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## ***Agalma* at the void: on the subject of an evental sublime**

Adam Drury, Oregon State University

Over the last two decades, Slavoj Žižek's Lacanian anti-philosophy and Alain Badiou's materialist dialectic philosophy can be seen to have approached each other asymptotically – intentionally, and also inevitably so. Without question, the convergence of their respective movements of thought makes for a potent and indispensable critical war machine. And especially so for those to whom psychoanalysis and materialist-dialectical philosophy represent, in the present, a long tradition of intellectual resistance to capitalism and the theoretical destruction of the democratic materialism that underpins its global regime. That is to say, when we are speaking of Badiou and Žižek in the context of the political, we are speaking of the Idea of Communism, and nothing else.

So when Alain Badiou writes, tucked away in a short note in the back of *Logics of Worlds*, that “we make up a politburo of two which decides who will be the first to shoot the other,” (Badiou 2009: 563) he shares with us more than just some playful hyperbole concerning his relationship with Žižek; instead, the joke's Stalinist framework reveals an apparently brutal mutual-exclusivity of the metapolitical consequences of these authors'

divided conceptualizations of the real.<sup>1</sup> In light of Badiou's and Žižek's anti-humanist advocacy for the return to the Idea of Communism, their debate concerning the real acquires critical urgency, since what is ultimately at stake is a theorization of the egalitarian-emancipatory subject.

I will address this debate by analyzing what I take to be its two main components. There is, primarily, the question of structure, which is to say the question of bodies. More precisely, the question involves the theory of incorporation of two bodies – in this case, the 'natural' body of a human individual, and the body of a truth. I aim to demonstrate that what separates Badiou and Žižek amounts to a kind of 'minimal difference' concerning the paradoxical status of Lacan's *objet a* in the incorporation of bodies. While Badiou and Žižek both follow Lacan in asserting the body's extimacy with regard to the evental becoming-Other which marks the beginning of a subject's grip on an event's trace, their differing conceptualizations of the modality of this extimacy – as sequential and contingent becoming for Badiou; as structure for Žižek – installs a parallax gap at the heart of what Badiou calls 'the regime of the cut', the evental upsurge whose trace affects a body in such a way as to be the basis for a new subject.

What, then, is the 'evental sublime'? In one sense it is a conceptual figure that seeks to enable one to think within the gap separating anti-philosophy and philosophy, and to embrace the antinomies that emerge between these positions, without (it is my hope) being led into contradiction. But the evental sublime is also a notion which endeavors to formulate a unique and particularly charged construction of subjectivity, part Badiouvian, part Žižekian. Between the two models, there is a Lacanian subjectivation that Badiou claims to have surpassed (citing the limitation of an indelible skepticism which restricts truths' eternity at the same time that it prevents the creation of the truly new), while Žižek has asserted its finitude with more rigor and bravado than any comparable thinker. So to be a bit more specific, within what I am calling the evental sublime I seek a subjectivation that would harness all the subtractive power of negativity Žižek extracts from the Lacanian construction while avoiding the finitude and skepticism that would disqualify it, in Badiou's system, from the active composition of an eternal truth.<sup>2</sup>

## ***Agalma at the void***

I take as a point of departure the juxtaposition of two ostensibly disconnected passages from Alain Badiou's *Logics of Worlds*. The first, which is actually a sequence of two theses, appears in the scholium "A Musical Variant of the Metaphysics of the Subject" that concludes Book I; I have distilled it:

Four affects signal the incorporation of a human animal into a subjective truth-process: Terror, the desire for a Great Point; anxiety, the desire for continuity and monotonous shelter; courage, which affirms the inexorable discontinuity of points; justice, where the categories of the act are subordinated to the contingency of worlds. [...] To oppose the value of courage and justice to the 'Evil' of anxiety and terror is to succumb to mere opinion. All the affects are necessary in order for the incorporation of a human animal to unfold in a subjective process.<sup>3</sup> (Badiou 2009: 86-87)

The immanence of *affect* to subjective incorporation is one justification for recourse to the category of the sublime as the conceptual figure of a logic that could think the disjunction of philosophy and anti-philosophy as productive for answering the question of the Subject. The following is found in the section on Lacan in Book VII:

When Lacan says that 'the object of psychoanalysis is not man, it's what he lacks', one will note that he has yet to separate this famous psychoanalysis from philosophy, since by 'eternal truths' we too understand what is missing in the man of democratic materialism, and what can only be accessed by incorporating oneself into the Other body – which Lacan too bears witness to. But when he adds 'not absolute lack, but the lack of an object,' he takes a step too far in the direction of finitude, which de-philosophizes him. (Badiou 2009: 481)

When this second passage is read next to the first, with an eye for the register of the sublime, a striking relation emerges.

In Kant's *Critique of Judgment* the affects of terror and anxiety are bound together in the dialectic that composes The Analytic of the Sublime. To recognize the immanence of a lacking object to this dialectic, however, is more difficult. Badiou characterizes anti-philosophy as the de-absolutization of lack as the lack of an object. We know that for Lacan the formula for the lack of an object is *objet petit a*. But how does Badiou understand the category of Object? He conceives of it in the same way as Kant, as "the point of undecidability between the empirical and the transcendental, between receptivity

and spontaneity and between objective and subjective” (Badiou 2009: 231-2). This undecidability announces itself in the form of a reversibility between the pure or empty form of the ‘object in general’ (or in Kant’s vocabulary, the “transcendental object”) and the phenomenal appearance of any object whatsoever, given in intuition. For Badiou, this reversibility designates the object as a conjunction between the ontology of being (as pure indifferent multiplicity) and the logic of being as being-there (appearing in a world). The object, then, is situated at the edge of the void of any situation; it is what allows a situation’s governing transcendental to index the invariance of the multiple (or void) to the intensities in which any given object appears in a world in relation to other given objects. Or also, the category of Object designates the logical form of the objectivity of appearing that sutures the consistency of worldly phenomena to their multiple-being. Badiou’s notion that a situation (or world) is constructed around what does not appear or is void in that situation is akin to the Lacanian theory that a symbolic order is structured around an impasse of the real qua impossibility. Therefore, the object can also be said to indicate the general form of the passage, or the point of undecidability and reversibility, from the real to the symbolic.

Thus, it is possible to proceed in two directions. If we stay with Badiou, we will find that he strips from the Kantian conception of the object all residues of a subjective capacity. The unity of self-consciousness that Kant attributes to an act of transcendental apperception – the liaising of the void of the subject as an empty ‘I think’ with the void of the empty form of the object in general – is instead “the structural unity of the transcendental of a world.” Synthetic unity, which depends on the ‘faculties’ of human consciousness, is instead the “postulate of the real one of atoms” (Badiou 2009: 233).<sup>4</sup> This is in keeping with the initiative, first found in Badiou’s *Theory of the Subject*, to develop a ‘finally objectless subject’; here, there is an apparently subjectless object. The important point is to seize the ambiguity of the theory of the object’s undecidability. As Badiou demonstrates, this ambiguity circles around the ‘other’ of the transcendental: the object is the reversibility between the transcendental and the empirical (for Kant), *and* between the transcendental and ontological being-qua-being (for Badiou) (Badiou 2009: 234). And neither of these two domains implies, for Badiou of course, a subject. That the object lacks a subject is crucial in Badiou’s system, and it leads him to develop a completely novel interpretation of the Kantian ‘faculties’, where ‘intuition’ in particular receives a radical overhaul. Further along in this paper, I will have occasion to return to Badiou’s conception of Kantian intuition. For now, however, I will traverse the other path,

which makes of the undecidability of the object as logical form without content the principle of the Lacanian subject-effect.

