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Alain Badiou Visits Walden Two

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Abstract

In this paper I analyze Badiou's work *Saint Paul: The Foundations of Universalism*, and examine his stated project and how it involves both the historical figure and teachings of Saint Paul. I then show how the novel *Walden Two*, by B. F. Skinner complements Badiou's project of refounding the Subject by explaining how the novel *Walden Two* contains both a truth event and alternative foundations for the type of universalism of which Badiou believes Saint Paul to be the founder. I examine three paramount dialogues in *Walden Two*, which occur between the community's founder and the guests that are visiting the community. These three dialogues are on the topics of freedom, communism, and on whether behavioral science has replaced God. I demonstrate how the logic of such universalism is implicit in these dialogues, how the truth event refounds the Subject, and how my interpretations correspond to Badiou's interpretation of Saint Paul's universalism. Lastly I discuss how Badiou's project could experience greater gains if these alternative foundations of universalism found in *Walden Two* were also utilized.

Introduction

In the summer of 1945, B. F. Skinner wrote the novel *Walden Two*, in which he presented the science of behavior as a panacea with the power to render a utopian society. Kat Kinkade, one of Skinner's followers, was so impressed with the ideas in this novel that she founded three intentional communities (Twin Oaks and Acorn, in Virginia, and East Wind, in Missouri) that were structured in a similar manner to the fictional utopian community, Walden Two, described in Skinner's novel. In the decades to follow, the aspects of control involved in utilizing behavioral science, which Skinner's novel advocated, were abandoned by these communities. The ideas and convictions inspired by Skinner's novel that the communities did not abandon, however, were that they should remain atheistic or secular, communistic in nature, egalitarian, inclusive, and should operate with a token economy. What is most interesting of all is that the enactment of these remaining ideas and convictions within these communities appears to generate a universalism that is strikingly similar to the type of universalism Alain Badiou claims Saint Paul to be the founder of, in his work *Saint Paul: The Foundations of Universalism*.

In *Saint Paul: The Foundations of Universalism*, Badiou attempts to show both that Saint Paul is our contemporary and that he is the founder of a particularly nuanced form of universalism. Interpreting both the historical life of Saint Paul as well as his teachings, Badiou aims to show how Saint Paul's notion of universalism is able to re-interpret and re-establish the Subject. Badiou states the aim of his project clearly: "To refound a theory of the Subject that subordinates its existence to the aleatory dimension of the event as

well as to the pure contingency of multiple-being without sacrificing the theme of freedom' (Badiou 2003: 4). For Badiou this event is the theistic fable "Jesus is resurrected" and Badiou examines how Saint Paul interprets this event, and how Saint Paul's interpretations lead to this event becoming the foundations of universalism for Saint Paul. It is the thesis of this paper that the novel *Walden Two* contains both a truth event and alternative foundations for the type of universalism of which Badiou believes Saint Paul to be the founder. In order to prove this thesis I examine three paramount dialogues in *Walden Two*, which occur between the community's founder and the guests that are visiting the community. These three dialogues are on the topics of freedom, communism, and on whether behavioral science has replaced God. I demonstrate how the logic of such universalism is implicit in these dialogues, how the truth event refounds the Subject, and how my interpretations correspond to Badiou's interpretation of Saint Paul's universalism. Lastly, I discuss how Badiou's project could experience greater gains if these alternative foundations of universalism found in *Walden Two* were also utilized.

The Dialogue Concerning Freedom Found in *Walden Two*

The novel *Walden Two* begins with four students and two professors going to visit a utopian community. The community's founder, T. E. Frazier, claims that the community is utopian because the community members have discovered an effective science of behavior, and are able to employ this science to alleviate essentially any problems arising in the community. The six visitors question whether Walden Two is in fact a utopia, particularly because it appears to them that the community members are controlled and

manipulated, and lack any genuine sense of freedom. When this concern is brought to Frazier's attention he provides a startling question in response. Frazier asks the philosophy professor Castle, who is among the group visiting the community, 'What would you do if you found yourself in possession of an effective science of behavior?' (Skinner 1948: 240). Frazier also explains that this question he asks is '[...] the most terrifying question of your life (Skinner 1948: 240)'. Castle, however, is neither terrified nor does he answer the question to Frazier's satisfaction. Castle simply explains that he '[...] would dump [Frazier's] science of behavior in the ocean' (Skinner 1948: 240). Frazier's response to this question is quite different; he explains that he would 'wield the science of behavior for the good of mankind' (Skinner 1948: 241). When responding to this question of what each would do if they discovered an effective science of behavior, both Frazier and Castle view their responses as forms of benevolence toward humanity, but each has a differing notion of what the Subject is. When Castle explains that he would dump this science of behavior in the ocean, he does not allow the existence of a science of behavior to refound his notion of the Subject. Castle merely believes that if he somehow gets rid of this science of behavior that the Subject will not be fundamentally altered by the science of behavior.

