

Subjects of Creation

On Materialist Abstraction and the Enactment of Ideas

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I herewith certify that all material in this dissertation which is not my own work
has been properly acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Töpfner".

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Abstract

How are we to think creation today when such an act is understood as the making of something out of nothing? Insisting that genuine creation happens *ex nihilo* brings us into direct confrontation with much of contemporary philosophical thought, be it critical or analytic, since the latter predominantly rules out the possibility of making reasonable statements about nothingness, or, indeed, about any kind of radical outside to what exists. This thesis attempts to formulate a speculative, rudimentary model of creation that proceeds from the consequences of affirming the possibility to not only think a radical outside, but to also instantiate ‘some’ of the latter in the form of genuine novelty. The terms for this model are developed from, and via a close examination of, Alain Badiou’s *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds*. Ultimately, however, it becomes necessary to take a critical distance to Badiou’s system on the basis of some foundational inconsistencies that arise from his unrelenting Platonism. In its place, this thesis proposes an alternative generic conception of creation, which, although following Badiou’s idea of subjective formalisms, transposes the latter onto a materialist foundation with the help of Quentin Meillassoux’s work in *After Finitude* and the late work of Michel Foucault. It is then demonstrated how this new model can itself be materially effective, or, more specifically, how its enactment in any particular world can be thought to work. The argument is also made, contra Badiou, that the event – that which establishes the possibility for radical difference – is something we can intentionally induce or work towards. In summary, the aim of this thesis is to reinvigorate the notion of radical novelty and the process of its instantiation through the act of creation. In doing so it proposes a rational basis for the belief that genuinely different worlds are indeed possible – and how such possibilities can be thought, occasioned and enacted.

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Mit der Veränderung der Verhältnisse geht die des Verhaltens nicht parallel. Die das Neue schaffen, sind noch nicht neue Menschen. Erst das von ihnen Geschaffene formt sie selbst.¹

– Heiner Müller

1 The transformation of conduct proceeds not side by side with that of the conditions. The ones that create the new are not yet new men. Only that which they created forms themselves. (Müller, 2005: 54; my translation).

Abbreviations

- AF *After Finitude* (Meillassoux)
- BE *Being and Event* (Badiou)
- BST *Badiou. A Subject to Truth* (Hallward)
- LW *Logics of Worlds* (Badiou)
- TO *Briefings on Existence. A Short Treatise on Transitory Ontology* (Badiou)

Introduction

Creation: The Quest for Radical Novelty

Despair seems to be the dominant sentiment of the contemporary Left, whose crisis perversely mimics its foe, consoling itself either with the minor pleasures of shrill denunciation, mediatised protest and ludic disruptions, or with the scarcely credible notion that maintaining a grim ‘critical’ vigilance on the total subsumption of human life under capital, from the safehouse of theory, or from within contemporary art’s self-congratulatory fog of ‘indeterminacy’, constitutes resistance. Hegemonic neoliberalism claims there is no alternative, and established Left political thinking, careful to desist from Enlightenment ‘grand narratives’, wary of any truck with a technological infrastructure tainted by capital, and allergic to an entire civilizational heritage that it lumps together and discards as ‘instrumental thinking’, patently fails to offer the alternative it insists must be possible, except in the form of counterfactual histories and all-too-local interventions into a decentred, globally-integrated system that is at best indifferent to them. (Mackay and Avanessian, 2014: 5)

In our contemporary moment it is indeed difficult, despite the pandemonium of ever-proliferating communication and accelerating technological development, to ignore an all-pervading feeling of stasis, of something having come to a close. Socio-political progress and emancipation, political imagination, these terms appear to not only have lost their currency but also exhausted their capacity to

elicit enthusiasm, to draw engagement. The future itself has been, it feels, if not suspended then transformed into the anaemic, even if restless, repetition of the same – an endless iteration performed through consumer product releases, governmental reforms, trade agreements, communication protocols – spiced up only by the ever-more frequent crises of financial, humanitarian, ecological, (and so forth) nature. Political movements and activism, mainstream critical discourses, contemporary art and cultural production, and so on, have predominantly lost purchase on the development of any sort of positive construction of the future of humanity. The paralysis of emancipatory movements and the political left seems near total.