This other path is the one taken by the Slovenian Lacanians, notably Alenka Zupančič and Slavoj Žižek, who persuasively argue that Lacan's *objet a* is Kant's transcendental object in disguise. It is through the collective force of their arguments that the constellation of object-affect-subject emerges in an alignment that serves as a partial foundation for the idea of the evental sublime. These arguments are, precisely: Žižek's delineation of the relationship between *objet a* and the real, through a recognition of the shift in German Idealism from the subject of transcendental apperception (Kant) to the subject as crack in universal Substance (Hegel); and Zupančič's exposure of *anxiety* as the category of affect lying in the heart of a subjective proximity to *objet a*.<sup>5</sup> In fact, it is possible to discern a parallax gap in the concept of anxiety which induces its anamorphosis. Badiou lists anxiety as one of the four affects involved in an individual's incorporation into the subject-body of a truth – anxiety is here distinctly 'subjective' – and also his claim that any 'thinking' of the object does not imply a subject. What Zupančič accomplishes is the anamorphosis of an inscription of the Lacanian theory of anxiety – as the 'objective' feeling of a *subject's* nearness to the object (*objet a*) – into Kant's theory of the feeling of *respect*.

The Kantian feeling of respect appears – though in a significantly diluted form, argues Zupančič – in section 27 of the *Analytic of the Sublime*, which is titled, "Quality of the delight of our estimate of the sublime." "The feeling of our incapacity to attain to an idea *that is a law for us*, is RESPECT" (Kant 1961: 105). But this respect, that is respect felt as "delight," as a negative pleasure in the face of an experience of the sublime, is only a certain subreption by which we mistakenly attribute to the 'sublime object' the truth of our "proper vocation": accordance with the ideas (laws) of reason (Kant 1961: 106). In short, respect for the sublime object substitutes respect for the "idea of humanity in our own self – the Subject" (Kant 1961: 106). Yet this 'error' of subreption, which nevertheless manages to induce a pleasure from displeasure, cannot be explained away (as Kant does) with a reference to sensibility's inadequacy when overdriven by a colossal display of Nature's forces. What Zupančič argues in *Ethics of the Real* is that for this subreption to occur at all, 'respect' has to already have been situated at the level of a *representation*, which means 1) that the delightful feeling of respect induced by the sublime is "*bloss Subjektives*" [merely subjective] and thus a 'pathological' feeling like anything else, and 2) that the moral law or 'categorical imperative', whose seat is the ideas of reason 'intuited' by the

subject in sublime experience, must also be a representation (Zupančič 2000: 149).<sup>6</sup> And the name for the *representation of the moral law* is none other than *superego*.

What is the function of this superegoic moral law, that is of the moral law as its representation in the field of subjective experience? Žižek answers: we begin with a Hegelian reaffirmation of the Kantian 'gap' separating phenomena from noumena/Things in-themselves, which is also the gap separating our intuition from the pure concepts of our understanding.<sup>7</sup> This reaffirmation asserts that the 'suprasensible Idea' (of the moral law, for example) is neither an inaccessible Thing in-itself (Kant's position) nor present in the 'I' of transcendental apperception; it is, rather, "*nothing but* the inherent limitation of intuition" (Žižek 1993: 39). Furthermore, argues Žižek, Hegel's move here is immanently Lacanian, for it accomplishes with the noumenal Thing (Kant's *Ding-an-sich*) exactly what Lacan will accomplish with the Real: the 'Real Thing' is de-substantialized, voided, it has no positive being – or, its substance is only the retroactive 'mirage' of the transcendental object that no given object, not even a 'sublime object', can sensuously fulfill.<sup>8</sup> From this perspective, it is easy to see the special status of the sublime in Kant's undertaking: the sublime is that which exposes from within Kantian moral philosophy the void on which it is founded, a void to which Kant may have necessarily been blind. In any case, we are now in a position to understand Kant's recourse to a superegoization of the moral law.

Again, subreption – the move whereby the subject attributes to an object the cause of a *feeling of respect* that is 'really' caused by the awareness of the supremacy of reason's Ideas over "the greatest faculty of sensibility" – is *not* some innocent transference. This feeling of respect is of a strictly *reactionary* nature, whose only aim is to protect the subject, as it were, from the realization that its correlate, i.e. the transcendental object, is a semblance, a mere projection of the void of the Thing/Real into his fantasy space. Thus the importance for the transference of subreption: it allows the sublime object to substitute in place of the semblance of the transcendental object (qua form of the appearance of the void) so that reality retains its consistency (Žižek 1993: 38). But the consistency of reality is not the only thing threatened by the experience of the sublime. Bear in mind that Kant attributes the unity of self-consciousness to an act of transcendental apperception, or the co-relation of two voids: the empty forms of the object in general and the subject as pure 'I'. What *respect* reacts to is the possibility that, in perceiving the transcendental object as void, the subject might also 'come to' the void of his own ground. The consequence of such a 'coming to' would amount to nothing less than the annihilation of both the consistency of the world around me and the consistency of my-

self. In other words, the paradox of the sublime is that the same experience could lead either to the elevation of the self over any purposeless monstrosity Nature can throw at it, or it could lead to the radical evacuation of the ego, and the total withdrawal of the subject from the world. The latter possibility, famously, is the basis of the psychoanalytic cure. Since the transcendental object is designated by Lacan as *objet a* – i.e. the secret, innermost part of my self-identity, the *agalma* without which I would lose all consistency of the fantasy of myself as an individual ‘person’ – the act of the cure, *la traversée du fantasme*, involves the subject’s affirmation of the *agalma* as a semblance, whereupon I die, yet go on living.

The path of the cure, of course, is not at all the path taken by Kant and, one might add, this is to his great satisfaction.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the psychic cost of sublime ‘elevation’ [*Erhabene*], though an acceptable loss for Kant, may not be so for us, if what we’re after is an incorporation of an individual into the subject-body of a truth-process. What, then, is the exact nature of this cost? Žižek describes it as “an absolute pressure exerted on me by the superego, which humiliates me and compels me to act against my fundamental interests” (Žižek 1993: 47). It is hard to comprehend how such an experience could be described as a “delight”, or even a “negative pleasure.” As such, both of these consequences of the superego’s absolute pressure – humiliation and acting against one’s ‘fundamental interests’ – require examination in turn. Alenka Zupančič has linked the feeling of humiliation to the *representation* of the feeling of respect already discussed.<sup>10</sup> Here, humiliation and the superego appear locked in what has been called a Sadeian dialectic. Zupančič keenly observes that Kant’s superegoization of the (moral) Law involves its supplementation with a *voice* and a *gaze*, “a manoeuvre which aims to fill a hole in the Other (the Law) by means of supplementing the Other by the object that it lacks” (Zupančič 2000: 147). If the ethic of psychoanalysis, which culminates in the autonomous act of the subject’s crossing his fundamental fantasy, depends on an inconsistency or lack in the Other qua symbolic law, it is possible to see again how *humiliation* (as a form of respect) is a reactionary affect which aims at forever prohibiting/deferring the act.

