

**There is Truth, and then there are truths, or Slavoj
Zizek as a Reader of Alain Badiou**

Adrian Johnston

Introduction

To truly understand and fully appreciate the work of Slavoj Zizek already requires familiarity with a formidably wide range of background material; modern philosophy from Descartes through Hegel, Marxism and its complex theoretical as well as practical legacy, large cross-sections of culture both high and popular, and, of course, Freudian-Lacanian psycho-analytic thought. However, in addition to these sources of intellectual inspiration, Zizek's recent texts display a steadily increasing desire to entertain a sustained and detailed dialogue with the contemporary French philosopher Alain Badiou. In one of his earliest references to Badiou, Zizek applauds Badiou's declaration of war against the reign of the "new sophists," namely, his denunciation of the relativistic, anti-essentialist abandonment of a strong notion of truth common to so many current philosophical stances on both sides of the Atlantic.¹

Nonetheless, this engagement, at least as pursued by Zizek, is colored by a certain degree of ambivalence. On the one hand, in his efforts to delineate the contours of what constitutes a genuine Lacanian ethical "act" (i.e., a gesture that decisively-yet-unpredictably breaks with the reality of a given *status quo* and its symbolic, socio-historical scaffolding²), Zizek celebrates Badiou's anti-dialectical opposition between being and event,³ with Zizek defining the latter as, "an intervention that cannot be accounted for in terms of its pre-existing 'objective conditions'" (Slavoj Zizek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?: Five Interventions in the (Mis) use of a Notion*, London: Verso, 2001, p.117). He enthusiastically speaks of Badiou as "the theorist of the Act."⁴ On the other hand, despite Badiou's solid Marxist credentials, Zizek repeatedly accuses him, apropos of the same distinction between being and event, of backsliding into a sort of Kantian idealism and thereby failing to remain faithful to a genuine materialist standpoint⁵ (interestingly, in *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari

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insinuate something similar in the course of briefly making reference to Badiou⁶). Speaking of "Badiou's opposition between Being and Event," Zizek maintains that, "it is here that Badiou remains 'idealist'" (Slavoj Zizek, *Repeating Lenin*, Zagreb: Arkzin, 2001, p. 75). Can one make sense of this vacillation, this willingness to favorably invoke Badiou's central theoretical-conceptual opposition while simultaneously seeming to denounce it?

The critique of Badiou's alleged Kantianism hinges specifically upon what Zizek perceives as the perpetuation of a rigid version of the Kantian distinction between the "regulative" and the "constitutive." According to Kant, there are two ways in which one can employ the ideas of reason (as opposed, of course, to the concepts of the understanding grounded in a relation to empirical intuitions): these ideas can either be mistaken for references to really existing entities (i.e., an illegitimate, baseless "hypostatization" of reason's ideas as constitutive of an extra-ideational reality) or they can be treated as inevitable consequences of the workings of human cognition that, regardless, are nothing more than eternally unfulfilled hypotheses (i.e.,

"as if" principles deprived of any true ontological weight, but always threatening to generate the deceptive, beguiling phantasm of their existence).⁷ One of the central epistemological lessons of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is that human reason is continually tempted into allowing itself to fall prey to the alluring metaphysical illusions resulting from a hypostatization of the ideas of reason as constitutive rather than regulative. The task of the first *Critique* is, therefore, to keep reason restrained within the "limits of possible experience" by forbidding any move to ontologize ideas pointing beyond the spheres of intuition and understanding.

Zizek presents Kant's practical philosophy as, in part, an application of this epistemological distinction to ethical matters: the moral law, as epitomized by the categorical imperative, is impossible for finite, flesh-and-blood human agents to perfectly obey or exhaustively fulfill.⁸ This law functions in a regulative "as if" capacity, forever guiding the exercise of practical reason while nonetheless never becoming entirely actualized within the realm of human reality itself (thus purportedly

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upholding the strict separation of noumenal and phenomenal domains characteristic of Kant's philosophy).⁹ Zizek's complaint is that, supposedly in contrast to Lacan, Badiou tries to maintain an unbridgeable division between the "Truth" (*vérité*) emerging through its respective event--provocatively declaring himself a Platonist, Badiou affirms, against the dominant tendencies of twentieth century thought, that philosophical Truth per se is timeless and universal¹⁰--and the ostensibly interminable task, assigned to what Badiou terms the "subject of the event," of re-inscribing the *vérité* to which it's a subject back within the ontological substantiality of being and its corresponding forms of knowledge¹¹--"For Badiou, fidelity to the Event involves the work of discerning its traces, the work which is by definition never done; in spite of all claims to the contrary, he thus relies on a kind of Kantian regulative Idea, on the final end (the full conversion of the Event into Being) which one can only approach in an endless process" (Slavoj Zizek, *On Belief* New York: Routledge, 2001, p.125). The finite material world, stuck within the corrupt defiles of temporality, is always found to be lacking or somehow less than the rarified dimension of events and their infinite, eternal truths. In other words, the material is inferior and subordinate with respect to the immaterial. How else ought one to construe those many moments when Badiou underscores that the event is situated at the level of "non-being," that the event isn't included in being as such?¹²

Quite recently, in the foreword to the second edition of *For they know not what they do*, Zizek vigorously presses home this critique of Badiou. After conceding that Lacan and Badiou share a belief in the existence of certain occurrences when, from apparently out of nowhere, a "radical cut/rupture" shatters the current symbolic order (i.e., Lacan's act and Badiou's event),¹³ Zizek delineates in detail his indictment of the lingering Kantianism haunting *L'être et l'événement*:

Can we imagine a more direct application of the Kantian distinction between constitutive principles (a priori categories which directly constitute reality) and regulative ideas, which should be applied to reality only in the *as if*

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'unnameable' as the resistance point of the Real, the 'indivisible remainder' which prevents the 'forceful transformation' that would conclude its work, this assertion is strictly correlative to the as if mode of the post-evental work of forcing the Real: it is because of this remainder that the work of truth can never leave this conditional mode behind (p. lxxxiii-lxxxiv).
(Zizek, "Foreword to the Second Edition")

Zizek continues, arguing that, "it is Badiou who is deeply Kantian in his gap between the 'eternity' of, say, the idea of justice, and the interminable work of forcing it into a situation" (Zizek, "Foreword to the Second Edition," p. lxxxiv) and that, "the gap which separates the pure multiplicity of the Real from the appearing of a 'world' whose co-ordinates are given in a set of categories which predetermine its horizon is the very gap which, in Kant, separates the Thing-in-itself from our phenomenal reality--that is, from the way things appear to us as objects of our experience" (Zizek, "Foreword to the Second Edition," p. lxxxv). The labeling of Badiou as a Kantian by Zizek sounds a bit like an instance of the proverbial pot calling the kettle black.

One of the hallmarks of Zizek's work is his revival of the Cartesian *Cogito*. The opening lines of the 1999 volume *The Ticklish Subject* proclaim that, "A spectre is haunting western academia... the spectre of the Cartesian subject. All academic powers have entered into a holy alliance to exorcize this spectre" (Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject*, p.1). Similarly, in the introduction to the collection of essays on *Cogito and the Unconscious*, he praises Lacan for having revived a conception of subjectivity first formulated by Descartes and then radicalized by Kant and the German idealist tradition.¹⁴ Against the predominant tendencies of various wings of today's academy, Zizek employs the modern subject of Descartes in order to combat all attempts to reduce subjectivity to the sum total of its

particular, historical attributes stemming from its situated, innerworldly contexts (i.e., the subject as inherently sexual, ethnic, cultural, and so on). In fact, a now-classic Zizekian move is to underscore a paradox at the heart of postmodern theories of identity: the more one insists upon subjectivity as a dispersed multitude of shifting and unstable identity-constructs, the more one is confronted with the necessity for positing a universal, empty, and content-less frame, a formal void, as the backdrop against which the "mad dance of identification" takes place. The post-modern struggle to surmount the Cartesian subject of modern philosophy only succeeds, oddly enough, in further highlighting the contours of such subjectivity.¹⁵

However, one shouldn't be fooled here--Descartes himself isn't, strictly speaking, the real point of departure for Zizek's Lacan-inspired reinsertion of the modern subject back into contemporary debates. In his *Meditations*, Descartes, after establishing the indubitable existence of the *Cogito*, mentions a still-lingering uncertainty--"But I do not yet understand sufficiently what I am--I, who now necessarily exist" (René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* [trans. Donald A.Cress], Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993, p.18). Descartes has already, at this juncture, demonstrated the fact that the "I" as thinker necessarily exists each and every time thought occurs (including the thought "I don't exist"). However, the nature of this "I," its positive characteristics, has yet to be determined. Descartes proceeds to stipulate that the *Cogito* must not be equated with any of the contents cognized by it through its own thinking activity--"For I would indeed be simulating were I to 'imagine' that I was something, because

imagining is merely the contemplating of the shape or image of a corporeal thing" (Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, p.20). In other words, the activity of thinking as a verb or process cannot be imaginarily captured or encapsulated in any of the content-level products (i.e., imagined or perceived phenomena) of thought generated by this same activity. In his criticisms of the illegitimate hypostatization leading to the standard notion of the Cartesian *res cogitans* as a reified substance, Kant is more Cartesian than Descartes himself: he develops the full implications of Descartes' prohibition of equivocating between

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the *Cogito* as active possibility condition for all cognitive states (i.e., Kant's transcendental subject and/or Lacan's *sujet*) and the self as a set of images, marks, signs, and ideas identified with as the emblems of a "personality" or "soul" (i.e., Kant's empirical, psychological self and/or Lacan's *moi*). Zizek himself even concedes this interpretation when he notes that, "the Cartesian subject... is ~brought to its notion' with Kant" (Zizek, "Introduction: Cogito as Shibboleth," p.3)¹⁶ And, according to Zizek's own narrative of the historical development of the concept of the subject from Descartes through Hegel, the step that Hegel takes is simply to ontologize Kant's epistemological portrait of subjectivity--that is to say, the subject literally "is," in its very being (rather than as a matter of finite, limited thought and the shortcomings of its consciousness of self), nothing other than the void of negativity forever irreducible to any and every instance of determinate, phenomenal actualization.¹⁷ Hegel is hence, on this reading, "more Kantian than Kant himself," thus making Kant the "vanishing mediator" (to put it in Zizekian parlance) between two of the essential figures facilitating Zizek's Lacanian appropriation of modern philosophy (i.e., Descartes and Hegel) in the construction of a theory of subjectivity.¹⁸

At various points in his work, Zizek explicitly acknowledges that Kant, instead of Descartes, is the true founder of the notion of the subject as split or divided against itself, a notion later brought to fruition by Lacan via his "barred S"¹⁹ Stressing Kant's advance over Descartes, he states:

If...one bears in mind the fact that, according to Lacan, the ego is an

object, a substantial 'res,' one can easily grasp the ultimate sense of Kant's transcendental turn: it desubstantializes the subject (which, with Descartes, still remained 'res cogitans, i.e., a substantial 'piece of reality')--and it is this very desubstantialization which opens up the empty space (the 'blank surface') onto which fantasies are projected, where monsters emerge. To put it in Kantian terms: because of the inaccessibility of the Thing in itself,

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there is always a gaping hole in (constituted, phenomenal) reality, reality is never 'all,' its circle is never closed, and this void of the inaccessible Thing is filled out with phantasmagorias through which the transphenomenal Thing enters the stage of phenomenal presence--in short, prior to the Kantian turn, there can be no black hulk at the background of the stage (p. 136).

