Pli 10 (2000), 200-216.

Stellar Void or Cosmic Animal? Badiou and Deleuze on the Dice-Throw

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In 'So Near!, So Far!', the appropriately titled preface to *Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*, Alain Badiou suggests that Deleuze's thought is linked to his own through a relation that simultaneously combines intimate proximity and irreducible distance. Both lay claim to the Mallarméan formula according to which *"to think is to throw the dice"*, both articulate that claim through a philosophy of the event, yet it would be difficult to contrive a greater contrast than that presented by the manner in which those competing claims are staked out in their respective conceptions of dice-throw and event. Thus, in *The Clamour of Being*, it is *via* his brief but extremely suggestive delineation of the contrast between their respective appropriations of the Mallarméan dictum that Badiou locates what may well be the key moment of divergence separating what one might call his militant fidelity to the dispersive void from what he provocatively characterizes as Deleuze's punitive *ascesis* of the One.

That Badiou's provocative analyses occasionally lapse into an injudicious misprision of Deleuze's thought is undeniable, and as a result *The Clamour of Being* has already occasioned furious gestures of denunciation in the Deleuzean camp.[1] However, our aim here is neither to defend Deleuze against Badiou's charges, nor to absolve Badiou from the accusations of misrepresentation. It is simply to try to map out the wider ramifications of what may initially appear as little more than a peculiarly

[1] For an admirably nuanced and balanced appraisal both of the analytical strengths and polemical weaknesses in Badiou's reading of Deleuze, see Alberto Toscano's review-article *apropos* of the recently published translations of *La clameur de l'être* (*Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*, trans. L. Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000)) and Badiou's *Manifeste pour la philosophie* (*Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. N. Madarasz (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999)) in *Pli* 9 (2000), pp. 220-238.

recondite philosophical dispute by explicitly foregrounding the systematic character of the theoretical divergences underlying this *differend* between Badiou and Deleuze on the question of the dice-throw.

The Deleuzean dice-throw as *Eventum Tantum*

Badiou characterizes the Deleuzean dice-throw in terms of three essential features: it is *unique*; it is an affirmation of chance as a *whole*; and it is the *same* dice-throw that recurs in each distinct outcome. Let's recapitulate these points.

First, the Deleuzean dice-throw is *unique*. Univocity requires that there be only one throw, for, as Deleuze writes in *Difference and Repetition*: "*... the numerical distinction between 'beings' is a modal, not a real distinction. Is it not the same with the true throw of the dice? The throws are formally distinct, but with regard to an ontologically unique throw, while the outcomes implicate, displace and recover their combinations in one another throughout the unique and open space of the univocal*".[2] If, as Deleuze certainly seems to state here, the numerical plurality of empirical events is merely modal or formal in character, then Badiou is right to insist that for Deleuze, there can only be 'one' real event: the event of Being as *Eventum Tantum*. He is right, of course, provided we bear in mind that the uniqueness of this 'One' is no longer an index of numerical unity. Univocity is not monism; the two theses are logically independent of one another.[3] Thus, even if Being is the unique event, that uniqueness cannot be equated with the sum of a numerical totality. The 'unicity' of the Deleuzean dice-throw as univocally singular is not the equivocal unity of analogical totality. That is why the univocity of the dice-throw is, as Deleuze says in *The Logic of Sense*, that of "*the unique throw for all throws, a single Being for all forms and all times, a single insistance for all that exists, a single spirit for all the living, a single voice for every murmur and every droplet in the sea*".[4]

Secondly, the Deleuzean dice-throw is the affirmation of the *whole* of chance in a single throw. If Deleuze invokes the notion of chance as a

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[2] G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. P. Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 304.

[3] There are equivocal monisms, such as those of Parmenides and Hegel; univocal pluralisms, such as that of Leibniz; and univocal monisms, of the kind championed by Spinoza, Nietzsche, Bergson, and Deleuze himself.

[4] G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. M. Lester with C. Stivale, ed. C. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p.180 (translation modified).

whole, it is, as Badiou rightly points out, in order to forestall its statistical neutralization within the representational confines of a logistical calculus of probability. One could, for example, calculate the probability of one among the thirty-six possible outcomes of throwing the die by working out the frequency with which that one result occurs compared to the frequency with which the other thirty-five possible outcomes occur in the course of a finite number of throws. In the course of an infinite series of throws however, all those disparate probabilities become statistically equalized, logically reduced to the point where all possible outcomes become equal in probability. The logic of the possible subordinates chance to analogical equivalence. In order to ward off chance's reduction to merely logical probability, Deleuze must insist that the chance affirmed by the dice-throw is not that of its own probability or improbability, but rather that of all possible outcomes occurring simultaneously. As affirmation of the univocity through which all outcomes are virtually envelloped and envelloping, implicated and implicating within one another, the dice-throw must constitute an affirmation of absolute improbability. In other words, Deleuze demands that the dice throw affirm chance's virtual univocity as a representational im-possibility. Only thus can the dice-throw constitute the unique throw through which all the actual outcomes of numerically distinct throws coincide virtually.

