

EUROPEAN GRADUATE SCHOOL

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***On the Truth-Process:***  
**An open lecture by Alain Badiou**

SCHIRMACHER: Those of you who have heard him already know that he is 'like a rock', as they say, still fighting for the relevance of philosophy. Everyone abandoned Plato, abandoned Paul, everyone abandoned the history of philosophy, and at the same time he was saying 'No way, we need this!' How can he say this at the same time as all the deconstruction and questioning of philosophy which followed after Heidegger's studies of its history? Badiou was a student, friend and opponent to those who wanted to proclaim the end of philosophy, but although he is fighting for something like truth, he is not ignorant or naive—he is still on the side of Plato, but with a little smile, certainly...I am very glad that you have a chance to hear his version of philosophy and an opportunity to ask him, to attack him, and to think with him, because thinking is what we all have in common, that we think, that should be our battle cry.—Let's think with Alain Badiou.

BADIOU: Our epoch is most certainly the epoch of rupture, in light of all that Lacoue-Labarthe has shown to depend on the motive of mimesis. One of the forms of this motive which explicitly attaches truth to imitation is to conceive of truth as a relation, a relation of appropriateness between the intellect and the thing intellected. A relation of adequation which always supposes, as Heidegger very well understood, the truth to be localizable in the form of a proposition. Modern philosophy is a criticism of truth as adequation. Truth is not limited to the form of judgment. Heidegger suggests that it is a historic destiny. I will start from the following idea: Truth is first of all something new. What transmits, what repeats, we shall call knowledge. Distinguishing truth from knowledge is essential.

It is a distinction already made in the work of Kant, between reason and understanding, and it is as you know a capital distinction for Heidegger, who distinguishes truth as *aletheia*, and understanding as cognition, science, *techne*. *Aletheia* is always properly a beginning. *Techne* is always a

continuation, an application, a repetition. It is the reason why Heidegger says that the poet of truth is always the poet of a sort of morning of the world. I quote Heidegger: 'The poet always speaks as if the being was expressed for the first time.' If all truth is something new, what is the essential philosophic problem pertaining to truth? It is the problem of its appearance and its becoming. Truth must be submitted to thought not as judgment or proposition but as a process in the real. This schema represents the becoming of a truth. The aim of my talk is only to explain the schema. For the process of truth to begin, something must happen. Knowledge as such only gives us repetition, it is concerned only with what already is. For truth to affirm its newness, there must be a supplement. This supplement is committed to chance—it is unpredictable, incalculable, it is beyond what it is. I call it an event. A truth appears in its newness because an eventful supplement interrupts repetition. Examples: The appearance, with Aeschylus, of theatrical tragedy. The eruption, with Galileo, of mathematical physics. An amorous encounter which changes a whole life. Or the French revolution of 1792. An event is linked to the notion of the undecidable. Take the sentence 'This event belongs to the situation.' If you can, using the rules of established knowledge, decide that this sentence is true or false, the event will not be an event. It will be calculable within the situation. Nothing permits us to say 'Here begins the truth.' A wager will have to be made. This is why the truth begins with an axiom of truth. It begins with a decision, a decision to say that the event has taken place.

The fact that the event is undecidable imposes the constraint that the subject of the event must appear. Such a subject is constituted by a sentence in the form of a wager: this sentence is as follows. 'This has taken place, which I can neither calculate nor demonstrate, but to which I shall be faithful.' A subject begins with what fixes an undecidable event because it takes a chance of deciding it. This begins the infinite procedure of verification of the Truth.

It's the examination within the situation of the consequences of the axiom which decides the Event. It's the exercise of fidelity. Nothing regulates its cause. Since the axiom which supports it has arbitrated it outside of any rule of established knowledge, this axiom was formulated in a pure choice, committed by chance, point by point. But what is a pure choice? A choice without a concept. It's obviously a choice confronted with two indiscernible terms. Two terms are indiscernible if no formation of language permits their distinction, but if no formation of language discerns two terms of a situation, it is certain that the choice of having the verification pass for one over the other can find no support in the objectivity of their

defense, and so it is then an absolutely pure choice, free from any other presupposition than having to choose, with no indication marking the proposed terms, nothing to identify the one by which the verification of the consequences of the axiom will first pass. This means that the subject of a truth demands the indiscernible.