(Slavoj Zizek, *Enjoy Your Symptom!: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out*, New York: Routledge, 1992)

Zizek clearly intends to align, as precisely parallel, Kant's distinction between noumenal and phenomenal subjectivity (i.e., the distinction between the "I" as an unknowable *an sich* kernel and the "I" as it appears to itself *vis-à-vis* various series of appearances and their qualities) and Lacan's separation of the subject (*sujet*) from the ego (*moi*). What's more, Zizek argues, in numerous places, that Lacan is deeply Kantian: Lacan, in contrast to his theoretical contemporaries, pursues a transcendental project involving a "critique of pure desire"²⁰; both the Kantian and Lacanian subjects are "empty," incapable of being collapsed back into the determinate empirical-phenomenal contents fleshing-out this \$ as a monstrous, faceless void²¹; the Lacanian distinction between the subjects of enunciation and utterance is ultimately a Kantian one²²; Lacan's "subject of the unconscious" is nothing other than what Kant designates as the necessary failure of introspective reflection to establish any kind of stable, qualitative self-identity²³ . . . and so on. At first glance, it's difficult to grasp exactly why Zizek would object to lingering traces of Kantianism in Badiou's philosophy. If Badiou really does maintain a rigid dichotomy between the truth of the event qua regulative-noumenal, as an infinitely vanishing point guiding concrete activity, versus being *qua* constitutive-phenomenal, then it seems that Zizek himself preserves the same sort of opposition apropos of a theory of subjectivity. What renders Badiou's alleged recourse to this sort of dualism comparatively more objectionable? More importantly, is he

guilty as charged? If Badiou indeed Still leans against an unjustifiable idealism, then does his system actually need, for its explanatory purposes, to be supplemented by a materialist-style Lacanian psychoanalytic metapsychology? If so, what crucial analytic concepts are missing from Badiou's theoretical edifice, and what would be the consequences of reincorporating these concepts back within the register of Badiouian ontology?

Part One: From Spurious to Genuine Infinity

One could elegantly encapsulate the essence of Badiou's system as a consequent unfolding of the full ramifications contained in Lacan's pronouncement that "*L'Autre n'existe pas*" ("The big Other does not exist"),²⁴ an unfolding executed according to a particular interpretation of the register of the Real. The Lacanian phrase "*grand Autre*" is often synonymous with the notion of the "symbolic order" as the transindividual set of languages, institutions, codes, norms, and practices governing human reality, namely, as an omnipresent Symbolic framework of enveloping mediation.²⁵ This Levi-Straussian sort of structure generates and organizes, among other things, the forms of knowledge available to epistemological subjects embedded within a socio-linguistic matrix. And yet, especially after his love affair with structuralism cools starting in the 1960s, Lacan repeatedly stresses that this symbolic order is necessarily lacking and incomplete, that the big Other is constitutively "barred."²⁶ In the opening lines from his 1974 televised interview, Lacan declares, "there's no way, to say it all. Saying it all is literally impossible: words fail. Yet it's through this very impossibility that the truth holds onto the real" (Jacques Lacan, "Television" [trans. Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson], *Television/A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment* [ed. Joan Coped, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1990, p.3). Simply put, the Symbolic cannot exhaust the Real. What philosophical twist does Badiou put on Lacan here?

The foundational axiom of Badiouian ontology can be worded in several different ways: there is no set of all sets; there is no Being of all beings; the oneness of a global, complete totality isn't ever to be finally found. In short, every

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multiple is a multiple of multiples, and being *qua* being (*l'être-en-tant-qu'être*) is "pure multiplicity," an infinity without ultimately unifying wholeness, end, or unsurpassable limit.²⁷ Simply put, "the One" (*l'Un*) does not exist.²⁸ As Jason Barker explains in his overview of Badiou's philosophy, "The multiple is 'without one,' even to the extreme extent of being barred from itself (to adopt the Lacanian neologism)" (Barker, *Alain Badiou*, p.59). For Badiou, the "death of God" trumpeted by nineteenth-century philosophy obligates everyone thinking in the wake of this demise to abandon any type of intellectual recourse to a big Other as a grand-yet-finite "One" or 'All' (and, he views modern mathematics, especially set theory after Cantor, as the discursive domain in which philosophy's God is indeed once and for all finally put to rest through the precision of a cold, ruthless systematicity).²⁹ Hence, in place of the non-existent One comes the being of infinity. This infinity of being isn't discovered through observation or experience; the ontologist doesn't encounter an intuition of being's infinity in any direct, straightforward manner. According to Badiou, each and every presented unity (i.e., all experientially accessible beings/entities) is a subsequent result or outcome of a prior operation referred to as "counting-for-one" (*compter-pour-un*).³⁰ He proceeds to maintain that a consequence of this is that being *qua* being, as not subjected to the syntheses of counting (as before or beneath this operation), is a pure, inconsistent multiplicity in terms of being "not One." The inconsistency of the pure multiple cannot be presented as such. Exclusively through the operation of counting-for-one is this inconsistent multiplicity rendered consistent. The consistency established *vis-à-vis* counting is a necessary prerequisite for the genesis of accessible (re)presentations.³¹ Badiou likewise distinguishes between an "inconsistent multiplicity" and a "consistent multiplicity," a before-and-after contrast established via the intervention of the operation of counting.³² He even hesitates to dub the former (i.e., the inconsistent multiplicity of being prior to the count) "multiple," given that the opposition between one and many (an opposition according to which the notion of multiplicity tends to be thought simply as many ones) is itself a by-product of the type of cohesion brought about through counting.

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Consequently, "uncounted" being *qua* being may very well be neither one nor many³³ (one might wonder how far removed this hesitant reservation on Badiou's part is from the Kantian view that noumenal being *an sich* cannot, in its absolute alterity with respect to cognition, be subsumed under such ideational aspects of the understanding as "quantity"). Isn't this "counting-for-one" just the synthesizing activity of the transcendental unity of apperception invoked by another name? Doesn't Kant claim, in the "Transcendental Deduction," that the unification of objectivity is an *apriori* possibility condition for the presentation of any objects whatsoever?³⁴ Furthermore, isn't Badiou's non-existent One, into whose phantom guise being is transubstantiated through the operation of counting, just as immaterial and insubstantial as the sort of subjectivity extolled by various types of idealism? How would Badiou respond to the obvious question (a question indicating the difficulty of effortlessly avoiding fundamental idealist theses) regarding exactly

who or what does the counting responsible for rendering the inaccessible in-itself of being's pure multiple inconsistency in the form of a presentable consistent multiplicity? If the answer amounts to attributing to being itself the initiation of its own self-limiting count-for-one, one might ask why it would be prompted to sunder itself in this specific fashion.

Nonetheless, contrary to the sometimes Kantian undertones of Lacan's remarks about the Real as an "impossibility" intrinsically antithetical to representational depiction--Lacan occasionally flirts with a notion of the Real as a noumenality comparable to Kant's *das Ding an sich*³⁵--Badiou would argue that the Real of being in and of itself, as an infinite series of multiplicities without end, is a result of its potentially inexhaustible Symbolic density. In other words, one of the reasons why one cannot "say it all" (for Lacan, the saying of the truth is always a "half-saying" [*mi-dire*]³⁶), a reason why knowledge of being remains forever incomplete, isn't due to the existence of special aspects of being with the supposed property of an inherent resistance to representation. Instead, the infinite facets of being entail that knowledge can represent being in an infinite number of varying configurations.

In Badiou's account, the excess of being over knowledge

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(dis)appears as a "void" (*vide*) within the "state of the situation"³⁷ established by a given epistemological order. What "counts" for the Symbolic order of knowledge are the finite entities established on the basis of its own various and sundry conceptual criteria.³⁸ And yet, since the infinitude of being invariably overflows the limited and limiting strictures of epistemological strategies of representational containment, knowledge, as Lacan puts it, "holds onto the real" of being precisely-yet-paradoxically through its very omissions. Badiou expresses this same idea in establishing an equivalence between excesses of being and voids in knowledge (although, it merits mentioning that Badiou admits the converse as well, namely, that epistemological representation is sometimes in excess of ontological presentation within a given situation).³⁹ He also explicitly interprets the Lacanian Real as a Symbolic impasse.⁴⁰ Consequently, Badiou's manner of furthering these select Lacanian themes amounts to contending that the big Other of the Symbolic order (as the order responsible for the knowledge establishing specific states of situations) is barred and incomplete by virtue of its conditioned dependency on an ontological Real whose infinite complexity/inconsistency, as an immanent, immediate given (and not, following Kant, as a transcendent absence), nonetheless continually evades being captured within the net of a fixed cluster of conceptual sets.⁴¹

On several occasions, Lacan adamantly insists on the importance of distinguishing between "knowledge" (*savoir*) and "truth" (*vérité*).⁴² This distinction is also crucial for Badiou.⁴³ In emphasizing the gap that forever separates the Real of being from the Symbolic of knowledge--as just shown, this dehiscence isn't at all comparable to Kant's dichotomies between ontology and epistemology as well as between the noumenal and the phenomenal--Badiou denies the possibility of ever reaching "absolute knowledge" as an encyclopedia-style closure wherein representational structures achieve an infinitude perfectly isomorphic with that exhibited by being. Prior to *L'être et événement*, in *Théorie du sujet*, Badiou formulates this position thus:

l'univers est fermé total, et il y a de l'indistinguable strict, car vous n'avez pas, dans

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l'univers, assez de noms propres pour distinguer ses parties. Ou bien on peut toujours distinguer, mais alors l'univers ne fait pas tout, il y a de l'exces par quoi vous faites advenir du nom propre au-delà du tout supposé. L'univers contient toujours plus de choses qu'il ne peut en nommer selon ces choses même.