Still, this picture is too simple; what needs to be taken into account is that the superegoic prohibition of the act necessitates that everything *else* is permitted, with the tormenting caveat that it will never be *It*, that nothing will ever satisfy the superego. This claim is founded on the metonymy of subreption: a judgment of the sublime designates the object as the place where Nature, in a monstrous display of forces without purpose or end, *enjoys*; yet what the subject is ‘really’ experiencing is the enjoyment of the superego, or

the superego as the place of *jouissance* (Zupančič 2000: 157). And since the subject has been forbidden the possibility of a pure ethical act, he can only approach it *ad infinitum* in a series of attempts that will out of necessity always fall short. Such, argues Zupančič (following Lacan's thesis "Kant avec Sade"), is the Sadeian perspective of the sublime as a fantasy of infinite suffering, where every object is sublime insofar as it reveals the subject's impotence in front of an absolute Other. This, then, begs the question of how it is possible for such a tormenting fantasy to be sustained, and moreover sustained as relatively pleasing. Kant himself provides the answer. In order for the entire movement of the sublime to be set in motion, my actual, physical body cannot be in any *real* danger. In the face of displays of Nature's ferocity, "provided our own position is secure, their aspect is all the more attractive for its fearfulness; and we readily call these objects sublime" (Kant 1961: 110-1). Harping on the pun of a 'real danger', it is impossible to resist a Lacanian transposition of Kant's statement: the humiliation I endure in the face of a raging superego is a pleasure so long as I am not really 'there', in the *place* of this obscene *jouissance* whose other name is the Lacanian Real. Rather, I observe myself as fundamentally apart, projecting my animality 'down there' while my ego remains safely exempted, elevated even, and ultimately *indifferent* to the fate of my body. It is possible, therefore, to endure infinite suffering at the hands of the superegoic (moral) Law only if the subject remains essentially 'detached', a *spectator* of his own torment.

Zupančič identifies this 'detachment' as Kant's "'fundamental fantasy' – the *pathos of apathy*, which is the reverse side of the autonomous and active subject, and in which the subject is entirely passive, an inert matter given over to the enjoyment of the Law" (Zupančič 2000: 158). It is easy to see how Badiou would harshly reject such a mode of subjectivity; he everywhere maintains that we can call subject only that which is an *active* composition of a truth-process, and it would not be possible for the subject or ego or individual as articulated in the Kantian sublime to make the subjectivating decision of incorporation. We will have to look elsewhere, that is, in Zupančič's argument according to which the theory of the sublime merely reinforces a shift already at work in Kant's philosophy apropos of the feeling of respect.<sup>11</sup>

According to this line of argument, the (ethical) subject and the moral law intersect at the level of *affect*, which Kant calls 'respect', as I have already shown. But the affect of respect that appears in *The Critique of Practical Reason*, argues Zupančič, is fundamentally opposed to the one we experience in the sublime, and this is because, in his earlier philosophy, Kant endeavored to articulate a causality for respect that would be



“foreign to the mode of representation” (Zupančič 2000: 142). Foreignness to representation means that, although an affect, ‘respect’ designates a non-pathological feeling – or it is “the irreducible ‘quantum of affect’ that emerges on the part of the subject: it is nothing but the final residue of the pathological which, in fact, is no longer ‘pathological’ in the strict sense of the word” (Zupančič 2000: 143). As such, *respect* describes only the *drive* of pure practical reason, that is, the conversion of the form of the law into a drive. So if respect is the mark of how the subject experiences the drive, it is also the mark of how he experiences a lack of representation. We know from Kant’s critique of the *cogito* that the subject who possesses the capacity to represent reality as objectively valid is the product of a fundamental loss, i.e. the Thing in me that thinks. Yet the outcome of Hegel’s ‘return to Kant’, which Lacan will later seize upon with his notion of the Real, is the realization that this Thing has no substance of its own ‘outside of’ the space of *desire*, of (symbolic) representation. This means that respect is not ‘just’ a feeling of a lack of representation, it is also the feeling of the lack or loss that is *constitutive of the subject of representation*, i.e. the subject who is conscious of himself as a thinking being. The formula of *respect*, in this case, is thus the feeling or affect of a lack that comes to a lack, which as Zupančič points out happens to be the precise formula of Lacanian *anxiety*: *le manque vient à manquer*.

What is not to be missed is that the ‘lack that comes to lack’ is what Kant could have seen, or rather *would* have seen in his *Analytic of the Sublime* were it not for his substantialization of the noumenal Thing, which forces him into a necessary blind-spot. As a result, the failure of representation in the sublime provokes the displacement of the drive onto the superego, which, precisely as an ‘agent’ of representation (desire), distorts the Law into an obscene *jouissance* whose consequences for the ego I have touched upon above. Prior to this shift, however, Kantian *respect* and Lacanian *anxiety* are both ‘objective’, non-pathological feelings, *affects* that indicate I have ‘come to’ the extimate place of my *jouissance* in the form of an object-drive, the ‘object-cause’ of my desire, my *agalma*, whose Lacanian name is *objet petit a*. This is how one might read Lacan’s famous maxim *ne pas céder sur son désir*: ‘Do not give up on your desire’ is at once an injunction to follow your desire through to its ‘real’ in the drive (i.e. *jouissance*) *and* to not make the Other the exclusive site of your desire. The first is what the ethical/psychoanalytic act consists of, while the second ensures that such an act remains possible. Thus, we can argue *the logic of the psychoanalytic act is a sublime logic* that overcomes the reactionary sequence – i.e., desire for the consistency of the ego – that composes the Kantian

sublime. The logic of this 'psychoanalytic sublime' involves the subtraction of the individual (subject) to the site of his inscription as pure subjectivity, a site whose ontological value is precisely *void*.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the psychoanalytic sublime is the logical inverse of the Kantian sublime, and is therefore able to articulate an ethical act that Kant ultimately finds inaccessible. Let us say, then, that it is now possible to propose a formula for the evental sublime that draws a sharp distinction from its superegoic Kantian predecessor: the *evental sublime* is a subject's encounter with *agalma at the void*. The principle *affect* that signals the evental sublime is Lacanian *anxiety* at its purest. In what follows, I will attempt to ground the predicate *evental* in the formula of the sublime as *agalma at the void*, in order to achieve a possible liaison between Badiou's philosophy and Lacanian anti-philosophy.