There is a connection between the subject on one side and the indiscernible on the other. The indiscernible organizes the pure point of the subject in the process of verifying a truth. A subject is what disappears between two indiscernibles. A subject is a throw of the dice which does not abolish chance but accomplishes it as a verification of the axiom which founds it. What was decided concerning the undecidable event must pass by this term. It is a pure choice: this term, indiscernible, permits the other. Such is the local act of a truth: it consists in a pure choice between indiscernibles. It is then absolutely finite. For example, the world of Sophocles is a subject for the artistic truth which is the Greek tragedy. This truth begins with the event of Aeschylus. This work is a creation, a pure choice in what before it is indiscernible. However, although this work is finite, tragedy itself as an artistic truth continues into infinity. The work of Sophocles is a finite subject of this infinite truth. In the same way, the scientific truth decided by Galileo is pursued into infinity: the laws of physics which have been successfully invented are finite subjects of this infinite truth. We continue with the process of a truth. It began with an undecidable event, it finds its act in a finite subject, confronted by the indiscernible, this verifying course continues, it invests the situation with successive choices, and little by little, these choices outline the contour of a subset of the situation. It is clear that this subset is infinite, that it remains interminable, yet, it can be said that if we supposed it was to be ended, it would ineluctably be a subset that no predicate unifies.

It is an untotalizable subset that can neither be constructed or named within the language of the situation. Such subsets are called generic subsets. We shall say that truth, if we suppose it to be terminated, is generic. It is in fact purely impossible that a succession of pure choices could engender a subset which could be unified under predication. If the construction of a truth can be resumed by an established property, the course of the truth will have to be secretly governed by a law. The indiscernibles where the subject finds its acts will have to be in reality discerned by some superior understanding. However, no such law exists and there is no god of truths, no superior understanding. Invention and creation remain incalculable. So the path of a truth cannot coincide in infinity with any concept at all. Consequently, the verified terms compose or

rather, will have composed, if we supposed infinite totalization, a generic subset of the situation. Indiscernible in its act or subject a truth is generic in its result, or in its being. It is withdrawn from any unification by a unique predicate. For example, there does not exist after Galileo a closed and unified subset of knowledge that we could call physics. There exists an infinite and open set of laws and experiments. Even if we supposed this set to be terminated, no unique formula of language could resume it. There is no law of physical laws. The Being of the truth of the physical is that it is a generic subset of knowledge, both infinite and indistinct. In the same way, after the 1792 revolution in France, there were all sorts of revolutionary politics, but there is no unique political formula which could totalize these revolutionary politics. The set called 'revolutionary politics' is a generic truth of political understanding. What happens is only that we can *anticipate* the idea of a *completed* generic truth. It's an important point. The being of a truth is a generic subset of knowledge, practice, art and so on, but we can't have a unique formula for the subset because it's generic, there is no predicate for it, but you can *anticipate* the subset's totalization not as a *real* totalization but as a *fiction*. The generic Being of a truth as a generic subset of the situation is never presented.

You have no presentation of the completeness of a truth, because truth is uncompletable. However, we can know formally that the truth will always have taken place as a generic infinity. We have a knowledge of the generic act and of the infinity of a truth. Thus the possible fictioning of the effects of its having-took-place is possible. The subject can make the hypothesis of the situation where the truth of which the subject is a local point will have completed its generic totalization. Its always a possibility for the subject to anticipate the totalization of a generic being of that truth. I call the anticipating hypothesis a forcing. The forcing is the powerful fiction of a completed truth. A completed truth is a hypothesis, it's a fiction, but a strong fiction. Starting with such a fiction, if I am the subject of the truth, I can force some bits of knowledge without verifying this knowledge. Thus, Galileo could make the hypothesis that all nature can be written in mathematical language, which is exactly the hypothesis of a complete physics. From this anticipation, he forces his Aristotelian adversary to abandon his position. Someone in love can say, and generally they do say, 'I will always love you', which is the anticipating hypothesis of the truth of infinite love. From this hypothesis, he or she forces the other to come to know him or her and to treat him or her differently—a new situation of the becoming of the love itself is created. The construction of truth is made by a choice within the indiscernible; it is made locally within the finite, but the potency of a truth, not the construction, but the potency, de-