De là son inexistence (p.235).

(Badiou, *Théorie du sujet*)

Given the inevitable and irreducible excess of the ontological over the epistemological, a Badiouian event can be defined, in much too concise a fashion, as an occurrence that reveals, in a unique and particularly pronounced fashion, a certain instance of a discrepancy between the order of knowledge and the domain of being proper. As Badiou puts it in his study of Saint Paul, an event is a happening that, in relation to the language of an established system of knowledge, "puts language in an impasse."⁴⁴ Thus, following Badiou, one could say that an event points out a specific "hole" (*trou*) in the fabric of a given state of knowledge; an event reveals groupings of "singular multiplicities" sustaining a given situation without, for all that, being explicitly included in this same situation as counted elements.⁴⁵ Events come to display how ontological surpluses (as the excess of being's infinite multiplicities over finite systems of representations) subsist as occasionally egregious elisions at the epistemological level.⁴⁶ Badiouian "Truth-with-a-capital-T," as opposed to knowledge and its "veridicalities" (i.e., Badiou's "*véridicité*" as a fact or claim legitimized on the basis of a present epistemological order, as a piece of information vouched for within the encyclopedia of extant knowledge⁴⁷), is precisely this hole in knowledge--"The encyclopedia is a dimension of knowledge, not of truth, the latter creating a hole in knowledge" (Alain Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy* [trans. Norman Madarasz], Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, p 37).⁴⁸

Zizek latches onto the Badiouian conception of *vérité* as the telltale sign of a backsliding into Kant's old distinctions--"Badiou's Kantianism is discernible precisely in the way he

limits the scope of the Truth . . . Truth . . . can exist only as the infinite, incessant effort to discern in the situation the traces of the Truth-Event, exactly homologous with the Kantian infinite ethical effort" (Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject*, p.166). Undoubtedly, Zizek's motivations for rejecting this aspect of a Kantianism supposedly discernible in Badiou's thought are Hegelian in inspiration. The "Kantian infinite ethical effort" would be, from a Hegelian perspective, a specific manifestation of what Hegel refers to as "bad" or "spurious infinity"⁴⁹--"Something becomes an other; this other is itself somewhat; therefore it likewise becomes an other, and so on *ad infinitum*" (G.W.F Hegel, *Logic* [trans. William Wallace], Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975, §93, [p.137]). Hegel then introduces his definition of the spurious infinite:

This Infinity is the wrong or negative infinity: it is only a negation of a finite: but the finite rises again the same as ever, and is never got rid of and absorbed. In other words, this infinite only expresses the *ought-to-be* elimination of the finite. The progression to infinity never gets further than a statement of the contradiction involved in the finite, viz. that it is somewhat as well as somewhat else. It sets up with endless iteration the alteration between these two terms, each of which calls up the other (§94, [p.137]). (Hegel, *Logic*)

Ultimately, bad infinity is simply an infinite regression, a Sisyphean task of attempting to reach the infinite through the endlessly reiterated gesture of monotonously adding one more element to a finite series of preceding elements. Genuine infinity cannot be acquired through finite succession. No quantity of additional elements in the series (i.e., what Hegel calls the "somewhat") will ever break through the barrier forever separating finite particularity from infinite universality. In the most obvious example, counting from one to infinity is an infinite labor. However, such a labor, as inherently incapable of achieving its end--only its failure is infinite--is, in Hegel's view, "bad" or "spurious." In this same section of the *Logic*, Hegel

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proceeds to chide the practical philosophies of Kant and Fichte for having gotten stuck in this unproductive limbo--"The infinity of reflection here discussed is only an *attempt* to reach the true infinity, a wretched neither-one-thing-nor-another. This stage was never passed by the systems of Kant and Fichte, so far as ethics are concerned."⁵⁰ Kant's talk of "the road of endless progress towards holiness"⁵¹ as a movement that "is impossible of execution in any given time"⁵² certainly invites this reading. Kant indeed conceives of the infinite as a separate transcendence from which the finite is permanently barred. Kantian infinity "exists" only in fictions of a perpetually deferred future.

As Žižek himself surmises, perhaps the best Kantian reply to this Hegelian line of criticism is nonchalantly to say "So what?" and shrug it off as of little consequence.⁵³ Why shouldn't one portray, for example, moral progress towards a "holiness" prescribed by reason (or, in Badiou's case, the process of inscribing a truth back within the ground of being) as an infinite task? Žižek answers by claiming that Hegel's crucial move here is, as elsewhere, the elegantly simple ontologization of Kant's schema. In so doing, "*Hegel's critique simply openly states and assumes the paradoxes constitutive of Kant's position*" (Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, p.86). In other words, whereas the Kantian metaphysics of morals sometimes speaks of innerworldly human morality as a matter of pursuing an eternally deferred perfection infinitely receding as forever *à venir*, the Hegelian position, according to Žižek, is to maintain that the full accomplishment of morality in the present is nothing other than this same gap's immanent disruption of phenomenal reality. For Kant, the infinite, here identified in terms of the pure moral law and its ethical ideals as totally and flawlessly actualized, exists, at least for the human agent, in a projected time always yet-to-come. For the Žižekian Hegel, the Kantian dehiscence between noumena and phenomena, as sustained in the immediate givenness of the concrete present, is itself the true reality of practical "infinitude." In this context, the salient difference is that between, on the one hand, infinity as a permanently deferred possibility in the future (i.e., "bad" or "spurious infinity"), and, on the other hand, infinity as a given actuality in

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the presence of the present (i.e., "good" or "genuine infinity"). Žižek distinguishes between Kant and Hegel precisely along this subtle fault line, and he unambiguously situates Badiou on the side of the former. This particular critical strategy with respect to Badiou neglects some of the most basic features of Badiou's system.

Badiouian infinity is diametrically opposed to the "bad infinity" that Hegel attributes to Kantian practical philosophy. The whole point of Badiou's ontology is that infinity is always-already here, on the very surface of presentation as the sole ground of existence, rather than functioning as some sort of ephemeral fullness-yet-to-come hovering perpetually out of reach on a future horizon (with Badiou likewise contending that contemporary thought must conduct itself under the jurisdiction of a secularization of infinity as the brute banality of being).⁵⁴ The fundamental thesis of Badiouian ontology is the proposition that being *qua* being is an infinite multiplicity admitting neither, at its base, indivisible atomistic constituents nor, at its summit, a unified, whole totality--"il n' y a que du multiple infini, qui presente du multiple infini, et l'unique point d'arrêt de cette présentation ne présente rien. Il s'agit ultimement du vide, et non de l'Un. Dieu est mort, au coeur de la présentation" (Badiou, "Philosophie et mathématique," p.177).

As observed, this ontological axiom sharply separates Badiou from Kant (the above example of this break being that, according to Badiou, ontology's irreducibility to epistemology is due to the presentation of being's infinite multiplicity exceeding, instead of withdrawing as absent from, the finite limits of knowledge and its representations). Subjectivity, for instance, isn't stuck, as in the metaphysics of morals, endlessly chasing after the infinite *qua* a regulative ideal that absolutely resists being incarnated in the present. Žižek frequently portrays Kant as a key innovative founder of the now-familiar philosophical theme of the finitude of the subject.⁵⁵ The finite actuality of subjectivity amounts to its experiential confinement to a limited, inconsistent, and incomplete phenomenal reality. Noumenal rationality, in its apparent completeness and consistency, is merely a projection originating within the frame of this flawed, finite perspective. That is to say, for Žižek's

Kant, the accomplished infinite (whether theoretical or practical), defined simply as an exit from the limits constitutive of experience, is a spectral absence generated by the activities of the finite subject. On a certain level, Badiou inverts this Kantian theme. The infinite isn't an *à venir* lure arising from within the confines of finite subjectivity and its circumstances; it isn't a by-product of a foundational, unsurpassable finitude. On the contrary, the finite subject is, according to Badiou, a subsidiary component or moment of the infinite--"A subject is . . . this finite point through which, in its infinite being, truth itself passes" (Alain Badiou, "On a Finally Objectless Subject" [trans. Bruce Fink], *Who Comes After the Subject?* [ed. Peter Connor and Jean-Luc Nancy], New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 25).⁵⁶ Once again, the term *vérité* returns as the crux of the discussion.

One point in particular must be made as clear as possible before proceeding any further: in Badiou's work, there are grounds for carefully distinguishing between Truth-as-place and truths-as-veridicalities-to-come (i.e., Truth versus truths), with Badiou's notion of "forcing" (*forçage*) explaining the link between these two poles⁵⁷ (even if Badiou himself doesn't carefully draw out such a set of distinctions in an open and deliberate manner, he arguably ought to considering his overall project). In fact, clarifying Badiou's position in response to Žižek's critique requires superimposing a tripartite distinction between Truth-as-place, truths-as-veridicalities-to-come, and truth-processes onto the Badiouian system (the third conjoining the first two as the locale of their intersection). One cannot ignore the fact that Badiou sometimes explicitly distinguishes between a "formal concept of Truth" (i.e., the philosophical notion of Truth as an eternally possible operation) and the plurality of determinate truths resulting from Badiou's

four "generic procedures" (i.e., science, art, politics, and love).⁵⁸ Badiou remarks, "*La catégorie philosophique de Vérité est par elle-même vide. Elle opère, mais ne présente rien*" (Badiou, "*Le (re)tour de la philosophie elle-même*," p.66). He then insists that, "*la catégorie de Vérité . . . n'est légitime qu'autant que la catégorie est vide, parce qu'elle n'est qu'une opération*" (Badiou, "*Le (re)tour de la philosophie elle-même*," p.71).⁵⁹

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Truth-as-place (or the space of *vérité*) is simply the eternal gap, the forever open rift, between, on the one hand, the epistemologically indigestible infinity of entities and relations bequeathed (by virtue of the absence of limiting boundaries that would presumably be established by an existent One or All) to the structures of knowledge, and, on the other hand, any possible states of knowledge as finite representational configurations or localized constellations of being(s). There will always be voids in knowledge, since an exhaustive rendering of being's infinite multiplicity is, according to Badiou, necessarily impossible--"the infinite part of the situation can never be presented *in itself* as infinite" (Sam Gillespie, "Subtractive," *Umbr(a): A Journal of the Unconscious--Badiou*, 1996, p 9).⁶⁰ Hence, given the manner in which Badiou opposes *vérité* to *savoir*, the perpetual excess of being over knowledge guarantees that the space of Truth-as-place cannot ever, in principle, be eliminated or foreclosed. Simply put, there is always more to say. In Lacanian parlance, the half-saying of *vérité* is never finished.