Frazier, on the other hand, believes his question to be terrifying because, if properly understood it has the ability to refound the Subject and give rise to a universalism among individuals. This is precisely why Frazier answers that he would wield this science of behavior for the benefit of humanity. For Frazier the existence of an effective science of behavior refounds the Subject because it means that humans have never possessed free

will and have always been determined. This is a terrifying premise, but it is also a premise that contains foundations for universalism. If all humans are determined this can mean that no one human action or accomplishment possesses any more merit than another; furthermore, it can mean that no human is more important or more deserving of goods or happiness than anyone else. In the premise that we are all determined, one can interpret that we are all radically equal and equally deserving of happiness, and it is clear from the way in which Frazier responds to the aforementioned question, that he has interpreted the existence of an effective science of behavior in just this way. Frazier's question, 'What would you do if you found yourself in possession of an effective science of behavior?' has the ability to refound the Subject if its meaning is properly understood. I find that because the asking of this question has the ability to refound the Subject, that this question can be seen as a truth event, similar to the way Badiou sees the truth event "Jesus is Resurrected" as functioning for Saint Paul.

Before I compare these truth events further it is important to examine what exactly Badiou means by an event and how he sees the event "Jesus is resurrected" as relating to Saint Paul and Universalism. In his work, *The Rebirth of History*, Badiou explains that an event is defined as '[...] what makes possible the restitution of the inexistent' (Badiou 2012: 56). This is to say that an event allows the inexistent to be restored to the state of existence. The example used by Badiou to illustrate an event, where the inexistent is restored to the state of existence is that of an uprising or riot. In this example the inexistent are the masses of people in a society of oppression and exploitation. In such a context, Badiou claims that these masses of people '[...] have, strictly speaking, no

existence' (Badiou 2012: 55). The riot or uprising is the event, i.e., it is what provides the in-existent with existence. Badiou also supplies a clear definition of what he finds an event to be in his work *Being and Event*. Here Badiou defines an event as '[...] that-which-is-not-being-qua-being' (Badiou 2005: 14). Using set theory as his ontology, Badiou describes the multiple as being, whereas he articulates the one as void. Badiou states that '[...] it is indeed certain that set theory legislates (explicitly) on what is not, if that is, it is true that set theory provides a theory of the multiple as the general form of the presentation of being' (Badiou 2005: 45). Subordinating this theory of self to the chance events of multiplicity as well as the chance dimensions of the event provides the proper ontology for Badiou to pursue a theory of self that can be refounded.

In his work *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, Badiou states that his project is to '[...] refound a theory of the Subject that subordinates its existence to the aleatory dimensions of the event as well as to the pure contingency of multiple-being without sacrificing the theme of freedom [...]' (Badiou 2003: 4). The question Badiou puts forward with this project is precisely, 'How are we to inscribe this name [i.e., Saint Paul] into the development of our project (Badiou 2003: 4)?' Answering this question is essential to understanding how Badiou understands Saint Paul's message and the historical person to relate the truth event "Jesus is resurrected". The first clue we find is a reference to Saint Paul's conversion and its striking similarity to Badiou's project itself. Badiou asks, 'Is the term "conversion" appropriate to what happened on the road to Damascus?' He then explains and includes a quote from Saint Paul's letter to the Corinthians. In his explanation he writes, concerning Saint Paul's experience on the road

to Damascus that ‘[...] it was a thunderbolt, a caesura, and not a dialectical reversal. It was a conscription instituting a new subject: “By the grace of God I am what I am” (Cor. 1.15.10). What this absolutely aleatory intervention on the road to Damascus summons is the “I am” as such (Badiou 2003: 17).’ This refounding of Saint Paul’s existence, which according to Badiou was entirely by chance and subordinate to the event (this event being the resurrection of Christ), allowed for the creation of a particular type of subject. The type of subject which Paul becomes is one merely based on his faith in the event; it is the type of subject that is both universally available to all of humanity and yet if experienced it in no way diminishes the particularity of the subject. This kind of universalism (i.e., universal particularity) is the type that Badiou credits Saint Paul with being the founder of and it is the type of universalism that Badiou also believes is essential to his project.