In the face of such a devastating diagnosis of our present, a small range of responses have recently developed within the fields of contemporary philosophy and political theory, of which speculative realism and communisation, and to a lesser degree accelerationism are the key examples – and each of which to a certain extent provide a loose context for this thesis,¹ alongside the more central role of Alain Badiou. What unites these otherwise divergent theories is, generally speaking, a refusal to succumb to the limitations of human experience within and as determined by the aforementioned impasses whilst reclaiming, in distinct ways, forms of realism or positions of immanence within this problematised present.² The enabling consequences thereof are a decoupling of thought from its anthropocentric restrictions – a decoupling in the form of, on the one side, a shared critique, amongst these currents, of thought limiting itself to the general conditions of experience,³ and on the other side Quentin Meillassoux's critique of

1 Chapter 3 will discuss the work of Quentin Meillassoux, one proponent of speculative realism, whilst the Conclusion will offer a brief situating of this thesis in relation to communisation theory. Although the author generally shares the analyses and critiques of the present condition by proponents of accelerationism – especially the laying out of a Promethean impulse for politics contra one that accepts various limits – there will be no engagement with their diverse proposals in this thesis beyond this introduction.

2 See also Joshua Johnson's introduction to *The Politics of the Outside*: "With the rise of Speculative Realism, Object Oriented Ontology, and other realist projects there has been a turn away from anthropocentrically hardened philosophies of the last thirty years and a re-consideration of the outside." (Johnson, 2013: 6)

3 In the context of discussing Badiou's subtractive ontology, Sam Gillespie puts the problem of thought being conditioned by experience in the following, succinct, even if polemic way: "If philosophy confines itself to the conditions that are set to it by experience, it is of course inevitable that it will fall prey to either a postmodern, moribund cynicism or an ethical regulation of a smooth-running state of affairs. The first repudiates any hope of thinking that

correlationism – the idea that we have no access to reality in-itself but only ever to the correlation between thinking and being, which relativises this access to the realm of the ‘for-us’ (I will return to this in Chapter 3). A further, more generalised upshot is the rejection of the idea of the present as mere point of passage within a presumed linear history, and, instead, an affirmation “toward *having* a history”, as Reza Negarestani puts it. To have a history means nothing other than “reorienting and repurposing it toward future ends unseen by the past whose recognition should never be an impediment but merely a way to liberate the present from its past commitments, either by collectively revising or abandoning them” (Negarestani, forthcoming). The present thesis is set in this two-fold contextualisation – of our dejected present on one side and the rational belief in non-linear, interruptive processes on the other, where the latter promotes an understanding “that we are at the *beginning* of a political project, rather than at the bleak terminus of history” (Mackay and Avanessian, 2014: 5).

‘Outside within’ versus radical outside

Whereas contemporary struggles, in socio-political as well as theoretical arenas, are certainly not under-invested with the rhetoric of altogether different futures, they appear to be, by and large, incapable or unwilling to decouple such visions, and particularly their processes of realisation, from the present they are supposed to differ from. One major aspect that obstructs the necessity for this separation is arguably the mode of positive imagination, of wanting to put forward and follow graspable alternatives or particular changes. The emphasis on concrete images or conceptions of another world, of a different future is, however, what encodes the present into these possible futures. More precisely is it the very way in which the present makes sense that necessarily provides the basis for such projections into the future, for them to make sense in the present, for them to be precisely grasp-

a different world is possible, while the latter position consigns itself to preserving the status quo of mediocrity that defines the world today (few could credibly argue that medical ethics, business ethics and multinational governing bodies as ‘ethical’ commissions have improved the standards of living for the majority of the world in the latter half of the twentieth century). It is only by radically separating itself from the world—so radically, in fact, that the question of a philosophical application of thought onto the world becomes an afterthought of sorts—that philosophy becomes an imperative to try out through militant activity.” (Gillespie, 2008: 148)

able or concrete for us today. By infecting the future with the logic of the present, positive imagination passes on, rather than breaks with the present impasses it allegedly aims to overcome.