At this juncture, the problem with Zizek's accusations regarding a Badiouian revivification of the Kantian "infinite labor" on the basis of a rigid separation of the regulative (i.e., what ought to be as an unending task) from the constitutive (i.e., what is as "less than" the demanding ideal) becomes apparent. Truth-as-place is eternal because, according to both Lacan and Badiou, the rift between finite Symbolic knowledge and the Real of infinite being cannot ever be sealed. This gap is an immanent, irreducible feature inhering within any and every determinate mode of knowledge. Put differently, Badiou contends that this internal incompleteness of knowledge is a result of the subject's immediate immersion in the infinite that foundationally precedes it as its ontological ground; being *qua* being, as necessarily Not-One, cannot ever, in principle, be unified (i.e., counted-for-one) and thereby made the object of a total and complete form of knowledge. This Badiouian gap between Truth and knowledge certainly isn't indicative of a distance between the finite here-and-now and an ever receding, forever deferred infinitude *à la* the "bad infinity" of the Kantian dichotomy condemning phenomenal reality to perpetually strive in vain after the vanishing point of regulative ideality

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--"*nous habitons l'infinie comme notre séjour absolument plat*" (Badiou, *Court traité d'ontologie transitoire*, p. 22). The infinitude and timelessness of Badiouian Truth, in the sense of a structurally determined place, isn't a strictly normative or prescriptive principle akin to Kant's regulative ideal, but, rather, the descriptive actuality of that which always-already exists in the present--"With Badiou . . . the infinite ceases to be the limit of the conceivable, of the human--of the finite--to become the very medium of all existence (including possible existence)" (Hallward, "Generic Sovereignty," p. 90). Furthermore, in commenting upon Lacan's theory of sexual difference as formulated in the nineteenth and twentieth seminars, Badiou observes that he and Lacan part company on the question regarding the ontological status of infinity: for Lacan,

infinity is a fictive, mythic construct incapable of supporting any judgment of existence--Lacan views every infinity as "bad" in the Hegelian sense--whereas, for Badiou, infinity is nothing other than the fundamental actuality of being *qua* being.⁶¹

What about the other senses of *vérité*, both as veridicalities-to-come and, additionally, as certain processes? Badiou remarks that, "*la vérité est un processus et non une illumination*" (Badiou, *Saint Paul*, p. 16). That is to say, in Badiou's system, *vérité* also refers to the dynamics enabling changes to be produced in states of knowledge. This activity of "forcing," which Badiou refers to with his technical term "*forçage*" (and which could also here be dubbed "truth-as-process"), follows in the wake of an event having unveiled a void in knowledge due to the inevitable absence of some previously unaccounted for (or, as Badiou would say, uncounted) excess. The subject of an event makes a decision to name this void, this point of exclusion in the fabric of extant knowledge.⁶² Thereafter, this subject, by virtue of what Badiou designates as its "fidelity" or "faithfulness" to the event bringing it into existence, engages in a variety of concrete practices and interventions aimed at changing the state of its situation under the influence of a specific truth (a la a localized void in knowledge) emerging through the subject's founding event --"I shall call 'truth' (a truth) the real process of a fidelity to an event: that which this fidelity produces in the situation" (Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 42).

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Badiou subsequently observes that, "A truth punches a 'hole' in knowledges, it is heterogeneous to them, but it is also the sole known source of new knowledges. We shall say that the truth forces knowledges" (Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 70).

Truths-as-veridicalities-to-come, as different from Truth-as-place, aren't special sorts of epistemological contents elusively fleeing from every attempt to apprehend them. Nor are these truths (noumenal) entities transcending concrete empirical reality. Instead, under the heading of the *forçage* of *vérité* effectuated under the aegis of a *sujet du événement*, Badiou groups together the various imaginable operations for bringing about changes in knowledge through the appeal to those points where exclusions from previous epistemological regimes become visible through the flash of illumination provided by an event. In the course of elucidating his sense of *forçage*, Badiou clearly posits an intimate relation between truth and knowledge--"*Ce concept . . . je le soutiens du nom de forçage ... Il s'agit du point où une vérité, si inachevée soit-elle, autorise des anticipations de savoir, non sur ce qui est, mais sur ce qui aura été si la vérité vient à son achèvement*" (Alain Badiou, "*La verite: forçage et innommable*," *Conditions*, p. 206). Once a hole in knowledge is revealed in this fashion, the militant subject who remains faithful to a given event labors to transform the epistemological terrain of the present state of the situation by introducing new names for these omissions in this *status quo*, by putting marks of the truth-event into circulation.⁶³

The terms derived from the event and its naming by the subject of the event can, in certain circumstances, be added to knowledge as supplements or new components. Truths-as-veridicalities-to-come should be defined as those features of a truth-event that eventually, in the future, become inscribed back within the frame of knowledge as accepted veridicalities (i.e., as valid or legitimated facts, propositions, judgments, etc.). A subject of an event seizes a particular manifestation of a dehiscence within knowledge--this indestructible incompleteness in general is Truth-as-place-and forcefully struggles to insert that which announces itself through an event into the field of knowledge, thereby modifying this very field in the process. As Étienne Balibar

notes in a recent article, Badiou, "oblige

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us to give the name 'subject' to the operator of the forcing that reduces truth (*vérité*) to veridicity, or event to knowledge" (Étienne Balibar, "'The history of truth': Alain Badiou in French Philosophy" [trans. David Macey], *Radical Philosophy*, no. 115, September/October 2002, p. 23). Consequently, although Truth-as-place forever marks an emptiness that cannot be purged from the intermingling of being and knowledge--the space of *vérité* intrinsically resists inscription within or suturing to the reality dwelling at the sometimes volatile, unstable intersection of being and knowledge--the specific contours of truths as localized voids in a given field of knowledge can be, and indeed are, transformed into veridicalities via the processes of forcing operated by subjects of events.⁶⁴ Badiou's theory of the truth-event aims to delineate the ahistorical motor, specified in terms of the voids in the epistemological order made inevitable by the gap between being and knowledge as the space of *vérité*, of the ongoing historical metamorphoses of knowledge. Similarly, Balibar insightfully observes that, for Badiou, "historicity" is yet another term designating the fundamental, eternal incompleteness of knowledge--"Historicity is basically . . . the heterogeneous association of a determinate knowledge and a name for the truth, which demonstrates precisely the infinite or radical incompleteness of that knowledge" (Balibar, "'The history of truth,'" p. 25). Or, as François Wahl notes apropos of Badiou, "*il n'y a pas de langue complète*" (Wahl, "*Le soustractif*," p. 23).

If the truths of events could not, in principle, be forced into eventually becoming veridicalities added to knowledge, then Badiou would admittedly be quite vulnerable to the accusation that he treats *vérité* as a transcendent regulative ideal. And yet, Badiou's thought moves in precisely the opposite direction:

. . . a subject generates names whose referents are in the future anterior. Such names will have been assigned referents or meanings when the situation will have come to be in which the indiscernible, which is only represented (or included), is finally presented, as a truth of the former situation (p. 31).

(Badiou, "On a Finally Objectless Subject")

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The forcing activities of subjects of events, subjects that are faithful to named truths, makes it possible for certain truths, as discrete, localized, voids within an epistemological present, to later achieve entry into the domain of accepted knowledge. A Kantian regulative ideal involves something that it is impossible to instantiate, some element that is necessarily lacking within situated reality; this sort of ideal is always and invariably absent. Conversely, Badiouian truths have, in the mode of the *futur antérieur*, the potential to eventually become fulfilled, that is, to gain "referents" or "meanings" in a new, subsequent epistemological state of affairs. Truths can pass over from absence to presence, from exclusion to inclusion. Along these same lines, the argument could easily be made that, when Badiou refers to particular truths (in addition to the general philosophical category of Truth) as "infinite," the temptation to read this as an endorsement of a conception of truths as transcendent, otherworldly, quasi-noumenal etherealities must be decisively resisted. Badiou's qualification of truths as infinite refers to (to put it in Lacanese) their potential Symbolic density, not their disembodied detachment from the world in the mode

of purely empty formalities categorically opposed to representational actualization. The militant subject of the truth-event is unable, from within the finitude of his/her local perspective, to predict the indefinitely large number of ways in which a particular truth can and will be inscribed into unforeseeable orders of knowledge yet-to-come.⁶⁵ Even within a present epistemological regime, subjects are at pains to accurately measure the full consequences that flow from the forcing of a truth into the vast, complex representational matrices surrounding these same subjects--"the set of actors of a generic procedure, of a truth procedure, are clearly ignorant, unknowing, of what it is" (Badiou, "Politics and Philosophy," p. 122). The reverberations of the various registers of knowledge in response to a truth, the resonations ringing out from an act of forcing, are too numerous and multi-faceted to be accurately assessed by a single ear alone. In short, the number of veridical ramifications of a truth is "infinite" (i.e., non-finite, innumerable) insofar as the very essence of a specific truth is partially dependent upon the open-ended structure of the future anterior, namely, upon the richness of a truth's actual as well as potential veridicalities.