Universal particularity, which Badiou believes is essential to his project, has alternative foundations in the novel *Walden Two*. It is not the case the Frazier’s question, ‘What would you do if you found yourself in possession of an effective science of behavior?’ merely suggests an abstract universality shared by all humanity on account of determinism being posited. Although one could draw this conclusion from positing determinism, this is in no way the conclusion that Frazier does draw. Frazier claims both that in order for an effective science of behavior to be possible, we must assume that freedom is impossible, explaining both that ‘if man is free, then a technology of behavior is impossible,’ (Skinner 1948: 241) and that, ‘I deny that freedom exists at all. I must deny it – or my program would be absurd. You can’t have a science about a subject

matter which hops capriciously about (Skinner 1948: 241-2).’ At the same time that Frazier asserts his utter disbelief in freedom, he also adamantly declares that Walden Two is ‘[...] the freest place on earth’ (Skinner 1948: 247). This apparent contradiction in the beliefs that Frazier holds stems from the fact that although he posits determinism to be true he also believes that people should not be controlled by force, threat of force, or manipulated for ends that are not their own. It is clear from Frazier’s conversation with Castle that Frazier finds the human condition consisting of one of two options after the development of an effective science of behavior. Frazier understands these options for the human condition to be either being controlled by societal forces that do not necessarily seek the good of the individual in society, or as being engineered by a science of behavior to maximize the happiness and feeling of freedom in the individual. Frazier’s view becomes evident when he criticizes Castle for saying that he would dump an effective science of behavior in the ocean. Frazier responds to this answer by saying, ‘But you would only leave the control in other hands [...] the charlatan, the demagogue, the salesman, the ward heeler, the bully, the cheat, the educator, the priest – all who are now in possession of the techniques of behavioral engineering (Skinner 1948: 240).’ Frazier sees society engineering individuals, but not engineering them in ways that is of maximum benefit for the individual. Frazier answers his own terrifying question by saying he must wield this science of behavior for the benefit of humanity, but what appears to be of most benefit to humanity involves an acknowledgment of universal particularity, despite the supposition that determinism is true. Each individual, although posited as determined by Frazier, remains a particular individual determined in a particular way. The universality shared in determinism, in no way diminishes the

particularity of an individual in society. On the contrary, the supposition of determinism appears to cause Frazier to acknowledge and preserve the particularity of the individual and facilitate all remaining concepts of freedom to their greatest potential.

In this dialogue on freedom, found in *Walden Two*, I aimed to show how the question asked by Frazier in this dialogue, ‘What would you do if you found yourself in possession of an effective science of behavior?’ (Skinner 1948: 240) can serve as a truth event that is able to refound the Subject, in a similar fashion to how Badiou asserts that the truth event, “Jesus is resurrected” served to refound the Subject for Saint Paul. Furthermore, I aimed to demonstrate that the particular type of universalism that Frazier’s question ultimately leads to is the same type of universalism Badiou claims Saint Paul to be the founder of. In the next section I examine the dialogue on communism found in the novel *Walden Two*, and I show how the notion of universalism present in *Walden Two* leads to the utopian community forming a communistic model of economics. Lastly, I compare the communistic model of Walden Two with the communistic notions Badiou finds present or suggested in the historical life and teachings of Saint Paul, that originate from the universalism Badiou attributes Saint Paul to founding.

The Dialogue Concerning Communism Found in *Walden Two*

In ‘Walden Two Revisited’, the preface written by B. F. Skinner for *Walden Two*, twenty-eight years after the novel’s original publication, Skinner clearly explains that if and when