Third and finally, this is why, for Deleuze, it is the *same* dice-throw which recurs in each numerically distinct outcome. That which eternally returns within each numerically separate throw is the unique throw in which chance has been affirmed as an incompossible whole. Of course, to affirm chance as incompossible whole is to sacrifice one's own subjective identity, for otherwise that identity would persist independently of the affirmation as a possibility separate from the whole. In throwing the die to affirm chance as a uniquely improbable whole, ipseity is cracked open, the self dissolved, and the thrower's subjective separation annihilated through the multitudinous swarming of the impersonal individuations and pre-personal singularities released by the throw. The thrower coincides with everyone and no-one. Consequently, Badiou is entirely correct when he notes that the superior or Deleuzean gambler is a 'purified automaton' rather than a subjective agent. It is not the thrower who affirms chance, but Chance which affirms itself through the thrower. And in affirming itself Chance abolishes the arbitrariness of the merely possible. Herein lies Deleuze's stoic *ascesis*: the auto-affirmation of Chance as virtually incompossible whole abolishes possibility in order to vindicate Chance itself as the ineluctable necessity of what occurs. Thus, as Deleuze writes

in *Difference and Repetition*: "*Once chance is affirmed, all arbitraniness is abolished every time*".[5] This is why, for Badiou, the Deleuzean affirmation of eternal recurrence in the dice-throw, crystallizing Chance's unconditional affirmation as virtual whole, is, in the final analysis, nothing but the auto-affirmation of the One's ineluctable necessity in the guise of chance *via* the thrower as purified automaton. As Badiou puts it, "*That which insists and eternally returns within all the immanent events of the One's power is chance as* chance of the One itself. *And what are we to understand by 'the chance of the One', if not Being's radical contingency? In the final analysis, the eternal return is the univocal affirmation of Being's own contingency, deployed in all the events through which the latter is auto-affected*".[6]

The upshot of Badiou's analysis is clear: we should not allow ourselves to be deceived by the Deleuzean invocation of pure Chance as locus of the absolutely incalculable, the improbable, and the impossible; for what is really being affirmed is the ineluctability of Fate. In the Deleuzean dice-throw, the incalculable contingency of the singular event as auto-affection of the One-All becomes indiscernible from the absolute necessity of chance as a *whole*, as *Eventum Tantum.* Moreover, in affirming everything, the purified automaton must be prepared to sacrifice everything, including itself. Deleuze's *Amor fati*, his ethics of the Event, enjoining us "*not to be unworthy of what happens to us*",[7] require nothing less. The Deleuzean automaton functions according to the glory of the impersonal pronoun 'one'; it speaks, thinks, and acts in the fourth person singular, operating in the anarchic realm of impersonal individuations and pre-personal singularities. 'One' affirms the event through the dice-throw in the same way as 'one' dies: impersonally and anonymously, for, as Deleuze states in *The Logic of Sense*, "*Every event is like death*".[8]

Accordingly, in a gesture typifying his admiring but uncompromisingly critical stance *vis à vis* Deleuze, Badiou will praise the latter's 'admirable creative stoicism', in accordance with which the dice-throw becomes an affirmation that "'*All* is *grace*'. *For what there is is*

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[5] G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.198.

[6] A. Badiou, *Deleuze: La clameur de l'être* (Paris: Hachette, 1997), p. 113 (*Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*, p.74). Although we shall provide references for the english version of Badiou's text, this and all subsequent translations from *La clameur de l'être* are our own.

[7] G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 149.

[8] Ibid, p.152.

nothing other than the grace of the All",[9] before fatally qualifying that praise with an intractable *caveat*, "*Except that for he who, like myself, excludes the possibility that Being be thought as All, to say that all is grace means precisely that no grace whatsoever is ever accorded us. But it is not so. An interruption, a supplement, comes upon us, and that this is rare or vanishing enjoins us to be lastingly faithful to it*".[10]