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In the course of providing what at first sounds like a straightforward exegetical account of Badiou's system and its terminology, Zizek advances what can now be recognized as a somewhat loaded definition of Badiouian truth. He argues that, "the infinite Truth is 'eternal' and *meta-* with regard to the temporal process of Being; it is a flash of another dimension transcending the positivity of Being" (Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject*, p. 132). Since Zizek, in the opening phases of his reading of Badiou, posits that *vérité* is a meta-level feature of "another dimension" occasionally glimpsed from within experiential reality, the charge of Kantian idealism articulated at the end of the same chapter of *The Ticklish Subject* ("The Politics of Truth, or, Alain Badiou as a Reader of Saint Paul") comes as no surprise. This talk of separate dimensions already serves to color Badiou in a slightly Kantian hue. The problem with Zizek's interpretation is that, in somewhat deceptively contrasting the dimensions of fleeting, ephemeral truth with fluctuating, tangible being, he ignores the multiple dimensions internal to the Badiouian conception of *vérité* itself. Truth-as-place is the eternally unsuturable void subsisting, as an inherent structural feature, between the uncountable infinitude of being and the finitude of knowledge (the latter relying upon the "finitization" of infinite being through counting-for-one), with knowledge being immanent to the single plane of being itself. In other words, for Badiou, there is no second ontological dimension such as a noumenal "beyond"--"*nous pouvons déjà dire, nous, habitants du séjour infini de la Terre, que tout est ici, toujours ici . . . Ici est le lieu du devenir des vérités. Ici nous sommes infinis*" (Badiou, *Court traité d'ontologie transitoire*, p. 23). For this very reason, Badiou vehemently denies that he indulges in any sort of idealism--"To be an idealist you have to distinguish between thought and matter, transcendence and immanence, the high and the low, pure thought and empirical thought. None of these distinctions function in the system I propose" (Badiou, "Being by Numbers," p. 123). Truth-as-place is the timeless catalyst for the temporal evolution of epistemological orders. But, by contrast, truths-as-veridicalities-to-come--the forcing of specific truths by faithful subjects of events transforms today's given truths into the new knowledge of tomorrow's

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veridicalities--are holes in various Symbolic orders that have a chance to be filled if and when these orders undergo alteration (thus giving the lie to the allegations of a covert reliance upon a Kantian constitutive-versus-regulative opposition). As Badiou protests, "I conceive of a truth not as a pre-given transcendent norm, in the name of which we are supposed to act, but as a *production*" (Badiou, "Politics and Philosophy," p. 122). He unequivocally declares that, "I am absolutely immanentist--I am convinced that if there is truth, it isn't something transcendent, it's in the situation" (Badiou, "Being by Numbers," p. 87).

However, one would be justified in asking Badiou whether veridicalities that once were truths within a prior epistemological order are also, in their own way, as timeless and universal as Truth *qua* eternal gap between being and knowledge. Is Badiou interested in offering a theory in which the initial emergence of timeless truths is located within the diachronic confines of historical temporality? Is the general theme at stake here the immanent temporal genesis of the thereafter timelessly transcendent, or something else altogether? Badiou sometimes hints that these sorts of motifs are, in fact, his real philosophical concern--"A truth is what within time exceeds time" (Badiou, "Being by Numbers," p. 87). Along related lines, it merits inquiring after the notion of knowledge. Badiou's definition of *vérité* (as well as of event) is obviously parasitic with respect to the distinction between being and knowledge.⁶⁶ So, where does knowledge come from? What spurs the (re)presentational reduplication of being? Žizek claims that both Kant and Badiou leave these enigmas unresolved--"The basic problem remains unsolved both by Kant and by Badiou: how does the gap between the pure multiplicity of being and its appearance in the multitude of worlds arise? *How does being appear to itself?*" (Žizek, "Foreword to the Second Edition," p. lxxxv). The strength of Žizek's reading of Badiou resides not in his critique of the latter's supposed Kantian idealism, but in forcing Badiou's system to confront the necessity of thinking through the preconditions of the truth-event, rather than complacently assuming that "it happens."

Part Two: Enigmatic Reduplications

Near the end of a splendid essay on Badiou, Peter Hallward enumerates a series of questions thus far left hanging in Badiou's still unfolding oeuvre. Hallward observes that, "knowledge must be retained in relation to truth. The truth comes to be as the truth of a specific situation" (Hallward, "Generic Sovereignty," p. 105). Hence, truths, as localized voids in given (re)presentational configurations, remain distinct from veridicalities only so long as knowledge is always-already present beforehand:

To accept the specificity of the void-in-occasion--a specific void--, then, is to accept at least some kind of 'knowledge' or relation as transcendental to Badiou's system as a whole. Knowledge would thus be transcendental to ontology itself. However, acceptance of the transcendental aspect of a specific knowledge would undercut his critique of knowledge as the mere result of a construction, as 'added' in order to be eventually subtracted (p. 105). (Hallward, "Generic Sovereignty")

Evidently, Badiou, as also charged by Žizek, uncritically assumes the pre-existence of epistemological frameworks, remaining silent regarding how and/or why knowledge emerges from being in the first place. During an interview with Hallward in 1997, Badiou mentions this very criticism and concedes that this problem is something he is still in the process of solving to

his own satisfaction.⁶⁷ The potential solution sketched in this interview clearly foreshadows the content of the fourteenth and final chapter ("*L' être et l'apparaître*") of the 1998 book *Court traité d'ontologie transitoire*.⁶⁸ How does Badiou account there for the Symbolic reduplication of being by knowledge?

Badiou, in relation to the "Copernican revolution" of Kant (*à la* the transcendental idealism underpinning the Kantian account of knowledge), initiates a Copernican counter-revolution of sorts. Against Kant, he argues that the conceptually expressible relations between phenomena (i.e., appearances)

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immanently arise out of being, instead of originating from within the de-ontologized confines of an understanding buried at the idealist core of Kantian subjectivity. Badiou sets out to justify this position in a demonstration that can schematically be broken down into five interconnected steps. First, being per se, in and of itself, doesn't exist, since the key principle of Badiou's ontology stipulates that only multiplicities exist (to the detriment of any totality).⁶⁹ Badiou repeatedly insists that set theory, assuming mathematics to be the most direct expression of the Real (with ample contemporary justification on this point),⁷⁰ necessitates siding with the antitheses of Kant's first two antinomies of pure reason. This leads automatically to the second assertion: each and every ontological investigation is entirely local, in other words, limited to engaging with particular, determinate beings instead of a grand whole.⁷¹ In the third step here, Badiou adds some specificity to the preceding second claim in stating that all being, as pure multiplicity, is necessarily a "being-there" (*être-là*)--"*Tout être est être-là: voilà l'essence de l'apparaître*" (Badiou, *Court traité d'ontologie transitoire*, p. 191). He refers to the specific sites of being's always-localized incarnations as "situations."⁷² Fourth, these situations shape those beings encountered as appearances. These appearances are, in fact, the fundamental essence of the being-there of being.⁷³ Therefore, fifth and finally, appearing is an inherent determination of being's nature as being--"*L'apparaître est une détermination intrinsèque de l'être*" (Badiou, *Court traité d'ontologie transitoire*, p. 192). Furthermore, appearance--the notion of an appearance involves differential determination (i.e., appearances acquire epistemological values through relations with other appearances)--inevitably and invariably points towards an impossible, non-existent totality of Being as the largest encompassing set of all possible relations between beings-as-appearances (consequently, human reason is haunted by a "transcendental illusion" of unified wholeness despite the evident absence of any such unity). For Badiou, one of the most important results of this exercise is that logic and its categories, insofar as logical structures are defined as relations obtaining between appearances, aren't to be viewed from a Kantian perspective as part of a subject-centered order

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somehow mysteriously "preceding" the immediate manifestation of appearances themselves.⁷⁴ Badiou is careful to note that his crucial ontological principle, as the first premise in this argumentative sequence, is an internally generated product of formalized mathematical reason itself.⁷⁵ That is to say, it has nothing to do either with the invocation of an inaccessible, otherworldly domain or with arbitrary assertions about presumed limits to the powers of rationality.⁷⁶ Commenting on this same chapter of *Court traité d'ontologie transitoire*, Zizek

aptly observes that the standard philosophical flavor of the distinction between being and appearance is decisively altered by Badiou: typically, being is portrayed as concrete, tangible, and substantial in contrast to the fleeting and ephemeral character of (sometimes illusory) appearances (for Kant too, objects-as-appearances lack the same ontological heft supposedly possessed by things-in-themselves); the Badiouian universe, by contrast, being *qua* being is a weightless abstraction best captured by the pure formality of mathematics, whereas appearances within specific situations are left to carry the quotidian weight of experienced existence.⁷⁷

Assuming that knowledge is constructed on the basis of appearances and the conceptual relations immanent to them, Badiou could perhaps go so far as to assert that he's able to deduce the existence of knowledge from the internal dynamics of his ontology as delineated previously in *L'être et l'événement*. Moreover, this deduction as Badiou himself underscores, requires no idealist-style recourse to the constituting activities of a transcendental subject intervening within the order of being--"*Il ne dépend d'aucun sujet qu'on présupposerait dans sa constitution. L'étant-multiple n'apparaît pas pour un sujet. Il est bien plutôt de l'essence de l'étant d'apparaître*" (Badiou, *Court traité d'ontologie transitoire*, p. 192). Neither knowledge nor subjectivity lay claim to originally transcendent roles in Badiou's system. Knowledge, as the conceptually organized interconnections amongst multitudes of appearances, isn't the result of the apriori operations of a pre-given epistemological "1," but, rather, a domain of structure immanent to *l'être-en-tant-qu' être* within which the knowing self merely participates as a subsidiary fold or inflection. This is precisely the place where a series of problems intervene.

Readers of Badiou who disagree with each other (for example, Hallward and Critchley) at least concur apropos of one theme in Badiou's oeuvre: for Badiou, one becomes a subject at decisive moments. In other words, subjectivity emerges through particular processes, instead of functioning as an innate element of all possible situations.⁷⁸ Through a critical reading of Lacan, Manfred Frank argues that any and every genetic theory of the subject, of subjectivity as a becoming, is doomed to failure by virtue of an unavoidable, vicious circularity. From Frank's perspective, these sorts of (what he designates as) French "neostructuralist" approaches are driven to conceal this failure via a specious sleight-of-hand in which, so to speak, the rabbit they seemingly pull out of the hat *ex nihilo* is the one they covertly put there beforehand.⁷⁹ How does this critique work, and what relevance does it have with respect to Badiou in particular? Badiou posits that a subject proper only arises when an event calls forth a form of subjectivity specific to that event's truth--"I call 'subject' the bearer [*le support*] of a fidelity, the one who bears a process of truth. The subject, therefore, in no way pre-exists the process. He is absolutely nonexistent in the situation 'before' the event. We might say that the process of truth *induces* a subject" (Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 43). Frank argues, in opposition to what he takes to be the position of thinkers such as Althusser and Lacan, that phenomena like recognition and interpellation occur exclusively on condition that a kind of subjectivity always-already exists as that which performs the gesture of recognizing itself, of taking the stance of respondent to the interpellating call of the Other (Zizek points out that Badiou's manner of linking subject and event is uncannily close to Althusser's theory of ideological interpellation⁸⁰). For Frank, without assuming the effective existence of sentient, self-reflective subjectivity as an un-derived, primordial given (and not as a genetic result or by-product), one is powerless to explain exactly who or what performs the creative act supposedly generating subjectivity. Almost certainly, he would raise this same

objection against Badiou: a truth-event cannot, in reality, found subjectivity, since there must first be a subject who discerns the truth-event and makes a decision to submit to its injunction through faithful practices of *forçage*. If, following

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Badiou, one refuses to label the individual prior to interpellation by a truth-event a subject proper, then what ought one to designate a human being as potentially-but-not-yet-actually caught up in evenmental (*événementiel*) processes?