the quality of individuals' lives come into conflict with the success of capitalism, it is the quality of human life that takes priority. Skinner states that "[...] it might be argued that if America were to convert to a network of small communities, our economy would be wrecked. But something is wrong when it is the system that must be saved rather than the way of life the system is supposed to serve (Skinner 1948: xiv).'⁹ Prior to this sentiment Skinner writes, 'Consider the following propositions. The first is from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*: by reducing the amount of goods we consume, we can reduce the amount of time we spend in unpleasant labor. The second appears to assert just the opposite: we must all consume as much as possible so that everyone can have a job (Skinner 1948: xiv).'⁹ In both of the aforementioned quotes Skinner critiques aspects of capitalism and suggests instead a model of communism and conservation as a path to increase the quality of life for individuals living in society. It is from this critique of capitalism by Skinner that the dialogue on communism found in *Walden Two* finds its context. Skinner's thoughts on conservationism find their inspiration in Thoreau's *Walden*, and it is this unique mixture of Thoreau inspired conservationism coupled with the experimental spirit of behavioral science that creates a communism with the aim to nurture the universal particularity present in the members of Walden Two.

When describing how it was decided that the utopian community would be called 'Walden Two' Frazier explains, 'Several ambiguities in the name amused us. Thoreau's was not only the first of the Waldens, it was an experiment with one life, and social questions were neglected. Our problem was to build a "Walden for Two" (Skinner 1948: 209).'⁹ Frazier continues to explain: "There's also a pun on the t-double-o—"All this and

Walden Too” (Skinner 1948: 209).’ In Walden Two economic systems and structures that encroach on or diminish the Thoreauvian sense of freedom and leisure are rejected for systems that foster both individual good and the good of the society. Much like Thoreau, the citizens of Walden Two work, but rarely do they ever work more than four hours a day. With their leisure time they endeavor into educational pursuits, hone artistic and scientific talents, as well as simply exist and participate both in nature and in an enriching social community. Walden Two would not be considered a utopian community, according to Frazier, if it could not preserve such elements of the Thoreauvian lifestyle in an economically viable society. Frazier, when articulating the problem Walden Two addresses as building a ‘Walden for Two’ acknowledges the necessity of preserving both the universal and the particular. Frazier, however, is still asked in conversation, by those visiting Walden Two, to distinguish the communism of Walden Two from that of Russia.

Frazier is asked by the visitors, ‘Isn’t there a considerable resemblance between Russian communism and your own philosophy (Skinner 1948: 258)?’ In response to this question Frazier explains four relevant differences between the communism of Walden Two and the communism of Russia. Frazier finds that Russia no longer possesses the experimental spirit that was essential to its initial humanitarian impulse; second, Frazier believes Russia has ‘[...] overpropagandized, both to its own people and to the outside world (Skinner 1948: 259).’ Third, Frazier suggests that there is an appeal to heroes (such as Lenin and Stalin) making decisions, as opposed to an appeal to an effective process of government, i.e., decisions are made because Lenin believes it is best, not because an

appeal is made to an agreed upon set of principles. Lastly, Frazier finds that the most important difference between the communism of Russia and the communism of Walden Two is that the power asserted by Russia over its citizens is intolerant and oppressive. Describing the communism of Russia, Frazier explains that, ‘in order to get its people to act as the communist pattern demands, the Russian government has had to use the techniques of capitalism [...] it resorts to extravagant and uneven rewards [...] the government also uses punishment or the threat of it (Skinner 1948: 259-60).’ Frazier finds the tactics of the Russian government to be contrary to the principles of Walden Two and antithetical to the creation of a utopian society. Wielding a science of behavior for the benefit of humanity ultimately means conditioning human behavior for the greatest human benefit, according to Frazier. Describing the practical applications of this conditioning Frazier explains ‘[...] we [the behavioral scientist] see to it that they [the inhabitants of Walden Two] will want to do precisely the things which are best for themselves and the community. Their behavior is determined, yet they’re free (Skinner 1948: 279).’ The behavior of the citizens of Walden Two are conditioned through positive reinforcement, which Frazier believes is simply another way of describing love, (I will explain in more detail why Frazier believes positive reinforcement is love, as well as analyze this argument in the remaining dialogue) and never manipulated through force or threat of force. Furthermore, in Walden Two there is no inequality among resources. Everything is communally shared and it is never supposed that one individual is more deserving of resources than another.