depends on the hypothetical forcing. The construction of a truth is, for example, 'I love you.' It's a finite declaration, a subjective point, and a pure choice, but 'I will always love you' is a forcing and an anticipation. It forces a new bit of knowledge in the situation of love. So in a finite choice there is only the construction of a truth, while in infinite anticipation of complete truth there is something like power.

The problem is knowing the extension of that sort of power of a truth, knowing if such a potency of anticipation, from the point of view of subject of truth, is total. If we can force all the bits of knowledge concerned, then the potency is total. It is, for example, the romantic problem of absolute love. It's the political problem of totalitarianism. In all cases the problem concerns the extension of anticipatory forcing, and it's very important to distinguish the pure question of the *construction* of a truth across *finite choices*, and the question of the potency of a truth which is always the question of *infinite anticipation* of a complete truth and the forcing of bits of knowledge. This question can be expressed simply thus: Can we, from the finite subject of a truth, name and force into knowledge all the elements that this truth concerns? How far does the anticipating *potency* of generic infinity go? My answer is that there is always in any situation a real point that resists this potency. I call this point the 'unnamable' of the situation. It is the point that within the situation, within the eyes of a truth, never has a name. Consequently, it remains unforce-able. The unnamable, being that which is excluded, is the term that fixes the limit of the potency of a truth. From the point of view of the truth-process, we have a new proper name for all elements in a situation. It is the action of *forcing* to give a name to *all* the terms of a situation. For example, when Galileo says that all nature can be written in mathematical language, he is saying that all elements of nature have a mathematical name possible in the situation.

The hypothesis of the point of the unnamable is that there is always one point without that sort of name, without a name from the point of view of the construction of a truth. The unnamable is then something like the proper of the proper. It doesn't have a proper name because it is the proper of the proper—it is so singular in its singularity, so proper in its propriety, so intimate in the situation that it doesn't even tolerate having a proper name. The unnamable is the point where the situation in its most intimate being is submitted to thought and not to knowledge. In the pure presence that no knowledge can circumscribe, the unnamable is something like the inexpressible real of everything that a truth authorizes to be said, thus the limit of a potency of a truth is finally some-

thing like the Real of truth itself, because the limit is the point where something is so Real for the truth that there isn't a name in the field of truth-construction.

Let's take an example. The mathematical is, as you know, pure deduction. We always suppose that it contains no contradiction, but as you know the great mathematician Gödel showed that it is impossible to demonstrate within a mathematical theory that this theory is noncontradictory. A mathematical truth, then, cannot force the non-contradiction of mathematics. For mathematical truth, the non-contradiction of the mathematical is the limiting point of the potency of mathematical truth, thus we will say then that non-contradiction is the unnamable of the mathematical. It is properly the real of the mathematical, for if a mathematical theory is contradictory, it is destroyed. It is nothing. So first, the Real of mathematical theory is noncontradiction, second, non-contradiction is the limit of the potency of mathematics, because within the theory we can't demonstrate that the theory is noncontradictory. Consequently, a reasonable ethic of mathematics is not to wish to force the point. If you have the temptation to force the point of non-contradiction, you destroy mathematical consistency itself. To accept the ethical is to accept that mathematical truth is never complete. This reasonable ethic, however, is difficult to hold. As can be seen with science or with totalitarianism there is always a desire for the omnipotence of truth. Here lies the root of evil. I propose a definition of evil. Evil is the will to name at any price. Usually it is said that Evil is lies, ignorance, deadly stupidity, brutality, animality and so on. The condition of evil is much rather the truth-process. There is evil only insofar as there is an action of truth, that is, an anticipation, a forcing of nomination at the point of the unnamable, an artificial nomination of that which is without name, the proper of the proper. The forcing of the unnamable is always a disaster. The desire in fiction to suppress the Unnamable, to name at any price, to name all terms, without restriction, without limitation, frees the destructive capacity contained in all truth. Evil is something immanent to truth, and not something exterior to it.