On several occasions, Badiou contrasts animality and human subjectivity, with the event serving to establish the boundary between these two.⁸¹ As Critchley notes, "For Badiou, we are simply the sort of animals who are claimed by circumstances to *become* a subject" (Critchley, "Demanding Approval," p. 21). Badiou explains himself thus:

Let us say that a *subject*, which goes beyond the animal (although the animal remains its sole foundation [*support*]) needs something to have happened, something that cannot be reduced to its ordinary inscription in 'what there is.' Let us call this *supplement* an *event*, and let us distinguish multiple-being, where it is not a matter of truth (but only of opinions), from the event, which compels us to decide a *new way* of being (p. 41).

(Badiou, *Ethics*)

Who or what is this "us" that can "decide a *new way* of being?" What is it in human beings that animals lack? Or, as Lacanian psychoanalysis would have it, what is it that human beings lack that other animals possess? In other words, what resides within the nature or constitution of humanity that allows for receptivity to the happening of events? Animals aren't the only creatures mired in the brute immediacy of "what there is"--human beings too, when simply operating within the confines of a particular state of the situation, are less than full subjects (perhaps one would do well here to retrieve an Aristotelian notion of "rational animality" as the missing third term to be placed between Badiou's two poles of animality and subjectivity).

As early as several select lectures from the late 1970s (found in *Théorie du sujet*), Badiou provides some specifics concerning his conception of subjectivity. He speaks of the "subject-effect" (*effet-sujet*)--throughout his intellectual itinerary, Badiou consistently maintains that the subject is an effect,

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an effect of the truth-event-as necessarily involving both "subjectivization" (*subjectivation*) and a "subjective process" (*procès subjectif*). Subjectivization is the disruption of a given order by something in excess of that *status quo*, while a subjective process is defined as the labor of reinscribing this previously excluded excess back within the situational space.⁸² In *L'être et l'événement*, Badiou alludes to the notion of subjectivization in declaring that, "*L'impasse de l'être . . . est en vérité la passe du Sujet*" (Badiou, *L'être et l'événement*, p. 469). Later, during the course of his discussion of Saint Paul, Badiou stipulates that, "*une rupture événementielle constitue toujours son sujet dans la forme divisée du «non . . . mais»*" (Badiou, *Saint Paul*, p. 67). With reference to the earlier *Théorie du sujet* (in which Badiou also mentions the role of the "no" in the genesis of subjectivity proper⁸³), the "no" here is correlative to the moment of subjectivization as the negative withdrawal from a particular situation's way of configuring being

via knowledge, and the "but" signals the task of *forçage* characterizing a subjective process.⁸⁴ In short, the "no" of subjectivization marks the emergence of the subject itself.⁸⁵ The faithful, militant struggle of the subjective process is left in the wake of this originary gesture of negation. Where is the difficulty in this? What remains to be explained in response to something like Manfred Frank's charge of vicious circularity?

A short passage from *L'être et l'événement* betrays the problem at stake--"*l'impasse de l'être est le point où un Sujet se convoque lui-même à décider*" (Badiou, *L'être et l'événement*, p. 469). A surreptitious double-sense to the term "subject" appears to have crept in here: the subject is simultaneously that which decides on an event as well as being that which is generated as a product of the event (this problematic equivocation is similarly revealed by the fact that the Badiouian event is always and necessarily double, having to happen twice before it could be said even to have happened once--the second event, retroactively producing the first event, is the groundless, arbitrary, *ex nihilo* moment of decision when the choice is made to "intervene" in a situation by naming the first event as a proper event per se⁸⁶). In other words, Badiouian subjectivity seems to function as both cause and effect of the truth-event.⁸⁷

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As in the case of counting-for-one, the question of exactly who or what intervenes and thereby names the first event is left hanging: Who or what makes such a decision, if subjectivity doesn't arise until after this decision generates its subsequent, consequent effects? Although Žižek's indictment of Badiou as a closet Kantian idealist arguably misses the mark, he nonetheless accurately perceives the need to break this circular deadlock in Badiou's system. That is to say, Žižek insightfully identifies Badiou's failure to specify precisely what, in the very moment that gives birth to both the truth-event and its subject, makes possible the founding negative withdrawal (i.e., the subjectifying "no") from the positive order of given, extant situations. What underpins the uniquely human capacity to negate "what there is" in favor of an unconditional fidelity to an "x" internally excluded within a situational field? If this power of negativity by itself isn't to be identified as the subject per se, then what is it and from where does it come? Balibar appears to be raising similar queries when, regarding Badiou's contention that the decision for the naming of the event paves the way for the militant fidelity of the subjective process, he asks, "at what moment, to what extent, and in accordance with what subjective modality, does generic fidelity, which has become the operator that founds the universal . . . come to be dependent on a proper name?" (Balibar, "The history of truth," p. 26). Žižek contends that, apropos of these troubling issues, Badiou's system requires a supplementary recourse to the resources of Lacanian psychoanalytic metapsychology.

Badiou refuses to identify the eternal void of Truth-as-place with the subject. From his perspective, to do so would be tantamount to confusing a timeless, inhuman feature of ontologically determined structure with the specifically local inflections of existence qualified as properly human.⁸⁸ What's more, Badiou fears that any association of the subject with his order of being would risk eliminating the possibility of the subject participating in the non-being of the event. Žižek takes great care to emphasize that the link between void and subject is the crux of the difference between Badiou and Lacan:

. . . the Lacanian answer to the question asked (and answered in a negative way) by such

different philosophers as Althusser, Derrida, and Badiou-- 'Can the gap, the opening, the Void which precedes the gesture of subjectivization, still be called 'subject?'--is an emphatic 'Yes!' --the subject is both at the same time, the ontological gap (the 'night of the world,' the madness of radical self-withdrawal) as well as the gesture of subjectivization which, by means of a short circuit between the Universal and the Particular, heals the wound of this gap . . . (p. 159)
(Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject*)

Zizek continues:

. . . Lacan insists on the primacy of the (negative) act over the (positive) establishment of a 'new harmony' via the intervention of some new Master-Signifier . . . This difference between Badiou and Lacan concerns precisely the status of the subject: Badiou's main point is to avoid identifying the subject with the constitutive Void of the structure--such an identification already 'ontologizes' the subject, albeit in a purely negative way--that is, it turns the subject into an entity consubstantial with the structure, an entity that belongs to the order of what is necessary and a priori ('no structure without a subject'). To this Lacanian ontologization of the subject, Badiou opposes its 'rarity,' the local-contingent-fragile-passing emergence of subjectivity . . . For Badiou . . . the subject is consubstantial with a contingent act of Decision; while Lacan introduces the distinction between the subject and the gesture of subjectivization: what Badiou and Laclau describe is the process of subjectivization--the emphatic engagement, the assumption of fidelity to the Event . . . while the subject is the negative gesture

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of breaking out of the constraints of Being that opens up the space of possible subjectivization (p. 159-160).
(Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject*)

Badiou and Lacan are perfect inversions of each other regarding how they each cast the distinction between the terms "subject" and "subjectivization." Badiou treats subjectivization as the founding negativity of a not-quite-yet-subject (i.e., an excessive inconsistency in a given situation) that subsequently produces a subject, with this thus-produced subject defined as the positive set of fidelity procedures in relation to the content of a particular truth-event. Conversely, Lacan, according to Zizek, treats the subject as the void of an irreducible negativity in response to which all forms of subjectivization (*qua* determinate incarnations *à la* "suturings" to specific events and their truths) are partially failed attempts to domesticate. Consequently, as can be seen above, Zizek accuses Badiou of confusing a description of the process of subject-ivization with an analysis of the subject itself.

Zizek's critique of Badiou as a Kantian falls flat in part due to the distinction between types of *vérité* already discernible in the Badiouian system. However, this other layer of Zizek's critical engagement with Badiou currently under discussion calls for developing a distinction, absent in Badiou's texts, between separate senses of the term "void." Incarnate voids within

human nature (i.e., voids as internal to, for instance, the libidinal economy) should be distinguished from an inhuman, structural void (i.e., Void-as-general-place, as a universal feature of ontology). Zizek could be construed as pleading for the preservation of a difference between void-as-subject--while addressing Badiou's work, Zizek insists upon the equivalence between subjectivity and the death drive (*Todestrieb*)--and void-as-place (i.e., the irreducible gap between being and knowledge previously labeled Truth-as-place). The Lacanian void-as-subject (\$) functions, in this argument, not only as the possibility condition for the human individual being receptive to the disruption of the reigning order by the advent of a truth-event (i.e., as the power of the Badiouian "no" of subjectivization that clears the ground for something other

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than extant knowledges), but also as the reason why, against Badiou, one cannot fully collapse the subject back into the series of innerworldly procedures and practices of concrete fidelity. The negativity of this "barred S" is, at one and the same time, both a condition of possibility as well as a condition of impossibility for the subject's positive identification with the cause of a truth-event:

. . . it is Lacan's contention that, in this negative gesture of 'wiping the slate clean,' something (a void) is confronted which is already 'sutured' with the arrival of a new Truth-Event. For Lacan, negativity, a negative gesture of withdrawal, precedes any positive gesture of enthusiastic identification with a Cause: negativity functions as the condition of (im)possibility of the enthusiastic identification--that is to say, it lays the ground, opens up the space for it, but is simultaneously obfuscated by it and undermines it (p. 153-154).

(Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject*)

The irony of Zizek accusing Badiou of Kantianism presently reaches its peak: the vision of the subject shared by Kant and his German idealist successors, clothed in Lacanian terminology, is mobilized against Badiou. Although Zizek thinks Manfred Frank clumsily misreads Lacan,⁸⁹ there is nonetheless common ground between them in that neither believes that one can simply conjure the subject completely *ex nihilo* out of, for instance, an event alone--"strictly speaking, individuals do not 'become' subjects, they 'always-already' are subjects" (Zizek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment*, p. 60). And, both of them refer to late modern German philosophies of subjectivity when raising this objection (Zizek explicitly uses Hegel's "night of the world" phrase in this critical reading of Badiou). Something other than a mere impasse in knowledge or the Symbolic order, this impasse being really just as structural and inhumanly anonymous as the ontological void with which Badiou refuses to identify the subject, must be posited as a prior element conditioning the sort of subjectivity delineated by Badiou.