Walden Two is a secular community and there is never any talk of salvation in a

theological sense. The closest comparable notion of salvation for the citizens of *Walden Two* is the experience of utopia in the here and now; this experience is not earned or distributed unequally, but rather it is equally available to all people by grace (not something that has to be earned or justified by any law). It is this type of communism that Badiou finds Saint Paul's universalism able to accommodate and nurture, particularly when Saint Paul explains that salvation is universally available to all people by grace. Discussing Saint Paul's ideas concerning how grace is the opposite of the law and how faith is a gift of this grace, Badiou writes, "The salvation of the subject cannot take the form of a reward or wage. The subjectivity of faith is unwaged (which, in the final analysis, entitles us to call it communist) (Badiou 2003: 77)."¹ It is this notion of communism that is gratuitous, equally distributed, and available to all, that finds its foundation in the teachings of Saint Paul as well as in the novel *Walden Two*.

Badiou develops and stresses the fact that Saint Paul's notion of salvation is not the result of any type of mastery over law or philosophy, but it is universal and given by grace. In chapter four of *Saint Paul*, which Badiou entitles "Theory of Discourses", Badiou distinguishes between four discourses in which the Apostle Paul is involved as he declares the Christ event to the various peoples around him. Badiou labels these discourses 'Jewish discourse', 'Greek discourse', 'Christian discourse', and 'Subjective discourse of glorification'.¹ The two most prominent discourses that Paul is in

¹ Here Badiou explains that "[...] Paul delineates, as if in shadowy outline, a fourth possible discourse, besides the Greek (wisdom), the Jew (signs), and the Christian (evental declaration). This discourse, which Pascal tries to bring into the light of classical reason, would be that of the miracle, and Paul gave it a name: subjective discourse of glorification. It is the discourse of the ineffable, the discourse of non-discourse (Badiou 2003)."

conversation with in his epistles are the Jewish discourse which seeks a certain mastery of signs and wonders and whose authority figure is that of the prophet, and the Greek discourse, which seeks a certain mastery of philosophy as a means of understanding the natural totality of the cosmos. Badiou explains that ‘[...] Paul’s project is to show that a universal logic of salvation cannot be reconciled with any law, be it one that ties thought to the cosmos, or one that fixes the effects of an exceptional election (Badiou 2003: 42).’ Arguing for his particular type of universalism and arguing against any type of system that advocates mastery of any sort as a means to salvation, Saint Paul supplies the third discourse, namely the Christian discourse as Badiou refers to it. This discourse is categorically different from the previous two in that it is not the discourse of the prophet or the philosopher, but rather it is the discourse of the apostle. It is the discourse of the individual who declares the Christ event and is faithful to this event and that the faith the individual possesses is a gift. Finally, there is a fourth discourse which Badiou attributes to disturbed feelings Pascal had towards Paul’s complete fidelity to the Christ event and to that alone. This discourse attempts to modify the Christian discourse so that it is not so much merely faithful to the event, but also to the persuasion of miracles – which makes this later discourse akin to the Jewish discourse in Badiou’s mind because it also relies on signs and wonders. Commenting on the similarity of this fourth discourse with that of the Jewish discourse Badiou remarks, ‘For what is a prophecy if not a sign of what is to come? And what is a miracle if not a sign of the transcendence of the True? By granting to the fourth discourse (mysticism) no more than a marginal and inactive position, Paul keeps the radical novelty of the Christian declaration from relapsing into the logic of signs and proofs (Badiou 2003: 53).’

By positioning Saint Paul's discourse among the other three while maintaining that such discourse is merely the fidelity to the Christ event and its declaration, and that it is not '[...] the singularity of the subject that validates what the subject says; it is what he says that founds the singularity of the subject' (Badiou 2003: 53) Badiou is able to show that the Christ event is what refounds the subject and keeps both universality and particularity. When Badiou asks the question concerning what it is that Saint Paul wanted, the answer Badiou suggests is a rebuke of both abstract universality as well as identitarian protest. Badiou explains that Paul probably wanted '[...] to drag the Good News out from the rigid enclosure within which its restriction to the Jewish community would confine it. But equally, never to let it be determined by the available generalities, be they statist or ideological (Badiou 2003: 13).' Here we see the implications for a communism that avoids abstract universality and identitarian protest, while allowing for universal particularity and egalitarianism that stems from Saint Paul's teachings, according to Badiou. This same form of communism, with its focus on universal particularity, is present in the utopian community of *Walden Two*, and is generated not by the truth event "Jesus is resurrected", such as in the case of Saint Paul, but rather from Frazier's question concerning possessing an effective science of behavior.