So to this Deleuzean *ascesis* whereby chance is affirmed as a univocally exceptionless whole, Badiou will oppose his own *militant* conception of the dice-throw as a decision in favour of chance as a discontinuous exception, an ontological interruption constituted through the subtraction of a hazardous metaontological supplement. However, before we go on to delineate Badiou's own militant and subtractive vision of the dice-throw, we will simply mark at this juncture the way in which it provides the unstated theoretical fulcrum for the two fundamental objections which Badiou adresses to Deleuze in one form or another throughout *The Clamour of Being*. The first is that inasmuch as all numerically distinct occurrences have and will eternally recur as auto-affections of the One-All, Deleuze is obliged to sacrifice novelty and plurality on the altar of univocity. If there is but a single Chance for all chances, Badiou asks, if all numerically distinct throws remain virtually envelloped both within one another and within a single all-envelloping throw, hasn't Deleuze reintroduced monistic totality under the guise of univocal plurality? Badiou's second objection seems to follow inevitably from the first: because the dice-throw's affirmation of the an-archic, the anonymous, and the impersonal necessitates a punitive abnegation of subjectivity *per se*, the Deleuzean *ascesis* of the One-All cannot but provide a sort of transcendental *apologia* for the reigning ontological status quo in all of its socio-political nefariousness - in spite of Deleuze's avowed intentions to the contrary -, precisely insofar as it makes assent to what representation considers as impossible or intolerable the premise of unconditional affirmation. In the final analysis, for Deleuze, Badiou writes, "*At no time can we be the source of what we think or do. Everything always comes from afar, and further: everything is always already there within the One's infinite and inhuman resource*".[11]

Obviously constrained by space, Badiou in *The Clamour of Being* does little more than offer the reader the most summary of hints

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[9] A. Badiou, *Deleuze: La clameur de l'être*, p.142 (*Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*, p.96).
[10] Ibid., p.143 / p.96.
[11] Ibid., p. 21 / pp. 10-11.

concerning the alternative theory of the dice-throw in which both these objections are implicitly grounded. Nevertheless, they are explicitly underwritten in that text by an entirely independent argument concerning the relation between univocity and transcendence, and it is this argument which provides the philosophical nub of *The Clamour of Being*. It runs as follows: Deleuzean ontology establishes a distinction between 'Being' *qua* virtual univocity of the single throw, and 'beings' *qua* the actual equivocity of the numerically distinct throws. But that difference between virtual univocity and actual equivocity can be neither a difference of degree nor a difference in kind. If it's a difference in degree, being is said in an analogically unitary sense of quantitatively distinct beings, and univocity collapses into analogical monism. If it's a difference in kind, univocity is straightforwardly ruined by equivocal transcendence. Deleuze's only option then is to conceive of Being itself as neither/nor: as *inclusive disjunction* of virtual univocity and actual equivocity.[12] The inclusive disjunction is characterized by a unilateral asymmetry: the actual distinguishes itself from the virtual without the virtual distinguishing itself from the actual in return.[13] But as a result, Deleuze now needs *two* names in order to describe Being's constitutive asymmetry as inclusive disjunction of the univocal and the equivocal. Being must always be said *both* as virtual and as actual; as deterritorialization and as reterritorialization; as smooth space and as striated space; as anorganic life and as strata; as nomadic distribution and as sedentary hierarchy.

The trouble then is that *the naming of being itself becomes an equivocal act.* Deleuze cannot name Being univocally because he always needs two names to describe that univocity. And, for Badiou, it is this equivocal gesture indissociable from the act of naming as such that inevitably reintroduces transcendence at the heart of Deleuze's thought, compromising the univocal immanence he lays claim to.[14] Consequently,

[12] For Deleuze's account of virtual intensity as the 'inclusive disjunction' of difference in degree and difference in kind cf. G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.239. Although the expression itself comes from *Anti-Œdipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia 1* (co-written with F. Guattari, trans. R. Hurley, M. Seem, & H. R. Lane (London: Athlone, 1984)) and thus does not occur as such in *Difference and Repetition* (or in any of Deleuze's earlier work), the concept of inclusive disjunction is clearly present throughout *Difference and Repetition*, specifically in the form of what Deleuze calls there an 'asymmetrical synthesis' or 'pathos of distance'.

[13] G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.28.

[14] Accordingly, Badiou privileges what he considers to be set-theory's rigorously meaningless or a-signifying inscription of being in the mathematical letter precisely insofar as it manages to avoid any such equivocal gesture of naming through which

because Deleuze needs two names to describe the self-differentiating movement of univocal Being as inclusive disjunction, that disjunction itself ends up constituting the absolute surplus of transcendence required in order to hold virtual univocity and actual equivocity together, thereby maintaining Being as an immanent whole. But then the ontological indiscernibility of the numerically distinct throws, their immanent interpenetration and virtual coincidence in the eternal recurrence of a single throw, necessarily reinstates a transcendent Unity: that of the inclusive disjunction's infinite excess as the ontological element wherein virtual indivision and actual division become reconciled.

