but in this case we came to understand the specificity of this subject and, by this, the inability for us to define it as a mere human individual.

We started our third chapter by showing other comparisons of Sartre and Badiou, where we could see especially the focus on the subject and nothingness. We then moved to the comparison of the aspects relating to decision, dividing it into similarities and differences. The similarities in fact accounted for other specific differences. The cases of the situation and nothingness or the void are all the concepts that share similar notions, but are substantially incompatible. The subject or the perspective of the decision say a lot about what could be considered a decision and its range of possibilities, which again gives sense to the notions of time held by each philosopher. The aftermath of decision contrasts Sartre's notion of identification and responsibility with Badiou's fidelity and non-institutional fidelity. We ended this chapter with a concise definition of decision for each philosopher, finding out we can conceptualize the term by dividing it between a decision and a consequent verification.

We have also addressed some pragmatic notions behind each model of the decision, or rather the use of a portion of their philosophy as a means in the process of decision making. We can state that Sartre's philosophy, at least pertaining to *Being and Nothingness*, is entirely intertwined with decision, while Badiou's form of decision is great for providing a contrast, but is overly constrained by the event.

We chose to remain with this work for all this time. We may have arrived at some realizations or possibly filled our minds with confusion. We can ponder the degree to which this work will make us nihilate some part of ourselves and change the theme of our life, or to

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motivate us to remain faithful to a yet unrecognized truth. Or perhaps it will fade into nothing. Perhaps this is the point of cision —

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Resumé

V úvode práce sme opísali akú úlohu zohráva Sartrov existencializmus a fenomenologický prístup k tematike rozhodnutia. V existencializme môžeme nájsť témy ako nadmerná zodpovednosť či existenciálna príťaž. Sartrova fenomenológia je špecifická svojím literárnym štýlom. My sme ju však definovali jednoducho ako disciplínu, ktorá sa zaoberá tým, ako si je ľudské vedomie vedomé samého seba a fyzického sveta.

Badiou na rozdiel od Sartra neuznáva váhu ľudskej skúsenosti a uchýľuje sa k analytickejšim metódam. Vychádza z teórie množín, ktorá je spleťou matematiky a logiky. Aj keď sa ich pozície mimoriadne líšia, tento kontrast nám poslúžil v podrobnej analýze ich diel *Bytie a Ničota* a *Bytie a Udalosť*.

Prvá kapitola začala rozborom Sartrovej ontológie. Odhalili sme, že bytie sa uňho skladá z dvoch častí, pasívnej, ktorú môžeme naďalej pre jednoduchosť nazývať bytie, a aktívnej, ktorej prináleží status vedomia. Sartre prisudzoval vedomiu schopnosť nihilovať, teda vytvoriť ničotu okolo bytia, vďaka čomu si je vedomé samého seba ako niečoho rozdielneho od tohto bytia. Ďalej sme opísali pohyby vedomia naprieč časom. Pre Sartra, je čas výsledkom pohybu vedomia z minulosti do budúcnosti, teda neuznáva prítomný moment ako časovú jednotku. Tento pohyb je pre vedomie zároveň nihiláciou svojho minulého ja (bytia). Ďalej sme opísali úlohu motivácie a akcie pri rozhodnutí a došli k záveru, že pre Sartra vždy musí dôjsť k rozhodnutiu, aj keby to malo znamenať, že človek zostáva v stave nerozhodnosti. Venovali sme sa „situácii,“ čo pre Sartra značí okamih, v ktorom je človek nútený sa rozhodnúť. Situácia je miestom stretu fakticity, teda toho, čo je objektívne determinované, a ľudskej slobody, teda možnosti vedomia rozhodnúť sa pre inú možnosť ako tú, ktorá je mu predstretá. Kapitulu o Sartrovom konceptu rozhodnutia sme ukočili opisom toho, ako si každým rozhodnutím vytvárame svoju identitu, a teda aj do akej miery nesieme zodpovednosť za to, kým sme a čo robíme.