The Dialogue Concerning Whether Behavioral Science Has Replaced God Found in *Walden Two*

The thesis of this paper involves showing both that there is a truth event in the novel *Walden Two* and that from this truth event alternative foundations for the universalism

with which Badiou credits Saint Paul can be established. In the examination of the prior dialogues I have articulated what I have found to be the alternative truth event, as well as how the universalism derived from the truth event leads to a form of communism that I argue is compatible with how Badiou interprets the thoughts of Saint Paul to be communist with respect to salvation. In this remaining dialogue I explore the notion that behavioral science has both replaced God and is essentially salvation in the novel *Walden Two*. This idea is both implicit and made explicit in the novel, and I find that explaining how Frazier believes behavioral science has replaced God and has essentially given him abilities comparable to, and greater than our, conventional notions of God greatly strengthens the original comparison between the truth event “Jesus is Resurrected” with the truth event in the form of Frazier’s question, “What would you do if you found yourself in possession of an effective science of behavior?” At the same time I acknowledge that, some of the most problematic ideas in the novel *Walden Two* are contained in this dialogue; ideas that have made scholars of utopian literature wonder whether the novel *Walden Two* should be better understood as a dystopia rather than a utopia. Analyzing this dialogue I aim to place the truth event found in *Walden Two* in its proper utopian context, while addressing the concerns that the ideas in this dialogue are ultimately dystopian.

There are two points in the novel where the reader gets the strong sense that behavioral science has replaced God. The first point is about two thirds of the way through the novel when Frazier is asked by the visitors whether Walden Two is in any way a religious community. Frazier denies that Walden Two has any religious affiliation or that it

practices any formal religion. He then goes on to explain that '[...] the simple fact is, the religious practices which our members brought to Walden Two have fallen away little by little, like drinking and smoking [...] religious faith becomes irrelevant when the fears which nourish it are allayed and the hopes fulfilled – here on earth (Skinner 1948: 185).' In Frazier's response he does not claim directly that behavioral science has replaced God (or in this context more specifically, has replaced religious practices), he merely implies that a utopia rendered through behavioral science has alleviated the fears ultimately responsible for religious practices. Furthermore, he compares such religious practices to smoking and drinking, which in this context are seen as vices to overcome.

The second time the reader gets the strong sense that behavioral science has replaced God is in the third to last chapter of the novel. During a conversation with Burris, a professor who is one of the six individuals visiting Walden Two, Frazier compares himself to both God and Jesus Christ, and claims that love is merely positive reinforcement. Frazier and Burris ascend a hill and as they gaze down below at Walden Two, Burris somewhat jokingly compares Frazier to God as he watches Frazier look down from on high over his creation. Frazier responds to the comparison with the earnest statement, 'There's a curious similarity (Skinner 1948: 278).' Burris attempts to downplay any actual similarity by asserting that Frazier has much less control over the people of Walden Two than God has over humanity. Frazier again takes issue with Burris's claim and earnestly replies, 'Not at all [...] if we can believe the theologians. On the contrary, it is the other way round. You may remember that God's children are always disappointing Him (Skinner 1948: 278-9).' After this explanation Frazier

continues to show how a society functioning through the methods of behavioral sciences yields more satisfactory results than the world as it is described by both theologians and scripture. Claiming how his design for society is better than God's, Frazier explains, 'I've never stepped in to wipe out the evil works of men with a great flood [...] The original design took deviations into account and provided automatic corrections. It's rather an improvement upon Genesis (Skinner 1948: 280).'² Again Frazier continues in earnest to expand on how behavioral science possesses superior techniques for managing society and achieving the greatest human good. Towards the end of this conversation between Burris and Frazier, Frazier awkwardly mentions one more similarity. Referring to the people of Walden Two as his children, he confesses that he loves them, and he claims that love is just another name for positive reinforcement.²

Although Frazier is an atheist, he finds the concept of God something he is able to compare himself with because of the seemingly limitless power and love (positive reinforcement) available to him because he is in possession of an effective science of behavior. Comprehending the truth event in the form of Frazier's question also means comprehending the seemingly limitless power and love (power and love that is so great that it supersedes the notions of power and love conventionally associated with our concepts of God) and understanding that this power and love is available to us through behavioral science in an atheistic and materialistic world. When we examine how Badiou describes Saint Paul's conversion, we see that the truth event "Jesus is resurrected" is tantamount to the truth event found in Frazier's question, in effect such that both events

² This dialogue between Frazier and Burris ends with Frazier saying: 'These are my children, Burris [...] I love them. What is love [...] except another name for the use of positive reinforcement (Skinner 1948)?'