### **An evental sublime object?**

Inevitably, problems present themselves immediately. Returning to the first passage from *Logics of Worlds* (cited above), Badiou provides a definition of anxiety that is rather far removed from Lacan's. Here is the complete definition:

The second [anxiety] testifies to the fear of points, the retreat before the obscurity of the discontinuous, of everything that imposes a choice without guarantee between two hypotheses. To put it otherwise, this affect signals the *desire for continuity*, for a monotonous shelter. (Badiou 2009: 86, my italics)

It is impossible not to notice how similar Badiouvian anxiety is to the reactionary feeling of 'respect' Zupančič and Žižek identify as the mark of a superegoization of the moral law in the Kantian sublime. Is this superegoization not the exact consequence of the subject's desire for continuity? Badiou's own ethical theory testifies to the authenticity of an ethics only insofar as it involves a decision (or act) based on the *un-known* (the negative formula for *truth*) and as such carries no 'guarantee' that it will succeed (in the composition of a truth-process).<sup>13</sup> Thus, argues Zupančič, it is possible to detect a convergence between Kant, Lacan, and Badiou around this figure of ethics. Since the moral law has the structure of an enigma or of an *unknown* – the Other is not 'absolute' and therefore does not know *what* it wants, but is simply the site where the question of the subject's desire emerges – the ethical act involves the retroactive 'creation' of what the Other will have wanted; the subject will "write the destiny of his desire" (Zupančič 2000: 164-7). But whereas *anxiety* is

integral to the possibility of such an act for Lacan, it is clear that Badiouian *anxiety*, a “retreat” from the unknowable dimension of an act, is the opposite. The only other Badiouian affect that resembles Lacanian anxiety is *terror*, insofar as it “testifies to the desire for a Great Point, a *decisive discontinuity*...” (Badiou 2009: 86, my italics). But the homology evaporates as soon as one reads that this desire for a ‘decisive discontinuity’ is also the desire to institute “the new world in a single blow” (Badiou 2009: 86). As Žižek explains, it is indeed tempting

to risk a Badiouan/Pauline reading of the end of psychoanalysis – which is to say, a New Beginning or symbolic “rebirth” – with the analysand’s subjectivity radically restructured such that the vicious cycle of the superego is suspended, left behind. Nevertheless, Lacan’s way is not that of Paul or Badiou: psychoanalysis is not “psycho-synthesis”: it does not *posit* a “new harmony,” a new Truth-Event, but merely wipes the slate clean for it. (Žižek 1998: 252)

The debate between Žižek and Badiou crystallizes around the ‘end of psychoanalysis’ and the category of *anxiety* is what strikes this debate’s dominant chord. Badiou has said in a number of his writings that the psychoanalytic act in which the subject ‘identifies’ with his *jouissance* as the object-cause of desire is a ‘morbid fascination’, and that the Freudian-Lacanian death-drive is simply the name for an obscure desire for catastrophe, for nothingness. The general content of Žižek’s critique of Badiou’s position apropos of the death-drive is that Badiou uncritically conflates the *two* divisions of the subject in Lacanian theory, and as such remains ‘Freudian’ in his conception. In the first division, the subject is trapped in the Sadeian dialectic of the superego, which is the perverse ‘truth’ of the Kantian moral Law, and which can be witnessed at work in the Kantian sublime. In the second, radical division (which Lacan attributes to the fact that we inhabit language), the subject is the ‘split’ between the entire superego dialectic of the Law and the direct embodiment of the traumatic drive, the ontological void of an ‘undead’ *lamella*, which Lacan designates with the matheme  $\$ \leftrightarrow a$ . A true Lacanian, argues Žižek, insists on the constitutive necessity of a traumatic encounter with the ‘immortality’ of the drive as the background for any positive act of subjectivation (in Badiou’s sense of the word):

In Lacan, act is a purely *negative* category, which (in Badiou’s terms) stands for the gesture of breaking out of the constraints of Being, for the reference to the Void at its core, *prior to the filling in of this void*. ...The Lacanian death

drive is thus a kind of ‘vanishing mediator’ between Being and Event. (Žižek 1998: 257)

The Hegelian reference to the death-drive as a ‘vanishing mediator’ is key, and helps to resolve some of the inconsistencies in Žižek’s own argument: namely, that the negative gesture of the act is both what ‘wipes the slate’ for an event while being at the same time “sutured to its arrival”, *and* what evacuates the subject while at the same time opening the passage to (Badiouian) subjectivation (Žižek 1998: 253-7). In other words, it allows Žižek to make the distinction between on the one hand, the Lacanian subject of the drive, and on the other the Badiouian subject as the consequence of an individual incorporation. We are indeed dealing with two different subjects here, but Žižek’s Hegelian counter-argument is that one is the constitutive obverse of the other, that they are locked in the circularity of a Möbius strip (the Hegelo-Lacanian topology *par excellence*). However, Žižek’s topological circularity of the subject leads him to make some strikingly anti-Badiouian claims. For one, without the negative act of subjectivity there is no way to differentiate between an ‘authentic’ (political) event (e.g. the Paris Commune) and its semblance (e.g. Nazism); for another, the catastrophes of the twentieth century are not to be attributed to a morbid obsession with the death-drive – as Badiou has suggested<sup>14</sup> – but are rather the result of a failure to confront it fully. (Žižek 1998: 258)

Badiou would argue, however, that an event *will always have been* ‘authentic’, insofar as the subject remains faithful to its trace, and inaugurates a present (truth-event) process that interrogates the world point by point, from the perspective of the event-trace. In other words, there can be no ‘semblance’ of an event, only its reactive negation (a staunch conservatism *a lá* contemporary liberal-democracy) or its obscure occultation (fascism).<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, in a move to his own topology of the subject space, Badiou admits the predicate ‘subject’ even to those reactionary and obscure bodies that would respectively deny or occult an event’s trace. So while Žižek’s argument in “Psychoanalysis and post-Marxism” may be convincing in its own right, it breaks down the moment one attempts to transpose it into a Badiouian key, and therefore brings us no closer to a conceptualization of the *evental* sublime whose underlying register is the Lacanian subject *qua agalma at the void*. Nevertheless, Žižek attempts to establish a dialectical link between Lacanian subjectivity and Badiou, and it would thus be wise to examine his argument more carefully before abandoning it.

In the essay “From *objet a* to Subtraction”, Žižek provides a more substantial version of the Hegelian/Lacanian argument he forwarded in “Psychoanalysis and post-

Marxism.” What is perhaps most important to recognize from the outset is that in this later article, the emphasis shifts from ‘event’ and ‘subject’ to *objet a*. How so? Žižek begins with a more radical affirmation of the purely formal character of *objet a* – whose predecessor is the Kantian transcendental object – as not simply the element of a logical consistency but as the *virtual Real* in the field of the symbolic itself. Of course, the reference to the ‘virtual’ cannot but reveal the Deleuzian trajectory Žižek is embarking on. In fact, Žižek takes the logic of the irreducible circularity of the drive around *objet a* to its Deleuzian extreme, and in the process collapses the entire distinction he had previously made between the superegoic cycle of the Law/transgression and the domain of the drive ‘beyond’ that morbid dialectic: “Both aspects [of *objet a* in its reified material reality (superego), and *objet a* in its virtuality (organ without body)] display the same self-propelling twisted structure of a loop: the more the subject obeys the superego, the more he is guilty, caught in the repetitive movement *which is formally the same as that of the drive circulating around its object*” (Žižek 2007: 137, my italics). From here, it takes less than a page for the attack on Badiou to materialize.