Philosophical ascesis and machinic enslavement

Now, although we have already acknowledged that some elements of Badiou's critique of Deleuze could be (and indeed already have been) dismissed as instances of wilfully polemical misrepresentation, it seems to us that the equivocal nomination pinpointed in the analysis above, whereby immanence assumes the mantle of absolute transcendence and vice versa, highlights an awkward *quid pro quo* running right through Deleuzean thought; - awkward not because it would supposedly lay bare some crippling inconsistency or incoherence in that thought, but because it reveals the tribute which Deleuze is obliged to offer up to conceptual equivocation in order to ensure his philosophy's unitary ontological consistency. Even so, that an equivocal nomination may be the price to be paid for the affirmation of univocity is not ultimately the real issue. The difficulty concerns rather the extent to which, in affirming an exceptionless ontological consistency, Deleuze may be effectively stripping philosophy of any capacity it may still harbour as far as constituting an instance of *resistance* to the present is concerned; a

being could become intentionally apprehended or conceptually 'meaningful', and therefore hermeneutically circumscribed. For Badiou, mathematical thought alone guarantees ontological univocity and preserves being *qua* being from its phenomenological inscription in language or sense by suturing itself axiomatically (i.e. non-intentionally) to being's meaningless and unphenomenologizable emptiness, to its unpresentable inconsistency. And this suturing occurs by means of being's a-conceptual inscription in a radically singular, but meaningless, proper name: ø :- the name of the void or null-set. Cf. A. Badiou, *L'Être et l'Événement* (Paris: Seuil, 1988), esp. meditations 4 and 5, pp. 65-84.

[illegible] which he explicitly lays claim to for philosophy,[15] but may be inadvertently stymiing insofar as his affirmative and ascetic characterization of the dice-throw forecloses the possibility of thinking differential interruption prior to its ontological repetition; nomadic deterritorialization without its complement of sedentary reterritorialization; the plurality of chances independently of Chance as a whole.[16]

If Badiou's charges demand to be taken seriously, it's because there is far more at stake here than merely a matter of internal philosophical consistency. For if the logic of Deleuzean ontology uses the banner of immanence to disguise a philosophical pact with ontological transcendence, then it is not difficult to see how that logic may also mask a political covenant with the transcendent global sovereignty of Capital. Thus, in *A Thousand Plateaus* for instance, we are told that through this "*integrated (or rather integrating) world capitalism, a new smooth space is produced in which capital reaches its 'absolute' speed, based on machinic components rather than the human components of labour*".[17]

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[15] Cf. G. Deleuze & F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. H. Tomlinson & G. Burchell (London: Verso, 1994), esp. Ch.4, pp. 108-110.

[16] A possibility first explored in the work of François Laruelle; initially in his *Le Principe de Minorité* (Paris: Aubier, 1981), and subsequently radicalized through the elaboration of 'non-philosophy' as transcendental axiomatization and theorematization of philosophical Decision. It may be apposite in this regard to point out that Badiou is neither the first nor the only philosopher to highlight the manner in which the recourse to a radically unobjectifiable surplus of transcendence is inseparable from Deleuze's attempt to harmonize univocity, immanence, and multiplicity. Cf. François Laruelle, 'Réponse à Deleuze', in Non-Philosophie, Le Collectif, *La Non-Philosophie des Contemporains. Althusser, Badiou, Deleuze, Derrida, Fichte, Husserl, Kojève, Russell, Sartre, Wittgenstein* (Paris: Kimé, 1995), pp. 49-78. For Laruelle, the fact that the univocity of Deleuzean immanence can be purchased only at the price of an irrecuperable excess of transcendence is neither an accidental nor an inconsistent aspect of Deleuze's thought; - it is a structurally necessary feature characteristic of all philosophical attempts to conceptualize immanence; one, moreover, that ultimately constitutes an invariant feature of the philosophical gesture *per se*. That Deleuze is obliged to think immanence transcendently, or to think multiplicity under the auspices of an uncircumventable unity, is not a question of philosophical inconsistency, Laruelle argues; on the contrary it merely indicates the rigorous consistency of Deleuzean thought insofar as its internal coherence is regulated in accordance with the pernicious logic of philosophical Decision. Interestingly enough, the same collection also contains Tristan Aguilar's fascinating comparison of Laruelle's work with that of Badiou. Cf. T. Aguilar, 'Badiou et la Non-Philosophie: Un parallèle', op. cit., pp. 37-46.

[17] G. Deleuze & F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. B.Massumi (London: Athlone, 1988), p.492.

Furthermore, through these 'machinic components', Deleuze and Guattari continue, "... *it is as though human alienation through surplus labour were replaced by a generalized 'machinic enslavement', such that one may furnish surplus-value without doing any work (children, the retired, the unemployed, television viewers, etc) ... [thus] capitalism operates ... by a complex qualitative process bringing into play modes of transportation, urban models, the media, the entertainment industries, ways of perceiving and feeling - every semiotic system. It is as though ... circulating capital necessarily recreated, reconstituted, a sort of smooth space in which the destiny of human beings is recast*".[18]