serve as foundations for universalism, but also in effect such that in both events the believer believes that they are encountering power and love that they can only claim is divine or compare it with concepts we associate with the divine. This type of encounter appears to redefine existing identities with respect to the truth event. In his article ‘St. Paul, Founder of the Universal Subject’, Badiou writes, ‘[...] in the epistle to the Galatians, he writes, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law” (Gal 3:13). Christ, then is the name of an event, and in fidelity to this Christ-event identities are dissolved: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female” (Gal 3:28) (Badiou 2009: 29).’ In *Walden Two* fidelity to the truth event expressed in the form of Frazier’s question is seen both by Frazier’s response to his question, and by the creation of Walden Two which serves as a testimony to the event. The existence of a utopian community, in which universal particularity is manifested is a testimony to the fact that Frazier’s question contains the truth event that held alternative foundations for universalism.

Conclusion: Using This Atheistic Fable to Expand Badiou’s Audience

In *Between Naturalism and Religion* Jürgen Habermas correctly acknowledges that we are living in a post-secular world, but he also concedes that while the rest of the world is experiencing a resurgence in religiosity, Europe remains “immune” to such a trend.³

³³ In the introduction to *Between Naturalism and Religion*, Jürgen Habermas writes, ‘[...] the spread of naturalistic worldviews is encountering an unexpected revitalization of religious communities and traditions and their politicization across the world. For philosophy, the revival of religious energie (sic), to which Europe alone seems to be immune, is associated with a fundamental critique of the postmetaphysical and nonreligious self-understanding of Western modernity (Habermas 2008: 1-2)’.

This sentiment is also acknowledged in the work of sociologist of religion, Phil Zuckerman, particularly in his provocatively titled book, *Society Without God: What The Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us About Contentment*. This book is a description and reflection of studies Zuckerman conducted in Denmark and Sweden, countries that report some of the highest levels of atheism worldwide (Zuckerman 2008: 3). On a related front, another disparity between Europeans and Americans is articulated by Stephen Prothero, in his book *Religious Literacy*. In this work Prothero explains that '[...] Americans are both deeply religious and profoundly ignorant about religion. They are Protestants who can't name the four Gospels, Catholics who can't name the seven sacraments, and Jews who can't name the five books of Moses. Atheists may be as rare in America as Jesus-loving politicians are in Europe, but here faith is almost entirely devoid of content (Prothero 2008: 1-2).' Although Prothero's comments seem to express hyperbole, it does appear to address the fact that the spectrum of Badiou's potential audience among theists, agnostics and atheist is most diverse.

Badiou states the aim of his project clearly: 'To refound a theory of the Subject that subordinates its existence to the aleatory dimension of the event as well as to the pure contingency of multiple-being without sacrificing the theme of freedom (Badiou 2003: 4).' This project is of the utmost importance for humanity, and yet it seems clear that the theistic fable, 'Jesus is resurrected, i.e. the event that Badiou desires to utilize in his work *Saint Paul*, can be complemented by the atheistic fable contained in Frazier's question, 'What would you do if you found yourself in possession of an effective science of behavior?' and the complementing of the theistic fable with this atheistic fable may allow

Badiou's project to speak to a greater audience. Furthermore the existence of communities based on Skinner's novel *Walden Two*, founded by individuals who essentially believed they had an effective science of behavior in their possession,⁴ are still in existence and have generated a universalism that is strikingly similar to the type of universalism Alain Badiou claims Saint Paul to be the founder of, in his *Saint Paul*. This atheistic fable found in *Walden Two* is ripe for utilization and complements the aims of Badiou's project in that it provides alternative foundations for universalism to a greater audience.

⁴ In his book, *In Utopia: Six Kinds of Eden and the Search for a Better Paradise*, J. C. Hallman explains that Kat Kinkade founded a total of three intentional communities: Twin Oaks and Acorn in Virginia and East Wind in Missouri. All three communities are still in existence and Twin Oaks continues to be the 'longest-lived secular social experiment' in America. Hallman also explains that '[...] the subtext of control in *Walden Two* generated friction. Skinner's influence was eventually abandoned. Kinkade gave up on Twin Oaks. She left the community to found another in Missouri and to work alongside Skinner in Boston for a few years. Twin Oaks refused to die (Hallman 2010: 58).'

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