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Zizek proceeds to assert that the death drive is, at least from a Lacanian point of view, the subject itself as this power of negativity. He claims that this is the hidden, disavowed lynchpin of Badiou's foundational distinction between being and event--"The Lacanian death drive (a category Badiou adamantly opposes) is . . . a kind of 'vanishing mediator' between Being and Event: there is a 'negative' gesture constitutive of the subject which is then obfuscated in 'Being' (the

established ontological order) and in fidelity to the Event" (Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject*, p. 160). Badiou allegedly excludes this negative mediator from his system--"there is simply no place for the Freudian death drive in Badiou's pair of Being and Event."⁹⁰ What accounts for this exclusion? Furthermore, when Badiou, in *Théorie du sujet*, designates the subject-effect as the paradoxical unity-in-contradiction of subjectivization (i.e., the negative gesture of withdrawal) and the subjective process (i.e., the positive procedure of forcing),⁹¹ isn't this perhaps another way of expressing the Lacanian notion of subjectivity mobilized by Zizek in his critique? Does Badiou change his mind on this point after *Théorie du sujet*, thereafter excluding (in later texts such as *L'être et l'événement*) negativity from this account? Similarly, what about those moments when Lacan speaks of the subject as tied to a dynamic of "temporal pulsation?"⁹² Given this, would he really object to Badiou's assertions regarding the "rarity" of subjectivity *qua* occurrence?

In response to Zizek's assertions, Badiou would likely have two main reservations about introducing the psychoanalytic concept of *Trieb* into his theoretical apparatus. First, the omnipresence of libidinal causality in the analytic depiction of the psyche threatens to foreclose the possibility of the event as a radical rupture or discontinuity in the fabric of history. Doesn't Freud's infamous psychical determinism portray each and every stage of ontogenetic (and even phylogenetic) development as shaped by forces inevitably establishing an unbroken thread of continuity between past and present? Under the sway of the drives' relentless demands for repetition as well as the perpetual returns of the repressed, how can the event, as the unpredictable irruption of the new that entirely breaks with its prior temporal context and historical coordinates, even

be thought at all? Psychoanalysis, in its more deterministic modes--this determinism is always, ultimately, grounded on the theory of the drives as the rudiments of the libidinal economy--operates as a genealogy of the singular subject, an archaeology unearthing the strata connecting the multiple tiers of the mind (Bruno Bosteels, a Badiouian theorist attacked by Zizek in the 2002 foreword to the second edition of *For they know not what they do*, claims that Badiou's *Théorie du sujet*, with its dialectical materialist emphasis on the subject's reflexive "topological contortions" in relation to a malleable Real, seeks to avoid the deterministic closure of models based on "structural causality," such as those ostensibly espoused by Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalytic metapsychology⁹³). Badiou insists that philosophy, in order to revitalize itself, must break with the various forms of genealogical historicism holding sway since Hegel and Nietzsche--"*Je propose d'arracher la philosophie à cet impératif généalogique*" (Badiou, "*Le (re)tour de la philosophie elle-même*," p. 59).⁹⁴ The "genealogical imperative" of Freudian analysis would likewise be a danger to avoid from this perspective. Badiou's second objection to utilizing the death drive in particular would be that this concept is too closely allied to the philosophical thematic of finitude, too proximate to, among other notions, Heideggerian Being-towards-death (*Sein-zum-Tode*). In characterizing the subject of the truth-event as a finite moment of an infinite process, Badiou is stringently opposed to post-Kantian philosophy's dogmatic insistence that subjectivity is wholly and completely reducible to an essentially limited, mortal status.⁹⁵ The Badiouian subject carries within itself (whether it knows it or not) the infinitudes of truths, rather than being expelled from these spaces of *vérité* by virtue of condemnation to the prison-house of epistemological finitude. And, on several occasions, Badiou remarks that death, usually taken to be the ultimate emblem of humanity's finitude, is simply a feature of animality,

instead of being a mark of subjectivity proper.⁹⁶

Freud's depictions of the *Todestrieb* seemingly wed it, in a manner consistent with Badiou's likely suspicions, to the fact of finitude. Freud treats it as the most profound symptom of the human individual's embodied (hence mortal) condition,

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going so far as to discern its machinations across the broad spectrum of living beings (in fact, Freud draws a degree of inspiration for this idea from studies of single-celled organisms). Under the influence of the somatically dictated program of *Thanatos*, the drives strive towards an inorganic state.⁹⁷ How could one not interpret this as a psychoanalytic endorsement of philosophies of subjective finitude? Zizek accomplishes a complete reversal of this standard reading of the death drive. The blind insistence of *Trieb* that Freud attributes to the *Todestrieb* isn't, according to Zizek, a manifestation of mortal finitude. On the contrary, this compulsive repetitiousness is best compared to an undead, immortal revenant that permanently haunts the subject.⁹⁸ Drives, epitomized through the evocative figure of the *Todestrieb*,⁹⁹ pay no heed whatsoever to the passage of time. They endlessly reiterate their demands for the pure repetition of contingent past contents frozen into thereafter necessary forms:

This notion of a spectral undead existence also allows us to account for the fundamental paradox of the Freudian/Lacanian death drive: like the Kierkegaardian sickness unto death, the death drive is not the mark of human finitude, but its very opposite, the name for 'eternal (spectral) life,' the index of a dimension in human existence that persists for ever, beyond our physical death, and of which we can never rid ourselves . . . for Lacan, the death drive is precisely the ultimate Freudian name for the dimension traditional metaphysics designated as that of immortality--for a drive, a 'thrust,' which persists beyond the (biological) cycle of generation and corruption, beyond the 'way of all flesh' (p. 293-294).

(Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject*)

The instincts of animals generally tend to obey the natural rhythms of a biological organism automatically attuned to its environment. Drives, by contrast, are compulsive forces entirely divorced from these sorts of organically regulated periods and phases, blindly demanding an indefinite sequence of reiterations

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of a given state of affairs. Utterly ignoring the condition of their "mortal coils," a neglect licensed by an unconscious unaware of mortality,¹⁰⁰ drives make no exceptions for the "weakness of the flesh"--the individual's finitude is of no concern whatsoever.¹⁰¹ *Trieb* is a ravenous, insatiable parasite. Although deriving its living force from the body, it nonetheless pushes this same body towards death in its uncompromising, unconditional pursuit of *jouissance*.¹⁰² So, rather than serving as yet another indication of the human being's finite animal condition (to be contrasted with the true infinitude of Badiouian subjectivity), the Zizekian *Todestrieb* is an incarnate manifestation of an "immortality" that breaks with nature's embodied cycles of generation and corruption--"as Freud emphasizes repeatedly, there is no notion or representation of death in the unconscious: the Freudian *Todestrieb* has absolutely nothing to do with the

Heideggerian *Sein-zum-Tode*. Drive is immortal, eternal, 'undead'" (Zizek, *The Plague of Fantasies*, p. 89).

In his chapter on Badiou in *The Ticklish Subject*, Zizek indulges in a somewhat strange equivocation between the subject and the death drive. Whether or not Lacan actually endorses such an identity between these two terms is open to question. However, elsewhere, Zizek makes the more intuitive observation that *Trieb* is a transitional, borderline function halfway between raw animality and full-fledged subjectivity--"The mysterious intermediate status of drive resides in the fact that, while we are NOT YET dealing with the subject . . . we are also NO LONGER dealing with the immediate self-enclosure of a biological organism" (Zizek, "*Il n'y a pas de rapport religieux*," p. 96). This formulation is especially effective in showing why Lacan's version of the Freudian concept of *Trieb* would be extremely useful for Badiou. First of all, given Freud's stipulation that drives, unlike instincts, are "objectless"--drives do not come pre-wired in terms of some naturally ordained orientation towards specific sorts of entities and behaviors¹⁰³--this explains why human beings aren't totally soldered in place to extant situations and states of situations (an explanation crucial for Badiou's system). The inborn negativity of drives, the fact that "human nature" is always-already out of joint with the brute givenness of "what there is," is a vital

precondition clearing the space for engagements with events. Secondly, the ability of drives to operate "beyond the pleasure principle" (this being Freud's point about the *Todestrieb*) dovetails perfectly with a central cluster of notions in Badiou's corpus. Unlike the utilitarian cost-benefit calculations at work in the negotiated exchanges between the pleasure principle and the reality principle, drives in and of themselves, decoupled from this mediating dynamic between principles, are not subject to blackmail by the empirical circumstances of the *status quo*. With great rhetorical energy, Badiou frequently highlights a passion intimately involved in the labor of *forçage*--"*Le processus subjectif d'une vérité est une seule et même chose que l'amour de cette vérité*" (Badiou, *Saint Paul*, p. 97). He emphasizes that the forcing effectuated by the subject of the truth-event is driven by "fidelity," "faithfulness," "militancy," and "love."¹⁰⁴ What are these terms if not so many different names for that dimension of the human transcending, in its unnatural excessiveness, the ordered run of things (i.e., Badiou's "service of goods" [*service des biens*]¹⁰⁵)? What, within the core of humanity's very being, agitates and provokes a dissatisfaction with reigning states of affairs, with the stabilizing, soporific equilibrium between being and knowledge? What empowers and compels individuals to sacrifice their delicate well being for the sake of amorous, political, scientific, or even artistic causes? Zizek makes a convincing case for the (re)introduction of a psychoanalytic conception of the material nature of the Real (as epitomized by the theory of *Trieb*) within Badiou's system on the basis of these queries--"how does the gap open up within the absolute closure of the Real, within which elements of the Real can appear? Why the need for the pure multitude to be represented in a State? . . . Is it not that there already has to be some tension/antagonism that is operative within the pure multitude of Being itself?" (Zizek, "Foreword to the Second Edition," p. lxxxv). Badiou ought to be confronted when he says, "Considered in terms of its mere nature alone, the human animal must be lumped in the same category as its biological companions" (Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 58). Just as the event could be described (in Zizekian parlance) as "in being more than being itself," so too is *Trieb*, as both the negative power of withdrawal

from the world as well as the positive force underpinning the capacity for subjective commitment, "in human nature more than human nature itself."