This is an analysis of extraordinary prescience. Yet clearly, if we are to take Deleuze and Guattari at their word here, it is not only children, the retired, the unemployed, and television viewers who are now busy furnishing an integrating world-capitalism with its portion of machinic surplus-value simply by doing nothing: for who has ever provided a more superlatively indolent instance of (supposedly) unemployable negativity than the philosopher? The question then is: to what extent does the Deleuzean dice-throw, with its philosophical affirmation of chance as an exceptionless whole, effectively hamstring the possibility of philosophical resistance to the onset of a generalized machinic enslavement? For with the historical advent of this integrating world capitalism, it becomes difficult to discern the virtual as limit of absolute deterritorialization, from the 'absolute speed' through which Capital is accelerating toward that unenvisageable limit *via* processes of deterritorialization that, although supposedly 'relative', are nonetheless effectively exhausting all the available territories and resources of the actual in the process of constituting the absolutely smooth space necessary for maximizing rates of profit and exchange. One of the consequences of Deleuzean univocity is the impossibility of defining the distinction between the absolute deterritorializations Deleuze lays claim to on behalf of philosophy and the relative deterritorializations he assigns to Capital as a difference in kind.[19] Their inclusive disjunction precludes the possibility of disentagling them. But how then are we to to say where one ends and the other begins? Does Capital merely mime the logic of nomadic distribution or does nomadic distribution in fact mime the logic

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[18] Ibid., p.492.

[19] "*Philosophy takes the relative deterritorialization of capital to the absolute; it makes it pass over the plane of immanence as movement of the infinite and suppresses it as internal limit,* turns it back against itself so as to summon forth a new earth, a new people." G. Deleuze & F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. H. Tomlinson & G. Burchell (London: Verso, 1994), p. 99. Cf. op. cit., Chapter 4, esp. pp. 97-113.

of Capital? Perhaps the machinic symbiosis between absolute and relative deterritorialization, philosophy and Capital, is rendering it increasingly difficult to tell which is the host and which is the parasite. The relation between philosophy and Capital would be like that of wasp and orchid: - a block of apparralel evolution; a becoming. But then what guarantees do we have that Capital's becoming-philosophy and philosophy's becoming-Capital aren't in fact the harbingers of a generalized machinic enslavement? An enslavement, moreover, now promulgated through the good offices of philosophical thinking itself. For doesn't the purified automaton's affirmative *ascesis* of the One-All actively participate in this process of generalized machinic enslavement through which human destiny is being recast? In light of this threatened indiscernibility between philosophy and Capital, small wonder that the univocal chance affirmed in the Deleuzean dice-throw, its ineluctable ontological fatality, take on an oppressive, politically debilitating aspect for Badiou.

Badiou: quantifying the unquantifiable

As far as Badiou is concerned, philosophical resistance to the sovereignty of Capital is indissociable from the ultimate ontological destitution of the One-All, and from the foreclosure of transcendence in all its forms. But for Badiou, this necessary rupture of transcendent ontological unity operates *via* the redefinition of subjective truth as radically discontinuous, metaontological *caesura*. If the One-All's infinite excess seems to hover menacingly over us *via* the smooth space of global Capital, perhaps it's because Deleuzean *ascesis*, the destitution of subjective resistance in the dice-throw's fatal embrace of the ineluctable and the impossible, forecloses the possibility of assigning a subjective - i.e and thereby, as we shall see, political- measure to that infinite and necessarily unquantifiable ontological excess. Now, what's significant about Badiou's theory of the event in relation to Deleuze's is the manner in which it defines thought's dice-throw as a way of *quantifying the unquantifiable*. That's why we would like to draw attention to the manner in which Badiou's characterization of the dice-throw as process of subjective intervention *quantifies* thinking itself as an act of ultimately political resistance to the threat of generalized machinic enslavement.

From a Badiouan perspective, Deleuze goes astray by identifying the quantitative conception of the multiple with its denumerable representation, thereby reducing the domain of mathematical multiplicity to the realm of the logistically calculable. In complete contrast, Badiou

argues that only a rigorously quantitative - i.e set-theoretical - univocity of the multiple in its absolutely unequivocal *actuality* can succeed in terminating the One's transcendent sovereignty. And in place of what he considers to be Deleuze's transcendent ontological disjunction between a qualitative realm of virtual intensity and a quantitative domain of actual extensity, Badiou substitutes the immanent phase shift between the inconsistent, unpresentable multiplicity of being as ontological void, and its consistent presentation as a multiple-in-situation. Moreover, if, for Badiou, being *qua* being consists of infinitely ramifying multiples-of-multiples, all woven from the originary inconsistency of the void, subjectivity originates in the event as that interruption of consistency through which the void's inconsistency is summoned to the surface of a situation.