And does not the same shift determine also the status of the Badiouian Event [sic] with regard to how it relates to the order of Being? An Event inscribes itself into the order of Being, leaving its traces in it, “or rather” an Event is NOTHING BUT a certain distortion/twist in the order of Being. ... Maybe this reference to Lacan also enables us to formulate the moment that is missing in Badiou’s scheme: is it not possible to think this distortion of Being independently of (or as prior to) the Event, so that “Event” ultimately names a minimal “fetishization” of the immanent distortion of the texture of Being into its virtual object-cause? And is the Freud-Lacanian name of this distortion not DRIVE, death drive? (Žižek 2007: 138)

In this not-so-slight-of-hand, Žižek stacks the deck against Badiou; this is not just a reference to Lacan, it is a reference to the entire pantheon of thinkers that stand as Badiou’s most formidable opposition – Hegel, Lacan, ...and Deleuze – and Žižek does so merely with a clever extension of the paradoxical status of *objet a*. And it is furthermore no accident that, having found his strictly Hegel-Lacanian opposition to Badiou lacking, Žižek supplements it with Deleuze. For the event, according to Deleuze, is nothing other than *sense*, which means “to argue that the event belongs to the register of sense tips it over entirely onto the side of language” (Badiou 2009: 386). In my view, Žižek moves too quickly with this Deleuzian supplementation. Although the equation of event with sense may seem to reinforce the Lacanian element of Žižek’s critique, insofar as it places the

emphasis entirely on language, it does not acknowledge the refinements made by the later Lacan apropos of the concept of the *matheme*. To wit, the Lacanian Real is certainly this ‘distortion/twist’ in the Symbolic (or order-of-Being), but the Real is also senseless, or more precisely the *ab-sense of sense*.<sup>16</sup> As such, the Real’s “only relationship to language is to make a hole in it” (Badiou 2009: 386). Ultimately, to say that Badiou’s event is the ‘fetishization’ of Deleuze’s event is theoretically questionable, and does violence to both the sophistication of Lacanian anti-philosophy and to the rigorous distinction Badiou makes between his theory of the event and Deleuze’s.

Indeed, there is no greater difference between Badiou and Deleuze than in their respective understandings of the event.<sup>17</sup> Deleuze asserts the monadological, virtual One, whose expression is the vital continuity of unlimited becoming.<sup>18</sup> Here, there is only one Event, that of Life, of which all other events are simply various exhibitions:

[The event] is the immanent mark of the One-result of all becomings. In the multiple-that-becomes, in the in-between of those multiples which are active multiplicities, the event is the fate of the One. (Badiou 2009: 384)

By completely inverting/negating the Deleuzian conception of the event, we obtain Badiou’s:

...a site which, having appeared according to the maximal intensity, is equally capable of absolutizing in appearing what hitherto was its own proper inexistent. ...[Event] is a pure cut in becoming made by an object of the world, through that object’s auto-appearance; but it is also the supplementing of appearing through the upsurge of a trace; the old inexistent which has become an intense existence. (Badiou 2009: 384)

As Badiou aptly observes, between the two concepts is an authentic differend. There is, I believe, a way around this deadlock; the task is to establish the objectal component of the evental sublime. The whole point will be to argue the evental sublimity of a trace. The first step is to observe a common ground between Badiou and Žižek *avec* Hegel-Deleuze-Lacan, for which there is a concise formula: *the conjunction of a lack and an excess*.

This conjunction emerges at the point of Žižek’s argument in “From *objet a* to Subtraction” when he makes an explicit reference to Deleuze: “In his *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze provided a better model when he developed how the two series (of the signifier and the signified) always contain a paradoxical entity that is ‘doubly inscribed’ (i.e., that is simultaneously surplus and lack)” (Žižek 2007: 136). Žižek immediately transposes this

'double inscription' into Lacan's formula of the fundamental fantasy,  $\$ \leftrightarrow a$ , where  $\$$  is of course the split subject qua empty place is the signifying chain – the lack – while  $a$  is "an excessive object" (Žižek 2007: 136). The Deleuzian riff on the conjunction of  $\$$  and *objet a* is what leads Žižek to his critical position on the Badiouian event. In Badiou, on the other hand, this conjunction emerges in the first of his negations of Deleuze:

With regard to the continuum in the becomings of the world, there is both a lack (impossibility of auto-appearance without interrupting the authority of the mathematical laws of being and the logical laws of appearing) and an excess (impossibility of the upsurge of a maximal intensity of existence). 'Event' names the conjunction of this lack and this excess. (Badiou 2009: 384)

Significantly, the elements of Badiou's system which correspond to auto-appearance and to a maximal intensity of existence are respectively the object and the trace. Furthermore, the precise word for an object affected by auto-appearing – which means that "in being" it "belongs to itself," and that "in appearing" it "falls under its own transcendental indexing" – is *site*, or "the testimony of the intrusion of being as such into appearing" (Badiou 2009: 594). Finally, a site becomes an event, or evental site, when it attains a trace: "we call trace of an event, or *evental trace*, ...the prior inexistent which, under the effect of the site, has taken the *maximal* value" (Badiou 2009: 596). Taken together, I will call the evanescent sequence of intensification that begins with the object-site and culminates in an event that obtains to a trace, *evental objectivity*. Another important element to mention here concerns the 'situation' – in both senses of the term – of the site itself. A site is a multiple that is "foundational" in the sense that "sites *found* the situation because they are the primary terms therein;" hence the foundational cut of the site, its auto-appearing and self-belonging: from the perspective of the situation itself, the multiple of the site is "made up exclusively of non-presented multiples" (Badiou 2005: 173-7).<sup>19</sup> And it is because of its value as 'non-presented' that Badiou situates the site "*on the edge of the void*" (Badiou 2005: 174). Since the void of a situation is the suture to its being, it is possible to make sense of the site as 'the testimony of the intrusion of being *as such* into appearing.' If in the first part of this essay I endeavored to configure the 'subject-element' of the evental sublime as *agalma at the void*, what I have attempted to do subsequently is develop an evental objectivity that convenes in the same place, 'at (the edge of) the void'. The elements are in place; now to effect their possible relation.

It is necessary to return to Kant, or rather Badiou's departure from Kant, apropos the concept of the object. I have said that the reverse side of Badiou's objectless subject is a subjectless object, or at least an object that does not in the first place imply a subject or subjective faculty. I am returning to this terrain because Badiou's concept of the evental site is a direct consequence of his recapitulation *sans subject* of Kantian objectivity. In Kant, the objective validity of a given phenomenon depends on a schematic relationship between the intuition and understanding, 'mediated' by the transcendental imagination – subjective capacities which Kant calls 'faculties'. Via Badiou, intuition and understanding are recast into "the space of appearing as such" and into the "transcendental operations" which govern appearances through "the formal regulation of identities," respectively (Badiou 2009: 234-5). By 'identities', Badiou means the "degree or intensity of the differences of what comes to appear in the world;" setting this degree is the essential operation of a transcendental (Badiou 2009: 235).