The destructive capacity of truth is the potency of truth across the fiction of the complete truth—which is without limitation, without the point of Unnamable, which is in subtraction to the potency of the truth. The ethic of truth resides entirely in a sort of caution, as far as its powers are concerned. The effect of the undecidable, of the indiscernible, and of the generic, or else the effect of the event, and of the subject, and of truth, must admit the unnamable as a limitation of its powers. To contain evil the potency of the true must be measured—what helps us is the rigorous

study of the negative characters of the powers of truth: The event is undecidable. the subject is linked to the indiscernible. Truth itself is generic and untotalizable, and the halting point of its potency is the unnamable. This gives us four negative categories, and the path of truth is something across these four negative categories. Their philosophical study is, for ethic reasons, capital. This study of the four negative categories, undecidable, indiscernible, generic and unnamable can be nourished also by thought—events which shape our times: For example, the undecidability of an event and the suspension of its name are features of politics that are particularly active today. It is clear for a Frenchman that the events of May '68 continue today to comprise an unattested anonymous promise. However, even the 1792 revolution or the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 remain partly undecided as to what they prescribe for philosophy.

The theory of indiscernibles is in itself an entire mathematical theory. We can also say that one of the aims of contemporary poetics is to found in language a point of the indiscernible between prose and poem, or between image and thought. The theory of the generic is at the bottom of the ultimate forms of the logic of sets. The modern politics of emancipation freed from the dialectic scheme of classes and parties has as its aim something like a generic democracy, a promotion of the commonplace, of a quality abstracted from any predicate—so it's possible to speak of a generic politics, and a warfield of prose such as Samuel Beckett's, which tried by successive subtraction to designate the naked existence of generic humanity. So you can see the study of the four categories is really a strong activity in all fields of modern thought: prose, poetry, mathematics, logic, politics and so on, and that that sort of study is finally also the study of what is the construction of a truth, and more ethically, what is exactly the potency of a truth and the disaster when the potency is without limitation. The poet investigates the unnamable in his exploration of the limits of the force and potency of language. In addition to being a framework for contemporary poetics, the unnamable is the question of the mathematician who looks for the undefinables of a structure, and it's also the question for the person in love, tormented by what love comports, the unnamable sexual. Thus the ethic of truth, in being attentive to the relation or disrelation between the construction of a truth and its potency, is that by which we take the measure of what our times are capable of. The construction of a concept of truth is the real of philosophy, because philosophy finally is always the construction of some concept of truth, with or without the name of truth.

The construction of a concept of truth is useful to evaluate the potency of a singular truth, political, mathematical or artistic—there is a relation be-

tween philosophy on one side and the general question of the ethics of a specific truth on the other. Since the ethics of a truth is the question of the relation between the truth's construction and its potency, the general concept of truth is useful to evaluate it. My final point is the relation, in a truth's construction, between singularity and universality, because a truth is exactly that; something which is absolutely singular, and which begins with a singular event, yet is also something the anticipation of which is universal. So a truth is a mixture in a real process of singularity and universality, and naturally the question of the relation between construction and potency is the question of the relation between a truth's singularity and the universal anticipation of that truth. We can also say that the question is the relation, connection or contradiction between truth and multiplicity—what exactly is the relation between a truth as a truth and multiplicity? Our experience is that something true must be absolutely true, because if something isn't absolutely true it isn't true at all, absoluteness is a predicate of truth. The connection between something absolutely *true* and something absolutely *open* is the real question of the relation between construction and potency. We prescribe a philosophical world which is pure multiplicity on one side, because we are not in the dream of a Great One, and so we have to accept that the world is pure multiplicity, but not, on the other hand, without the perfection of some truths.