How is this ontologically inconsistent interruption related to the dice-throw? For Badiou, the void's originary and excessive inconsistency is continuously reconfigured by the infinite incommensurability between set and power-set; structure and metastructure; or presentation and re-presentation. Badiou defines the metastructural re-presentation or 'state' of the situation as that operation which counts or codifies its parts or subsets. Where the situation is the 'counting-as-one' (*compte-pour-un*) of its elements, the presentation of its members, the state of the situation counts-as-one its subsets or re-presents its parts. Now although there are always *more* parts than elements, more subsets than members, it is impossible to measure that excess, to assign a fixed power to it. In other words, the excess is undecidable. But it is precisely this intrinsic ontological undecidability that petitions axiomatic decision in the form of a subjective intervention through which the undecidable is constituted as an *event*. Yet far from resolving the undecidability proper to the event, the intervention accentuates it by withdrawing the event from decidability, subtracting it from the arena of the decidable, thereby putting the event as undecidable into effect. It is this putting into circulation of the event as an undecidable decision; a decision *in favour of* the undecidable, that Badiou calls the dice-throw.

However, even though it constitutes a metaontological *caesura*, the structure of 'eventality' itself for Badiou must be rooted in the ontological *matheme*. Thus, speaking of the undecidability concerning the quantity of the increase in magnitude separating the cardinality of an infinite set from its successor power-set, Badiou writes, *"That one must tolerate there the almost complete arbitrariness of a choice, that quantity, that paradigm of objectivity, leads to pure subjectivity, herein lies what I*

would willingly call the Cantor-Gödel-Cohen-Easton symptom".[20] Thus, if subjectivity itself is nothing but a set-theoretical 'symptom' then the dice-throw is metaontologically 'symptomatic' insofar as it constitutes an undecidable decision, an ontologically groundless intervention which decides the undecidable and fixes the excess by deciding to count as belonging to a situation that which was previously omitted or uncounted by the ontological count. According to Badiou, it is through the dice-throw's undecidability that an event is *subtracted* from the ontological consistency of a situation and subjectivity generated as a post-evental fidelity to that originary subtraction from the ontological order.

Now, if being is both void and infinitely multiple, and if the dice-throws are ontologically distinct, then it can only be because each throw indexes a distinct quantification of the infinite, a distinct quantification of the void-as-infinitely-multiple. Thus, to the Deleuzean conception of the dice-throw, to the qualitative indiscernibility of numerically discrete throws, to the univocal consistency of the single throw's eternal recurrence, Badiou opposes his own conception of the dice-throw as a uniquely discernible instance of metaontological quantification; a radically discontinuous yet nevertheless quantifiable subtraction from the operation of the 'count-as-one' through which a situation attains ontological consistency. Accordingly, Badiou will state that "*I think then, contrary to Deleuze, that the evental dice-throws are all absolutely distinct, not formally (on the contrary, the form of all events is the same), but ontologically. This ontological multiplicity composes no series, it is sporadic (because of the rarity of events) and untotalizable*".[21]

Interestingly enough then, from Badiou's perspective, Deleuze's subordination of quantitative or numerical distinction to the unquantifiable, qualitative identity of eternal recurrence, his derealization of the actuality of the multiple in the virtualization of the One-All, and his deconstitution of the subject, are all parts of the same philosophical gesture. According to Badiou, in making of the dice-throw an a-subjective affirmation of the transcendent disjunction between virtual quality and actual quantity, Deleuze elides the possibility of an alternative, subtractive conception wherein the dice-throw figures as an immanent subjective quantification of that ontological excess; or, more specifically, in Badiou's case, of the void's subtractive inconsistency. Yet by the same token, Badiou's conception of subjectivity concedes nothing

[20] A. Badiou, *L'Être et l'Événement*, p.309.
[21] A. Badiou, *Deleuze: La clameur de l'être*, p.114 (*Deleuze. The Clamour of Being*, pp. 74-75).

to Kant or phenomenology. In keeping with his commitment to a strictly materialist univocity, Badiou provides an ontologically immanent, anti-phenomenological conception of the subjective dice-throw as a rare and hazardous deductive *process* or subtractive *operation*, rather than as a necessary transcendental condition, a locus of intentional agency or a site of lived-experience.

So if the Badiouan subject constitutes a metaontological *caesura* it's because it figures as that in-consistent instance of multiplicity through which the void's own inconsistent excess is immanently circumscribed, rather than because it constitutes a transcendent exception to the quantitative univocity of the multiple. And it seems to us that this is where we must locate the peculiar challenge posed by Badiou's mathematical conception of the multiple, wherein subjectivity figures as an immanent but inconsistent subtraction, to Deleuze's vitalist conception of multiplicity, wherein subjective separation is necessarily destituted as an inadmissible instance of transcendence. The challenge is remarkable if only for the way in which Badiou mobilizes Paul Cohen's theory of generic multiplicities to redefine subjective truth as an ontologically immanent but in-consistent subtraction;[22] an objectless process of deductive fidelity whereby the errancy of the ontological void, its infinite, numerically unassignable excess, is effectively quantified as a determinate yet locally indiscernible infinite magnitude.