Despite the correlations, however, Badiou points out that Kant does not have a very remarkable conception of the degree, identifying Kant's "mathematical childishness" as the cause (Badiou 2009: 236). As evidence of this, Badiou cites Kant's 'proof' of the axioms of intuition – which concern intensive and extensive magnitudes – where Kant "assumes that an extensive magnitude is one 'in which the representation of parts makes possible the representation of the whole'." If this were true, explains Badiou, "whole numbers wouldn't constitute an extensive field at all!" (Badiou 2009: 237). Why probe this seemingly minuscule criticism? Because what Kant calls the 'mathematical' sublime is precisely a breakdown in the axioms of intuition. More precisely, Kant attributes an 'absolute magnitude' to (mathematically sublime) objects that do not allow the representation of parts – via the imagination's faculty of *apprehension*, which can proceed *ad infinitum* – to achieve a representation of the whole – via imagination's *comprehension* (Kant 1961: 98-105).<sup>20</sup> Thus for Kant, absolute magnitude designates the greatest possible magnitude that can be given in intuition. So if 'intuition' is for Badiou simply the place of appearing as such, and if Kantian 'magnitude' (intensive or extensive) is for Badiou the degree or intensity of what appears, then there is a necessary correlation between a mathematically sublime object's "*absolute* magnitude" and a site-object's "*maximal* degree of appearing." Yet there is more here than a simple correlation between the terms of these two systems; Badiou's break with Kantian objectivity carries profound consequences for the history of the idea of the sublime. In the first place, the sublime is dissociated from the play of the ego, its 'elevation' or individuation – that is, from its Romantic interpretation. And the



sublime is also divorced from its epistemological enchainment to a technology of reading representations of subjective/individual experience against each other – that is, from its deployment in deconstructive and New Historicist critical idioms. Instead, the *evental* sublime would designate the ontological paradox Badiou calls ‘event’, it would mark the maximal intensity of the intrusion of being into appearing, and it is from this point that a reactivation of the revolutionary-emancipatory capacity of the sublime can be asserted.

The question to be asked is thus: How can the concept of the evental sublime help to illuminate the path of an emancipatory politics, that is the path of the Communist Idea, today? In “The Paris Commune: A Political Declaration on Politics,” Badiou argues that the fate of the Idea lies in our ability to return to – to make visible to political thought – the event of March 18, 1871, the worker insurrection that created the impossible: the Paris Commune.<sup>21</sup> Why there, and not, for example, October 1917, the Cultural Revolution, or May ’68? The answer unfolds as a series of three theses: 1) The left, “the established order’s sole recourse during movements of great magnitude,” has only ever meant the opportunistic exploitation of the gap between politics and state (Badiou 2010: 198); 2) today, true political rupture always means a rupture with the left, with the representative form of democracy, and a total subtraction from the state (Badiou 2010: 227); 3) the declaration of the Central Committee on March 19, 1871 is for the first and only time “a *declaration to break with the left*,” to organize a politics solely through the resources of the proletarian movement itself (Badiou 2010: 198).

Of course, Badiou’s interpretation of the Paris Commune and his assertion of its political significance is itself a rupture with its leftist absorption, where if it is mentioned at all, it is so through a “commemorative” mode that deactivates the contemporary value of the Commune: its rejection of the parliamentary destiny of popular political movements (Badiou 2010: 196). What matters to us here is the operation whereby Badiou recovers this value from its leftist, hermeneutical obfuscation. In short, the operation involves the demonstration that in its ontology – that is, as a site – March 18, 1871 creates a consequence in the logical domain of appearing that will have conferred on the site its status as an event. Abstractly, Badiou defines such a consequence as the coming to exist absolutely of that which was inexistent in the situation prior to the event (Badiou 2010: 221). More specifically, there is a site (March 18) whose intensity of existence is maximal (the worker insurrection in Paris), and as a consequence of this maximally intense existence, something whose value of existence was nil comes to exist in the situation absolutely (the political capacity of the proletariat). The effect of this new and absolute

existence is crucial. In the first place, the evental multiplicity of the site vanishes; “all the event’s power is consumed in the existential transfiguration” (Badiou 2010: 222). Thus, it is the absoluteness of the new existence, its maximal intensity in the logic of appearing, that is “the subsisting mark, in the world, of the event itself” (Badiou 2010: 223). Badiou names this subsisting mark “trace” [tracé], the path or statement that inaugurates an eternal truth.

Above, I established the objectal component of the evental sublime on the basis of Badiou’s classification of an event-site as an object whose auto-appearance attains a maximal intensity. I then demonstrated this classification’s conceptual link to the Kantian classification of sublime objects. Furthermore, the logical relationship between the maximally true implication of an event, the maximality of its antecedent (the site), and the absoluteness of its consequent, allows for the assertion of the sublimity of the event as transitive – it is a quality of both the event-site’s appearance/disappearance *and* the trace of the event. More specifically, the evental sublimity of a trace consists in the absoluteness of its existence.

As an (evental sublime) object, the absoluteness of the trace necessitates a violent torsion of worldly appearing, “a mutation of its logic,” a wholly new transcendental evaluation of the situation; and yet, “worldly order cannot be subverted to the point of being able to require the abolition of a logical law of situations” (Badiou 2010: 223). Consequently, the intensification of the object’s existence from nil to absolute necessitates the destruction of another element. But what is striking is the vocabulary Badiou uses to describe this destruction:

Every situation has at least one proper inexistent aspect, and if this aspect happens to be *sublimated* into absolute existence, another element of the site must cease to exist, thereby keeping the law intact and ultimately *preserving the coherence of appearing* (Badiou 2010: 224, my italics).

This vocabulary is striking because of its similarity to Lacan’s demonstration, in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, that the Kantian notion of the sublime is in line with the Freudian notion of sublimation. Here, ‘sublime object’ is “an empirical object ... elevated to the dignity of the Thing [the Real]: ...it holds the place of, stands in for, what has to be excluded, foreclosed, if ‘reality’ is to retain its consistency” (Žižek 1993: 38). And indeed: both of these passages describe a sublimation whose effect is to preserve the consistency of appearing – but they do not overlap. If one grants precedence to the *ontological void of the subject*, as do Lacan and Žižek, then the sublime object is *objet a*: a pure semblance

sublimated to the order of the Real-Thing to stand in for its lack. But if one grants precedence to the *ontology of the event-site*, as does Badiou, the sublime object is the trace whose sublimation does not fill in some gap in appearing – in truth, it *was* this ‘empty’ place, an aspect of the void of the situation – but instead results in a destruction/exclusion that preserves a logical law of worldly coherence.