It's very difficult, however, to have simultaneously the conviction of the pure multiplicity but also the conviction that there are some real and absolute truths in artistic production, in scientific invention, in love, and so on... and that sort of world, philosophical, with pure multiplicity but some truths, with anarchy but also with perfection, is like the world in a poem by Wallace Stevens. It will be my conclusion, in poetry. I conclude with a friendship, with peace between philosophy and poetry. The title of the poem is very appropriate to our situation because it is July Montaigne. I quote: 'We live in a constellation of patches and of pitches not in a single world in sayings said well, in music on the piano, and in speech as in a page of poetry thinkers without final thoughts in an always incipient cosmos.'

SCHIRMACHER: Yeah...Alain, you really disappointed me...I was expecting an attack on what others have said here so far, but it seems that we have so much in common that it's embarrassing, you know, we have fighting for the honor of the name by not naming, that's Lyotard, so much in common here...and what you gave in other classes was always Heidegger's *aletheia*, the interplay between revealing and concealing, etc, but we have to work hard now to find the distinction, to find what you have said that is new for us. Take Heidegger. It sounds like Heidegger, so what is not

Heidegger here, what have you done that Heidegger couldn't do? You certainly went into how this revealing and concealing is really working as a path, not just something which is a play in front of us, which we live in our lives and which has a very singular subjective personal moment to it, which is at least what Heidegger is not saying. That's one interpretation here. So to ask you a difficult question. You said it was evil, this forcing, this tendency in our investigation, in our thinking, to perfect, to complete, to find all words. I would agree with you, but I would ask myself, what makes us evil? What is it in us which cannot stop us in forcing? We know it's wrong and we just do it anyway. I don't believe in any judgment here. Maybe if there is something strong in us, it has also a great truth to it. So evil is not actually evil, evil is something we couldn't live without, our life would be such a boring thing, without this perfection, this forcing, this challenging of the unknown to say, 'I want to have a name again, if it's evil, then it's evil, but it's what I want.' But how come?

BADIOU: It's a question of the disproportion between truth and the subject of the truth, between finite and infinite. There is something infinite in the generic construction of truth and there is always something finite in the subjective choice. It's true that there is something in truth which is bigger than the subject of the truth, so when we are in anticipation, when we are in the necessity of forcing some bits of knowledge from the point of view of the newness of the truth, it's always a possibility, a temptation, to identify our subjectivity with the truth itself, to something which is infinite in the truth. It's a temptation of complete forcing, not forcing a bit of the knowledge, but forcing a total knowledge. There is a simple explanation for that sort of movement.

My thesis is that a forcing all the field of elements is real disaster, it's the destruction of the condition of truth itself, because it's the destruction of the real point of the field. It's not a moral question but one of destroying the point of the real which is finally the point of the real of the truth itself. So this sort of coercion is also a question of the possible continuation of truth's construction. Thus the disaster, the destruction, is a possible consequence of the truth, but that sort of consequence is the destruction of truth. By what? By truth. Truth is always the possibility of its proper destruction. So now let us hear some more questions, my English is not so good, so if I don't understand the question, the response will be savage.

AUDIENCE: Five minutes into your talk I was thinking 'Wallace Stevens, he's talking about Wallace Stevens', and then you ended with Wallace Stevens. As you talked through it all, the model and design of it, I was

thinking of your system in relation to the supreme fiction, which has three elements. It must be abstract, this is abstract. It must give pleasure, it gives pleasure. It must change—it must account for change, but it must also pass away, If you figure into your thinking here that your para-system would also pass away and be replaced with yet another.

BADIOU: You know, the big problem for a philosopher is always the conviction that he is the last philosopher. It's very difficult to think you are not the last philosopher, but I think my theory, my design is just a schema. It's not conceptually refined for the moment. It's possible to modify the general structure, and I am in a moment of modification of the question of the presentation of truth. Your question is difficult because you can't say that yes, my proposition is nothing, it's perfectly equal to another proposition, because you have to think that something is true in your proposition. I am very glad for the first part of your question, regarding my proximity to Wallace Steven's poetry, because I think the period between the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and nowadays is a period where poetry is essential, where it says something which philosophy proper cannot say.