Druhá kapitola začala podobne, zoznámením sa s Badiouovou ontológiou, ktorá sa podľa neho rovná matematike. Jeho odmietnutie singularity bytia nás odklonilo k ponímaniu všetkého ako sústavy množín. Pre Badioua je teda akákoľvek bytosť či situácia špecifická zmes množín, ktorá sa môže počítať ako jeden celok. Ak sa zamariame čisto na naturálnu ontológiu, všetky vzťahy týchto množín sú dokonale opísateľné teóriou množín. Avšak, ako

sme zistili, v rámci socio-historických situácií sa vždy naskytne možnosť nevidanej a doposiaľ neobjavenej udalosti. Udalosti sa pre Badioua odohrávajú v štyroch kategóriách: politika, veda, umenie a láska. Ak príde na moment novej udalosti, znamená to, že niekto je subjektom situácie, keď vyjde na povrch istá pravda. Táto pravda bola síce súčasťou situácie, ale až v momente, keď má možnosť byť plne odhalená, sa subjekt ocitne v pozícii kedy musí zasiahnuť, čím vykoná časť rozhodnutia, či daná udalosť skutočne patrí do situácie. Ak sa má táto udalosť pretaviť v skutočnosť, úlohou subjektu nie je len zasiahnuť, ale potvrdiť toto zasiahnutie vernosťou udalosti. Subjekt je teda subjektom iba v prípade vzniknutej udalosti a za rozhodnutie berieme interval medzi zasiahnutím a vernosťou.

Tretiu kapitolu sme začali rozborom sekundárnej literatúry, ktorá porovnáva Sartra a Badioua. Jednou z hlavných tém tejto literatúry je porovnávanie role subjektu. K tejto problematike sme sa dostali aj my v našom porovnaní, kde sme poukázali na, to ako sa bežný jednotlivec líši od udalosťou vyvoleného jedinca. Rozdiel medzi subjektmi rozhodnutia nám do veľkej miery ukázalo čo môže byť považované za rozhodnutie pre Sartra a Badioua a čo nie. Ďalším aspektom je používanie konceptu situácie, pričom pre Sartra je momentom núteného rozhodnutia a pre Badioua jednotkou množín. Odlišnosť sme našli aj v rozmedzí možností, kde Sartre oveľa viac zdôrazňuje uplatnenie kreativity v rozhodovaní, kdežto pri Badiouvi môžeme hovoriť o kreativite iba v prípade kde je vernosť subjektu natoľko špecifická, že výsledok tohto konania môžeme pokladať za udalosť samotnú. Takýto príklad sme uviedli v druhej kapitole, kde svätý Paul vytvoril kresťanstvo na základe udalosti ukrižovania Ježiša. Posledným rozdielom je následok rozhodnutia. Pri Sartrovi hovoríme o zodpovednosti, no Badiouov subjekt nenesie zodpovednosť v tradičnom slova zmysle. Subjektom je iba keď sa podieľa na udalosti, avšak túto sám nevytvoril, a teda, keď je jej verný, je to iba dôverou v seba ako subjekt s možnosťou zistenia toho, čo táto situácia v konečnom dôsledku prinesie.

Následne sme definovali koncept rozhodnutia u oboch filozofov. Sartrove rozhodnutie je nihiláciou svojho minulého bytia. Bytie zostáva jeho súčasťou, avšak vedomie môže pozmeniť jeho význam. Každé rozhodnutie sa teda krištalizuje ako naša osobnosť, kde máme možnosť zmeny, no zároveň aj absolútnu zodpovednosť. Podľa Badioua je rozhodnutie možné iba pri udalosti, ktorá vytvára subjekt. Skladá sa z dvoch častí: zasiahnutia a vernosti. Zasiahnutie je zlomovým bodom rozhodnutia, odstrihnutím sa od minulej skutočnosti. Vernosť subjektu je potvrdzujúcou súčasťou rozhodnutia, bez nej by rozhodnutie nemalo

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žiadnu váhu. Na záver sme opísali možné praktické využitie oboch modelov rozhodnutí. Sartrov koncept rozhodnutia nás podnecuje k uvedomeniu si všetkých aspektov našej osobnosti. Badiouov koncept rozhodnutia nám ukazuje širšiu perspektívu danej udalosti, ktorej sa týka.