What is at stake in this observation is the question of a subjective incorporation. The key is to understand the role of the sublime object in subjectivation, and in both Lacan and Badiou the primary or principal act of subjectivation consists in a decision, a will. The first part of this paper explored in detail the consequences of the decision directed toward *objet a*: it affirms *objet a* as a semblance, shatters the consistency of the ‘I’, and therefore makes possible the incorporation of a new enunciated content that will form the object-cause of the subject’s desire. Badiou, however, is critical of the Lacanian theory of incorporation. Although he “unhesitatingly communicates” (Badiou 2009: 480) with Lacan’s construction, Badiou identifies an ambiguity pertaining to it, and the interpretation of this ambiguity is what ultimately separates him from Lacan. “Lacan treats what I believe to be a sequence or contingent becoming as a structure” (Badiou 2009: 480), and as a structure it remains on the horizon of finitude – its truths are restricted to the truths of structure.<sup>22</sup> What prompts this restriction is Lacan’s anti-philosophy. Even though, as Badiou argues, “this theme [of the subsumption of bodies and languages by the exception of truths] requires above all the recognition of the potential absoluteness of a trace,” since Lacan “sees in the absolute what he does not hesitate to call the ‘inaugural mistake of philosophy’” (Badiou 2009: 480-1), he will ultimately arrive at a notion of the real that proscribes the ‘eternality’ of its trace. A fragment of the Lacanian real, projected through an imaginary subjectivation into the symbolic texture, can only ever make a hole in it. The consequence of the act of such a decision could only be destructive. Such is what I believe to be the content of Badiou’s criticism that the Lacanian real is “so ephemeral, so brutally punctual, that it is impossible to uphold its consequences.” Of course, there is also destruction in Badiou’s system, but it is the effect of the absoluteness of the trace, an absoluteness which confers on it an infinite/eternal existence.

Asserting the absoluteness of the trace is Badiou’s defense against anti-philosophy, and it enables him to situate “the singularity of the human animal one notch further,” for

It is only as a transhuman body that a subject takes hold of the divisible body of the human animal. ...We observe the gap between, on the one hand, the

transcendental laws of appearing and, on the other, the present engendered by a subjectivizable body, a present that initiates an eternal truth. This is also the gap between the multiple-body of the human animal and its subjective incorporation. (Badiou 2009: 481)

Yet in “The Idea of Communism,” Badiou formalizes the operation of the Idea in the register of Lacan’s three orders of the subject.<sup>23</sup> Here, the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic correspond to the abstract totalization of an Idea’s three basic elements: “a truth procedure [real], a belonging to history [symbolic], and an individual subjectivation [imaginary]” (Badiou 2010: 235). Focusing on the element of an individual subjectivation in the context of the Idea of Communism, we see that it involves an imaginary operation that projects a fragment of the political real – in this case, emancipatory politics – into the symbolic narrative of a History (Badiou 2010: 239). For the Communards of 1871, this subjectivation meant the decision, projecting the real of an emancipatory politics into the narrative of universal history, to break with the left and to build a new world upon the principle of the absolute political capacity of the proletariat. The trace of this event, captured in the Committee’s declaration on March 19, exists always. Thus Badiou proposes the following task to thought: to bring about the political visibility of that declaration in such a way as to reactivate the maximal intensity of its existence – that is, to make the trace of the Commune event the object of a subjectivating decision for individuals today. It is important to notice, however, that with the assertion of the absoluteness of the trace, Badiou can describe the operation of the Idea through Lacan’s formalism of the Subject without the interference of his critique of Lacan’s theory of incorporation. But how – what has happened to his situating the singularity of a human individual one notch further than that theory, to observing the gap between human animal and subjectivation? In “The Idea of Communism,” although that critique may not be present, the consequence of it is: from as early as *Théorie du Sujet* (1982), Badiou’s theory of incorporation has included the idea that a person, “while remaining the individual that he or she is, can also become an active part of a new Subject” (Badiou 2010: 234). In other words, Badiouvian subjectivation does not include or require the act of the psychoanalytic cure, *la traversée du fantasme*; at the level of my individuality, my ‘I’, nothing has to change.

Yet this belief seems to run counter to claims that the commodity domination sustaining Empire, named “The Spectacle” by Debord and “Biopower” by Foucault, requires a political subjugation installed at the level of the individual, in the form of

separation, alienation, and “total mobilization” (Jünger). Schizoanalysis, from a different angle, argues that the seizure of desire by the capitalist mode of desiring-production forms the real basis of the activity of individuals as economic subjects. Even more forcefully, there exists a body of texts, published anonymously under the name *Tiqqun*, which have put forward an extreme radicalization of what is already pointed to within the two major strategies of the work of Foucault, i.e. the substitution of a historical analysis of the microphysics of governmentality for the history of sovereignty, and the substitution of a historical analysis of subjectivation and practices of the self for the history of theories of the subject.<sup>24</sup> Yet whereas with Foucault these two analyses remain correlative, in the *Tiqqun* texts they find a point of junction. Today, apparatuses of governance and processes of subjectivation fully coincide with one another, such that “a theory of the subject is no longer possible except as a theory of apparatuses.”<sup>25</sup> Badiou’s approach is completely different. While *Tiqqun* acknowledges the collapse of the subject and attempts to rethink political action without the anthropological reference to a subject, Badiou eschews the anthropological reference by asserting a gap between a human individual and her subjective incorporation. The evental sublime, however, casts some doubt onto the tenability of Badiou’s assertion.

Lacan’s ethics of psychoanalysis and Badiouian ethics both culminate in the act of a decision to incorporate one’s individual body into an Other body, the Subject-body of a truth. What divides Lacan and Badiou concerns the Real. One on side, the Lacanian real is the ab-sense of sense, and its truths can only ever be projected into the symbolic negatively, destructively – they puncture language, says Badiou, but their real is too punctual. On the other, the Badiouian real of a truth-procedure, born of the void, is projected into a symbolic narrative in the absolute positivity of a trace – its existence in the world is infinite. Both of these projections (of the real of a truth into the symbolic) are made possible by the act of a decision, the imaginary-operation of a subjective incorporation. And in both Lacan and Badiou, the space for this decision is opened up by an encounter with an object, either *objet a* or a trace. What I have called the evental sublime reveals how both of these objects share a conceptual link with the Kantian sublime – the Analytic of the Sublime is their philosophical heritage. Lacan derives his concept of *objet a* from the Kantian transcendental object which, via subreption, is encountered as a dynamically sublime object. Badiou arrives at his concept of the event-trace through his break with Kantian objectivity, but it is a concept derived from the absolute magnitude of mathematically sublime objects. The evental sublime thus suggests how, at least in the

case of the operation of the Idea of Communism, the gap between the individual and her incorporation into an emancipatory political truth is collapsed; the decision concerns at once my individuality *and* my becoming part of the Subject of an emancipatory politics.