AUDIENCE: My question has two parts: First, about the relation between the status of the fictional and the *status* of the truth, and whether you consider this a schema which in a sense presents the truth as a fiction, the fictional as a condition of truth. Second, the relation between potentiality and negativity—to what extent do you consider the terms 'undecidable' and 'unnamable' as negative terms, and to what extent as open or potential terms, and how do you think the tension between the negative and the potential?

BADIOU: It's a very complex field of questions. First of all the schema is not a distribution between the real and the fictional. It's the schema of the path of the truth. In the path of a truth, there is something purely real, for example, the event. The event is real, but only from the point of view of the path. The subject is something real but not a point of real like the event or the unnamable. Additionally there is the possibility of the subject to be in the fiction of a complete truth. A complete truth is a fiction because a truth is never complete, never finishes. There is something like a fiction in the potency of a truth if the potency is forcing the situation from the idea of a complete truth. Thus the schema is first of all the integration of the real part of truth and the fiction part in truth. The second part of your question: Naturally, there is not only negative determination, but something positively real under the negative determination. For ex-

ample, the event is undecidable, but it's real, and the unnamable is a negative determination, but the point of unnamable is a real point. So it's possible that in another process of truth that the point of unnamable will be in fact name-able. It's not an ontological characteristic to be unnamable, it's relative to the singularity of a truth-process.

AUDIENCE: My question is in the field of political truth, regarding the limitation of ethics to a present context. It seems that we have a specific philosophical concept of truth at present—are we at the mercy of an unbridled technological movement that is changing our situation without allowing some ethical examination of what that movement entails?

BADIOU: The question of technology, of modernity, of *techne* is in my opinion not a very important question. There are always technical questions, but there is no capital newness in the question of technology. There is no direct ethical question of the relation between ethics and technology. Ethical questions, for me, are questions in the field of truth. Naturally, you are talking about scientific truth and you have problems about the technical consequences of scientific truth, but you have to determine the problem like that: first, of what field of truth we are talking, not about technology directly and so on. Technology is not a real concept, it's a journalistic debate. It's not a serious question. You have to say, first of all, what is exactly the scientific question in the situation, the question engaged in a technological problem, what is the truth-process in some particular technological question, what is the political framework of the question, because there is no technological problem *per se*, only techno-political problems. You have to determine the political questions, the scientific questions, and finally which field of truth, and after that sort of investigation you can examine the consequences of technical transformation in our world.

SCHIRMACHER: *Ach so*, Max, you understand that I couldn't disagree more with him, for me truth is generated by life technique which is like all other technologies. So Alain we have a few more years to make you aware how important the question concerning technology is, beyond Heidegger. Anyway, next question.

ŽIŽEK: I would like to ask one question which I think can play a useful role in the discussion—to begin with, the presentation you gave here did open the way towards engaging some of the standard criticisms of your work. So I don't agree with my own question now, but I will ask it so you can make it clear for us. One of the standard criticisms is that the way you

formulate the truth-process, in which the subject as finite discerns, in a pure ethical decision out of nowhere, an indiscernible event. So, I'm almost ashamed to formulate it, but isn't your ultimate position, in the finite subject which makes a pure irrational decision out of nowhere, who says 'I love you, this is truth,' or whatever, simply between Kant and proper relativism? Your position can be interpreted as yes, you should follow the axiomatic procedure but not too far, you should always proceed with some kind of reservation, the idea of total truth is a dream, you know what I mean. This would be the standard reproach to you, I know it's not like that, but I think it would serve well if you made clear why is it not, for example, a kind of Kantian reference, the dream of total truth inside the Kantian regulative Idea—why are you not saying that?...If...if you are not saying that?