Now, Badiou's suggestion is that a politically militant subject is the *generic* instance of that infinite quantification of an undecidable excess between structural presentation and metastructural re-presentation. Moreover, that quantification constitutes political intervention as a generic truth-procedure; the latter being Badiou's name for the process whereby subjective intervention quantifies the excess by deciding that something ontologically undecidable 'will have taken place'. And its genericity is intimately tied to the fact that the subject of political intervention is necessarily collective. Here we arrive at what seems to us to constitute the militantly subversive crux of Badiou's thought (although we may well be characterizing it in a way that risks contradicting Badiou's avowed intent to 'de-suture' the gesture of philosophical thinking from any extraneous political conditioning):[23] if subjectivity *qua*

[22] Cf. P. J. Cohen, *Set-Theory and the Continuum Hypothesis* (New York: W.A. Benjamin, 1966).

[23] For Badiou's comments on the nefarious consequences of the attempts to philosophize the political or politicize philosophy, thereby compromising the autonomy and radicality of both, and for a general statement of intent concerning the need to 'de-suture' philosophy from any extraneous condition, whether it be political,

metaontological *caesura* is a set-theoretical symptom, and if the collective subjectivity of political intervention is the figure *par excellence* of subjective militancy, then ontology itself dictates the constitutively political character inherent in the act of thinking insofar as it constitutes a dice-throw. Thus, in 'Politics as a truth procedure' Badiou writes, "*That the political event is collective necessitates that all are virtually the militants of the thinking that proceeds on the basis of the event. In this sense, politics is the only truth procedure which is generic, not only in its result, but in the local composition of its subject*".[24] Accordingly, Badiou continues: "*The true characteristic of the political event and of the truth procedure it initiates is that a political event fixes the errancy, assigns a measure to the State's ultra-power, sets a limit to the power of the State. Consequently, the political event interrupts the subjective errancy of the power of the State. It configures the state of the situation ... it measures it*".[25]

So to the Deleuzean automaton who abnegates from decision in order to affirm the event's excessive and unquantifiable ontological necessity, Badiou ultimately opposes his militantly decisive conception of subjectivity as an aleatory quantification of chance that circumscribes the void's random and incalculable excess. Badiou's dice-throw is an evental subtraction from ontological consistency, an excessive subtraction of the inconsistent from the excess of consistency. For Badiou then, it is through the dice-throw as a determinate but locally indiscernible quantification of the infinite that the excess of unquantifiable ontological transcendence affirmed by the Deleuzean automaton is circumscribed and discontinued. And what is politically significant about this inconsistent quantification of the undecidable is the way in which it subtracts itself from every transcendent, politically debilitating principle of sovereign ontological unity.

However, where Badiou provides a political translation of the errancy of ontological excess in terms of the infinite incommensurability between the structural presentation of a given social situation and its metastructural representation by the State, it seems to us that it is Capital, not the State, which now effects the metastructural regulation of the social field and ultimately instantiates the unassignable errancy of

artistic, scientific, or amorous, cf. A. Badiou, *Manifeste pour la Philosophie* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), esp. pp. 41-48 (*Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. N. Madarasz (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), pp. 61-67).

[24] A. Badiou, 'La politique comme proçédure de vérité', in *Abrégé de Métapolitique*, (Paris: Seuil, 1998), p.156.

[25] Ibid., p.159.

ontological excess. And in contrast to the State, which is a merely localized or relative instantiation of excess, in so far as it remains the State of this or that regionally specific situation, Capital's peculiar characteristic is to constitute a global or absolute configuration of ontological excess, for like the void, Capital is at once everywhere and nowhere. Consequently, one of the unresolved problems facing Badiou's philosophical system (and this, in our opinion, is the one lacuna in his thinking in comparison with Deleuze's) is whether or not it possesses the conceptual resources required for a rigorously theoretical definition of Capital as global configuration of ontological excess. Perhaps Badiou's comparative silence on this issue is a matter of caution. For it seems to us that the real difficulty facing him is this: on the one hand, any attempt to provide a set-theoretical definition of Capital's unlocalizable excess as a sort of global power-set, a universal metastructure or absolute re-presentation, will thereby immediately reinstate the One. On the other hand, if Capital ultimately figures for Badiou as a kind of radically inconsistent *Über*-Event, rather than as an ontologically consistent Unity, then surely this definitively uncircumventable configuration of the void's global excess can only result in a metaontological subjection that promises to be even more desperately debilitating than the machinic enslavement ascetically affirmed by the Deleuzean automaton.