To decide to be a militant of the Idea of Communism means the simultaneous acts of freeing oneself from the constraints of a political subjugation located at the level of desire, of affirming *objet a* as a semblance devoid of any real support, *and* of determining the place of the Idea's truth in relation to one's self and to the world in which that self thinks and acts. Yet to do so, it is precisely this self that cannot be the same as it was prior to the decision. Subjectivation is of the order of the imaginary, and as no real can be symbolized as such, it is the sine qua non of the operation of the Idea. As the imaginary foundation for the possibility of a person to consist as part of a subject, subjectivation is an ideo-logical commitment. As an ideology, the Idea provides a fantasy frame, and it is through this frame that one recognizes herself as a militant of the Idea while also exposing "the sequence [of its truth] in the symbolic order of History" (Badiou 2010: 239). What makes it possible to find one's self within the Idea's ideology is, I claim, the fact that the *decision* of a subjectivation merges with an *act of la traversée du fantasme* – that is, of the fantasy that had sustained the self prior to its incorporation into the body of a truth. By exposing in Lacan's and Badiou's departures from the Kantian sublime the common heritage of the operation of subjectivation, the eventual sublime allows us to see the necessity of this coincidence of a decision and an act, of the profound individual transfiguration that is also a part of the belonging to the Subject and historical movement of emancipatory politics.

<sup>1</sup> The quotation can be found in the “Notes, Commentaries, and Digressions” section of *Logics of Worlds*. On the same page, Badiou admits that his debate with Žižek “concerns the real.” According to Badiou, Žižek has proposed, following Lacan, a conception of the real “which is so ephemeral, so brutally punctual, that it is impossible to uphold its consequences.”

<sup>2</sup> It is inevitable that my desire to retain the radical negativity inherent in Lacan’s notion of the subject will betray my privileging, however slightly, that notion. This, however, is no accident. By completely dismissing the negativity of the category of the death-drive from his theory of the subject, Badiou likewise dismisses Tragedy (in favor of Comedy) as the form of theatre that could support the subject-body of an artistic truth (see his “Theses on Theatre” in *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (2005)). In my MA thesis, titled *Asynthesis & Act: the evental sublime in Badiou, Byron, and Barker*, I posit the evental sublime in defense of the political aesthetics of Tragedy. For a detailed exposition, *Asynthesis & Act* can be found at <http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/jspui/bitstream/1957/12846/1/DruryAdamM2009.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> By ‘point’ Badiou means “a point in the transcendental of a world that is the appearance of the infinite totality of the world before the instance of the decision, that is the duality of ‘yes’ and ‘no’.” For a more technical exposition see *Logics Of Worlds*, pg. 595 and Book VI, *Theory of Points*.

<sup>4</sup> See the chart of correlations between Badiou and Kant on page 233 of *Logics of Worlds*.

<sup>5</sup> See S. Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative* (1993) and A. Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real* (2000)

<sup>6</sup> See especially Ch. 7 of *Ethics of the Real*, “Between Moral Law and Superego”, pg. 140-160

<sup>7</sup> It may be useful to recall here that this ‘gap’ or ‘splitting’ is what allows Kant, with his “provincial religiosity” (to quote Badiou), to open the space for the existence of God, where God is understood as a being for whom concept and intuition would coincide, in an immediate synthetic unity. See Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, pg. 36-49.

<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to note apropos of the discussion of the Idea of Communism which opened this essay that Badiou writes, in *The Communist Hypothesis* (2010), “Slavoj Žižek is probably the only thinker today who can simultaneously hew as closely as possible to Lacan’s contributions and argue steadfastly and vigorously for the Idea of communism. This is because his real master is Hegel... There are two ways of rescuing the Idea of communism in philosophy today: either by abandoning Hegel [...] or by putting forward a different Hegel, an unknown Hegel, and this is what Žižek does, based on Lacan (who was a magnificent Hegelian - or so Žižek would claim - at first explicitly and later secretly, all along the way).”

<sup>9</sup> Several excellent historicist arguments have been made pointing to the various contemporary pressures that may have caused Kant to shirk from the radical consequences of his Analytic of the Sublime. See, for example, Frances Ferguson’s *Solitude and the Sublime* (1992), which argues that Kant sought to preserve at all costs, against his philosophical rival David Hume, the consistency of reality and thus an aesthetic regime of individuation. Putting aside the truth of these fascinating studies, the fact remains that the intrinsic pressure of the substantialization of the noumenal Thing necessitates a string of perverse consequences that commentators on Kant are still unraveling today.

<sup>10</sup> See Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real*, pg.147-149. I follow Zupančič’s argument over the next few sentences.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 140-146, I follow Zupančič’s argument throughout this whole paragraph, but have given page citations for direct quotes.

<sup>12</sup> This is also Žižek’s argument in “Psychoanalysis and post-Marxism: the case of Alain Badiou” (1998), where he critiques Badiou on the grounds that the latter is unable to think of the *void* also as *subject*, since for Badiou such a move would amount to the ‘structuralization’ of the void, which is of course impossible when the void is conceived as pure indifferent multiplicity, as being-qua-being ‘devoid’ of any structure.

<sup>13</sup> See Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (2001)

<sup>14</sup> See Alain Badiou, “Of an Obscure Disaster: On the End of the Truth of the State” *Lacanian ink* 22 (2003)

<sup>15</sup> See Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, Book I “Formal Theory of the Subject (Meta-Physics)” pg. 45-78 for a comprehensive discussion of the topology of the subject space.

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed discussion on this Lacanian innovation, see Badiou’s “The Formulas of *l’Étourdit*,” in *Lacanian ink* no. 27 (2006).

<sup>17</sup> cf. Hallward, *Badiou: a subject to truth* 174-180; Badiou, *Logics* “The Event According to Deleuze”

<sup>18</sup> cf. Deleuze *Logic of Sense* (1990)

<sup>19</sup> See Badiou, *Being and Event* (2005), Part IV “The Event: History and Ultra-one”, especially pg. 173-177

<sup>20</sup> See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, Analytic of the Sublime, “The Mathematical Sublime”, Section 26: “The estimation of the magnitude of natural things requisite for the idea of the sublime.” pg. 98-105

<sup>21</sup> See Alain Badiou’s chapter on the Paris Commune in *The Communist Hypothesis*, pg. 168-228

<sup>22</sup> cf. Badiou, *Logics* 480-481 “It follows from all this that the formal operations of incorporation into the place of the Other and of splitting of the subject constitute, under the name of Unconscious, the infrastructure of the human animal and not the occurrence – as rare as it may be – of the present-process of a truth which a subjectivated body treats point by point.”

<sup>23</sup> See Alain Badiou, “The Idea of Communism,” in *The Communist Hypothesis*, pg. 229-260. The demonstration begins on p. 238.

<sup>24</sup> *Tiqqun* is the name of a French journal of philosophy written and published anonymously in two volumes, the first in 1999 and the second in 2001. Various texts from the journal have been republished in French by La Fabrique in Paris and in English by MIT Press. An anonymous translator has produced a nearly comprehensive English edition of the two volumes, available online at [tiqqun.jottit.com](http://tiqqun.jottit.com).

<sup>25</sup> Quotation taken from “A Critical Metaphysics Could Be Born as a Science of Apparatuses,” in *Tiqqun #2*, available online at [tiqqun.jottit.com](http://tiqqun.jottit.com). See also “Bloom Theory,” in *Tiqqun #1*, available at the same website.

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