BADIOU: Yes, you anticipate my response. It's possible I am exactly as you say I am, that which you are demanding that I say I am not. [*laughter*]. The question is ontologically the question of the relation between finite and infinite, that's the real point. When I say the subject is finite, the only signification of that point is that the subject is nothing else as the finite part of a truth—so there is not a subject, and *after that*, something like a predicate of the subject which is that the subject is finite. It's really on the contrary: first, truth is infinite, and second, that which is the subject is a finite point of the infinite path of a truth. So on one side, I write the subject is finite. On the other side, I am absolutely in contradiction with all the modern philosophy of finitude, and I don't agree with the thesis for which the ontological destiny of human nature is finitude, because the fundamental destiny of humanity is not the subject but in the production of truth. The real content of humanity for me is creation and invention of truths. The subject is only the local operation of the infinity of a truth. In my conviction the destiny of humanity is infinite. The question of ethical moderation and so on is only the question of the salvation of the condition of infinity. This is because the point of the unnamable is the point which if forced to be named destroys the complete field and so destroys the possibility of infinity. Thus, it's not in the question of relation between finite and infinite, finally, the question is infinite creation and moderation, it's not at all something finite in the infinite, but on the contrary, preservation of the possibility of infinite creation, and the limit point is properly the possibility of the impossibility of the infinite—it's the real of the infinite itself, the possibility of the infinite.

SCHIRMACHER: Thank you, I think it's perhaps much clearer that we are maybe not all friends here.

AGAMBEN: I want to ask you a question about the limit point of the unnamable. We might recall the axiom of the white knight in *Alice through the Looking Glass*. You remember that the white knight says that we have no name for the name. The thing for which we lack names is the name itself. This goes with what Heidegger says in a certain way, that we have no word for the saying of language itself. It seems to be in that perspective that the point you call unnamable is a strange point in which language and real in a way coincide. The thing for which we have no name is language itself.

BADIOU: Yes, I prefer your second formulation, that the point is something like a point where the real and nomination are not really separated. The proper of the proper, the pure real, but the pure real is something which is indiscernible to the pure word as well. I agree with the conviction that under the unnamable you have a real point, but its relation to language is absolutely irreducible. So not exactly the name for name, because it is lack of name, not lack of name for name, but lack of name for something like the real of the real, the absolute real of the complete field.

ŽIŽEK: What I wanted to mention is the misunderstanding about this unnamable point, which becomes a kind of evolutionary vulgarity, you know, that without finite language we can just approach it, reality is infinitely more complex...stop that! When you are speaking about how the generic procedure cannot name itself, cannot produce itself, I would say that in this sense the unnamable is not a transcendent thing, it's absolutely immanent.

BADIOU: Absolutely. it's not something of an expansive nature, certainly. It's just a point. We can isolate the unnamable by a formal procedure, for example it's very remarkable that in mathematics you can demonstrate that it is impossible to name the non-contradiction. It's not at all something ineffable, religious, infinite, indeterminate, no not all, it's a specific point. For example in love, I think it's precisely sexual enjoyment which is the unnamable of love. It's nothing mystic. Although it is within the field of love's truth-process, from the point of view of this process, sexual enjoyment has no amorous name.

ŽIŽEK: This limitation is not simply the fact that we don't have a name for the name—it's not a limitation of language but how we can have language. It's not that oh my god, language is never complete. It's a positive condition, not a negative limitation.

SCHIRMACHER: What will we do after you leave us tomorrow, Slavoj?

ŽIŽEK: Shoot yourself! [*laughter*]

AUDIENCE: You made a very nice phrase, that evil is the will to name at any price, but it invokes for me the question whether truth can assume a commodity form, which I believe it can. If it can, is that a fixed price?

BADIOU: I think truth cannot be a pure commodity, it's impossible, because truth is simply something new without any possibility of exchange, of market. There is no market of truth, because truths are something like pure creations, without finality. You have the possibility of exploitation of truths, but you have to distinguish between production of truths, potency of truths, and exploitation of truths. Exploitation is always possible but it's not in the field of truth-production—it's something like a sort of forcing. I think there is something absolutely disinterested in truth-production, something which creates a new subject which is without proper interest. In my opinion there is no proper possibility that the truth can become a simple commodity, but there can always be the exploitation of a truth, like of anything else.