Conclusion

In forging a theory of the event, Badiou attempts to assign specific socio-historical contexts their appropriate place without, in the process, falling back into historicism's contextual determinism.¹⁰⁶ Badiou is clear: although events open the infinite vistas of truths, they don't descend upon mundane reality from some other, heavenly realm. Every event has a specific "site." That is to say, all events arise within particular, innerworldly configurations. Nonetheless, although the existence of a given site is a condition for the happening of the event, its occurrence cannot be reduced to a mere extension of trends stemming from the situated site itself (otherwise, it wouldn't qualify as an event *qua* event, as a true break)--"The event is both *situated*--it is the event of this or that situation--and *supplementary*; thus absolutely detached from, or unrelated to, all the rules of the situation" (Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 68). Hence, Badiou rejects any kind of determinism that would threaten to reduce all possible occurrences to permutations of an ultimately consistent historical continuum (psychoanalytic employments of the notion of the libidinal economy might sometimes seem to flirt with precisely this sort of reduction).¹⁰⁷ In *L'être et l'événement*, he isolates the event's site as the finite point of genesis for an infinite process--"l'ontologie ensemliste affirme que, si bien entendu la présentation peut être infinie . . . elle est cependant toujours marquée de finitude quant à son origine. C'est cette finitude qui est ici existence d'un site, au bord du vide, historicité" (Badiou, *L'être et l'événement*, p. 208). Elsewhere, in *Saint Paul*, he remarks, "Mais si dans son être l'événement est tributaire de son site, dans ses effets de la vérité il faut qu'il en soit indépendant" (Badiou, *Saint Paul*, p. 124). The event is a "pure commencement"¹⁰⁸ that arises within the defiles of, so to speak, impure continuance.

At this juncture, two trajectories running back-and-forth between the finite and the infinite become visible. On the one hand, Badiou endeavors to describe how the always-given

infinity of being distills itself into the finitude of limited constellations of knowledge, with truths serving as reminders of the never-severed links to this ontological plane. On the other hand, in tying events to the immanence of a circumscribed, localized site, Badiou traces the emergence of the infinite back to a finite originary locus. Thus, knowledge is the becoming finite of infinite being, whereas, in an inverse fashion, the truths of events are excluded elements embedded within finite sites (themselves determined by states of situations) becoming infinite. Although Žižek's way of labeling Badiou as a Kantian idealist misinterprets the first dynamic (i.e., the becoming finite of the infinite), his invocation of the Freudian-Lacanian *Todestrieb* justifiably demonstrates the need for a supplementary, mediating third factor, situated between the poles of the Badiouian dualism between animality and subjectivity, in order even for there to be the very occurrence of the second dynamic (i.e., the becoming infinite of the finite). In Badiou's terminology, one could say that Žižek introduces drives as elements of a finite site that, by virtue of their internal negativity, make possible a militant forcing that transcends the parameters of this same site itself.

Given its role in the preceding discussions, it merits asking exactly what is entailed by Kant's transcendental idealism. Taken in its most traditional and restrictive sense, it involves positing that the synthesizing activities of the thinking subject are constitutive for experiential reality and its correspondingly possible forms of knowledge (Badiou construes Kant's transcendentalism in this narrow fashion¹⁰⁹). Stressing Kant's idealism amounts to underscoring the part that the mind plays in generating an epistemologically accessible world. However, a broader interpretation of the Kantian position is licensed by an emphasis on his transcendentalism (rather than on his idealism): transcendental idealism is interested in investigating those features of subjective constitution, intellectual or otherwise (one might argue that psychoanalytic metapsychology, including drive theory, fits into this kind of transcendental project), that make possible (human) reality itself, that serve as necessary preconditions for things taking shape as they do. In this light, perhaps Zizek's criticism of Badiou should

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be reversed: Badiou is not enough of a transcendentalist. He neglects to stipulate why the finite folds of being that human beings are don't remain idiotically immersed in "what there is." He doesn't say, in any evident or straightforward way, how subjectivization in response to the interpellation of a truth-event is possible in the first place. If Badiou does indeed, as Zizek maintains, have "Kant trouble," it isn't too much transcendental philosophy, but, quite possibly, too little. However, pursuing the route opening up here through the interaction between Badiou and Zizek entails embarking upon an extremely ambitious philosophical program: the development of a transcendental materialism forged through an alliance between philosophy and psychoanalysis.

Addendum

In a recently published essay ("*L'investigation transcendente*"), Badiou foreshadows some of the theses to be deployed in his upcoming sequel to *L'être et l'événement* (the sequel being entitled *Logiques des mondes*). In this short preview, Badiou argues in favor of a notion of the transcendental in which its status is decoupled from its previous dependence upon (idealist) subjectivity. He contends that the transcendental consists of a localized set of possibility conditions (perhaps appealing here to something like a non-universal notion of the *apriori*) for appearances and their logical relations inherently internal to specific situations themselves. Simply put, Badiou seeks to divorce the transcendental from subjectivity: an inextricable, transcendental rapport between "logic" and "appearance" holds immanently within situations (the triad "logic"- "appearance"- "situation" constituting, for Badiou, a "world"), prior to the superfluous intervention of any sort of idealist subject.¹¹⁰ In the Badiouian view, subjectivity is a subsequent by-product coming after (as a residual effect or component inflection) the intervention of those transcendental elements/functions constitutive of a given situation's world. The coherence of a "world," as a sphere within which subjects can come to be *qua* subjects, is generated by the transcendental.

Badiou's ostensible departure from the Kantian sense of the transcendental is a bluff, an empty semantic shell game.

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Throughout almost the entirety of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant abstains from speaking of "the subject" or "subjectivity" in his delineation of the conditions of possibility for experience and its correlative forms of legitimate knowledge. A Kantian could nonchalantly reply to Badiou along the lines of, "Fine, the term 'subject' won't be used as somehow equivalent to the configuration of transcendental conditions for reality. So what? The essential framework of the critical system still stands, remaining serenely unaffected by this merely terminological concession." And, Kant may be even more radical than Badiou here. More often than not, criticisms of Kant's "idealist subject" fall into the trap of what a committed Kantian transcendental idealist could easily and convincingly condemn as crude metaphorical "picture thinking": the "Transcendental Aesthetic" of the first Critique clearly stipulates that spatiality is confined to being solely one of the two "pure forms of intuition."¹¹¹ Hence, accusations that Kant ultimately relies upon a simplistic idealist inside/outside dichotomy (i.e., experience is somehow "in" a subject rather than being "out there" beyond the closed circle of cognition) is, from a Kantian perspective, a cheap-and-easy criticism ultimately reliant upon a simplistic, unrefined category mistake. That is to say, such a critique betrays the fact that the critics have yet to make the leap from picture thinking sorts of depictions of subjectivity (the *Innenwelt* of the subject versus the *Umwelt* of being)--Kant might note that the subject cannot be envisioned in this way, namely, according to criteria implicitly or explicitly derived from the limited domain of intuition--to a transcendental level in which the very question of "inside or outside" (i.e., the spatial "where?") with respect to subjectivity is simply irrelevant. The Kantian subject is not spatially localizable, whether literally or, as with most criticisms of it, figuratively. Properly envisioning this form of subjectivity demands dispensing with the prosthetic crutch of visual metaphors.

With Badiou, one is in danger of being left with a tacit maintenance of the transcendental subject of Kant's theoretical philosophy ("counting for one," from *L'être et l'événement*, and the transcendental framework of "worlds," from *Logiques des mondes*, both revealing Badiou's disavowed, covert allegiance

to certain central theses of the first Critique) without, unfortunately, this subjectivity retaining its powers for intervention à la Kant's practical philosophy. In emphasizing the "post-evental" status of the subject, Badiou denies it a role in precipitating the event prior to its occurrence. In short, through his peculiar "theory of the subject," Badiou could be said to doubly fail: he fails both to "overcome" or leave behind Kant's theoretical philosophy as well as to preserve the, so to speak, pre-evental forcing powers of spontaneous noumenal autonomy as delineated in Kant's practical philosophy--one is reminded of Lacan's ". . . ou pire" or (to cite one of Žižek's favorite snippets) Stalin's "both are worse!" If one is going to remain within the Kantian critical framework, at least one usually gets to reap the "practical" benefits of having a subject endowed with a transcendental freedom allowing it to (as Badiou might phrase it) force events into occurring prior to their actual occurrence. At least the subject of Kant's metaphysics of morals isn't, as in Badiou's notions of the subject-of-the-event and forcing, confined to an existence that arises merely in the subsequent wake of an always-prior and anonymous evental "*es gibt*" (itself strikingly akin to the religious notion of a miracle).

To risk a formulation in psychoanalytic parlance, Badiou's philosophy remains unwittingly /unconsciously attached to an "impotent" or "castrated" Kantian subject, a subjectivity whose synthesizing activities (thinly veiled in different jargonized costumes such as "counting" and the

"void") are able to generate and sustain situations, although, sadly enough, unable to catalyze the emergence of transformative events. Again, if anything, Badiou isn't Kantian enough. For all his robust, militant sounding rhetoric about the post-evental labor of forcing (a discourse with a tone that revels in a sort of macho heroism of the truth--both Critchley¹¹² and Peter Dews¹¹³ have pointed out this stylistic resonance), Badiou clips the wings of subjectivity, rendering it incapable of fomenting change by precipitating events through volitional, active forms of concrete, engaged praxis (even if this latter possibility is admitted, Badiouian thought deliberately refuses to furnish the conceptual resources needed to theoretically grasp the pre-conditions under which events take place at all--events always transpire in the past tense, and

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forcing only begins its work after an event). To an analytically trained ear, Badiou's rhetorical bluster may even sound like an overcompensation effectively operating so as to conceal, behind its fiery façade, the passive and powerless position of always being subjected to events *après-coup*, after-the-fact of their unforeseeable, inexplicable, and miraculous occurrence. Perhaps all one can do is thank God for being delivered from this sort of Kantian curse.

Endnotes

¹ (Slavoj Zizek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, p. 4

(Alain Badiou, "Le (re)tour de la philosophie elle-même," *Conditions*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1992, p. 60)

² (Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XV L'acte psychanalytique, 1967-1968* [unpublished typescript], session of November 15th, 1967)

³ (Slavoj Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre Of Political Ontology*, London: Verso, 1999, p. 128-129)

⁴ (Slavoj Zizek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real! Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates*, London: Verso, 2002, p. 101-102)

⁵ (Zizek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?*, p. 137)

⁶ (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* [trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell], New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 151-152.)

⁷ (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* [trans. Norman Kemp Smith], New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1965, A664-A666/B692-B694 [p. 546-547])

⁸ (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* [trans. Lewis White Beck], New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1993, p. 87)

⁹ (Slavoj Zizek, "Foreword to the Second Edition: *Enjoyment within the Limits of Reason Alone*," *For they know not what they do: Enjoyment as a political factor* (second edition), London: Verso, 2002, p. lxxxiv)

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