Thus, in the final analysis, all that separates Badiou's militant 'No' to ontological consistency from Deleuze's ascetic 'Yes' to the same is the former's ability to distinguish the void's singular configurations in the plurality of dice-throws from the One-All's virtual coincidence in the unique throw. Yet in spite of Badiou's considerable precautions and the remarkable subtlety of his theoretical apparatus, that distinction is far from assured, for the spectre of the One figures as an ever-present danger shadowing his system, constantly threatening to assume the singular mantle of the void. The void's unpresentable in-consistency, its foreclosure to conceptual presentation as indexed by the singularity of the letter ø which is its proper name, is supposed to prevent it from lapsing into the subsumptive unity of a concept (effectively disqualifying the possibility of distinguishing between its use and its mention).[26] Yet this inconsistency is precisely what the event's undecidability summons through its double subtraction: subtracting the void from its subtraction to presentation, and also subtracting it from the consistency of its proper name by naming it improperly as undecidable, or as event. Accordingly, describing the event's invocation of the void, Badiou writes, "... *because*

[26] Cf. A. Badiou, *L'Être et l'Événement*, p.72.

the void of Being only comes to the surface of a situation in the guise of an event, chance is the material of a truth. And just as truths are singular and incomparable, the chance events wherein truths originate must be multiple and separated by the void. Chance is plural, which excludes the unicity of the dice-throw. It is by chance that this *chance comes to us. In the final analysis, Being's contingency can only truly accomplish itself if there is also the Chance of chances*".[27]

It is this 'Chance of chances', this haphasard plurality of dice-throws as inconsistent configurations or quantifications of the void of being that is supposed to discontinue the eternal recurrence of the One chance as a virtual whole. Thus, the discrete, numerical multiplicity of chances and the ontological distinction of events is supposed to be guaranteed by the void's unpresentable inconsistency. Although mathematically configured in every event as a distinct quantification of its infinite emptiness, the void can never surface as such, it can never occur, never take place, for it is nothing but an empty name devoid of reference, a letter that fails to designate, a sign without a concept. There can be an irreducible plurality of chances only insofar as 'Chance itself' (being as void) is nothing.

But is it merely a slip of the tongue, or something altogether more substantial, and therefore more problematic, which makes Badiou state here that the distinct dice-throws or chances are 'separated' from one another by the void? If each dice-throw as a distinctly inconsistent configuration of the void separates itself from ontological consistency; then surely it is only the distinct specificity of the consistent situation from which a specifically inconsistent quantification of the void is subtracted that can serve to separate the plurality of chances from one another, thereby rendering each ontologically - i.e. quantitatively - distinct yet ontically indiscernible in its invariant evental form (for although all events remain mathematically distinct, the *matheme* of the event is an invariant). In order for the void to become the separating instance, in the manner alluded to by Badiou in the passage above, wouldn't it have to become more than a name, wouldn't it have to function as a *consistent* ontological backdrop, as 'one' void (*'un' vide*)? In dispersing the dice-throws *via* the void's inconsistency, in pluralizing chance through the void as Chance of chances, doesn't Badiou risk reinflating the void as the unitary backdrop against which the plurality of chances become distinguishable, thereby collapsing the ontological

[27] A. Badiou, *Deleuze: La clameur de l'être*, p. 115 (*Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*, p. 75).

distinction between dice-throws and resubmerging them in the void's virtual unity as a consistent ontological medium?

Conclusion: the stellar void punctures the cosmic animal

Let's conclude by recapitulating the basic philosophical parameters of the disagreement between Deleuze and Badiou on the question of the dice-throw. Badiou himself sums up the opposition by reinvoking Mallarmé, with whom he aligns himself here against the Nietzsche-Deleuze tandem. For Nietzsche-Deleuze 'Chance comes forth from the Infinite, which has been affirmed'; whereas for Mallarmé-Badiou, 'the Infinite issues forth from Chance, which has been denied'. What then are the philosophical consequences of this slight, yet nevertheless crucial alternation ?

On the one hand we have the Deleuzean dice-throw as instance of anorganic vitalism. This dice-throw affirms the whole of chance in a single throw; it is the auto-affirmation of cosmic Chance as One-All in which the affirming 'I' is cracked and the thrower's identity dissolved. This is the dice-throw as vital figuration of the great cosmic animal. On the other hand, we have Badiou's dice-throw as index of the stellar *matheme*. This dice-throw is an undecidable subtraction separating an irreducibly singular configuration of the *alea*, and dissolving the cosmic unity of Chance in a gesture that simultaneously reaccentuates the void's untotalizable dispersion and crystallizes the Subject. This is the dice-throw as *mathematical* quantification of the stellar void. So we seem to be confronted with an insuperable conflict of philosophical interest: the event as subjective destitution versus the event as subjective constitution; the event as auto-affirmation of the One-All versus the event as puncturing subtraction from the One and dissemination of the All; a manifold of actual chances coinciding in the sovereign necessity of Chance as a virtual whole versus a plurality of separate and incommensurable chances subtended by the hazard of an infinitely empty void. And the conflict effectively remains insuperable or undecidable until a decision is forced. But perhaps the ability to decide in favour of the undecidable is precisely what separates subtractive intervention from purified affirmation; in which case the quantification of the stellar void punctures the qualitative unity of the cosmic animal.