Another aspect of such undertakings is an accompanying assumption of an ‘outside within’, as it were – that there be, within this world, an alternative sphere, power or capacity over which capitalism has no hold. What goes unaccounted for here are our intricate complicities with, and determinations by, what is to be abolished yet is also so defining of our world down to the most intimate levels of our existence. This means to misconstrue capitalism and more precisely its reproduction as external to us, therefore misleadingly granting us an uncorrupted agency for ridding the world of it. Contrary to this position, Benjamin Noys remarks:

The recognition of capitalism as an antagonistic and contradictory totality is more useful to chart resistance than a perpetual stand-off between the immanent powers of the multitude and the transcendent forms of capitalist capture. (Noys, 2013: 37-8)

Understanding the problem of capitalism as posing itself on the level of the totality of our world implies that we are ourselves determined by, as well as reproducing, this totality. By consequence there is no way ‘out of’ capitalism other than by a complete break with the totality it constitutes, starting with its reproduction and the latter’s agents – us ourselves. The position this thesis takes is that there is no alternative, no ‘outside within’, and that only a creative rupture on the level of the world’s totality stands a chance of genuinely transforming the latter.

It will be argued that both the novelty such a truly transformed world presents vis-à-vis the given world, as well as the means of achieving it are properly outside of the given field of possibilities within the world to be ruptured. For these reasons, it makes sense to qualify the novelty that true change brings about as *radical* novelty, since it does not merely concern a new – in the restricted sense of modified or reformed – organisation, structure, or way of living or thinking within this world but precisely the discontinuity of the world itself and the field of possibility it presents. Radical novelty as the result of rupture, of discontinuity, needs therefore be understood as productive of a genuinely new world. From the

perspective of the given world, the basis of a genuinely new world can only made sense of as something radically outside the given world, outside of the totality that enforces its specific sense before such a rupture. The process apt to instantiate, to bring about such radical novelty – it will be argued in the following chapters – is what I term the procedure of creation.

Preliminaries on creation

All creations, all novelties, are in some sense the affirmative part of a negation. “Negation”, because if something happens as new, it cannot be reduced to the objectivity of the situation where it happens. (Badiou, 2007a)

The hypothesis that initiates my enquiry, simply put, is that genuine novelty and radical change can happen, be evoked and enacted in the form of a procedure of creation. The aim for the following chapters is to validate this still vague assumption by considering, discussing and developing a conceptual framework for creation's foundation, its generic formalism and worldly capacity. What is then the problem that justifies exploring this simple hypothesis? It lies in the difficulty of grasping the radical notion of genuine novelty, which is to say that it should be possible for something to come to exist that has not even been conceivable or possible *until* its creation. However, novelty is not merely subjectively inconceivable, but needs to be understood in the strong sense of not being intelligible and possible within the world it will have been created from – so that the world itself has to transform in order for such a novelty to acquire proper sense and place. Creation, which gives form to genuine novelty, is therefore to be considered a procedure that differs in kind from any other, in that it cannot rely on the same basic processes that are exercised in a world – as, for example, in production, cultivation, and so forth. Unlike creation, these latter processes aim at making sense in the world as it is and thereby uphold the latter, regardless of whether they are repetitions, recombinations or modifications of what already exists. Creation, on the other hand, effectuates radical difference in regard to the world it arises

from, in regard to that world's framework of intelligibility.⁴ That the procedure of creation instantiates radical difference as novelty means that it operates not exclusively within the world it sets out from. If we want to uphold the notion of creation in this strong sense, we are required to assert that at least some part of the procedure of creation draws from the outside of its world.⁵ The apparent problem with this statement is that any *specified outside* of a world is inaccessible to thought, since concrete thought is enabled by but also limited to the logic that governs its world – we can know or think nothing specific or consistent outside our world.

The radical outside that is required for thinking creation in its strong sense is what the major currents in contemporary philosophy prove inadequate to account for.⁶ Whether in the form of problematising the framework of logical and grammatical rules of language (analytic philosophy), of interpretation of the immediately given (hermeneutics), or of deconstruction of the totalities of modernity (postmodernism), these orientations foreground the question of meaning and the conditions on which we can acquire or uncover and rationally use it, or the sense in which meaning and knowledge can ever only be partial and specific, never absolute and universal. The general problem that concern all these strains is their exclusive reflection on and of the world as it is, disallowing for any conception that interrupts and breaks with the given. In short, they “are too compatible with our world to be able to sustain the rupture or distance that philosophy requires” (Badiou, 2005a: 37) – the distance that is required for thinking the creation of radical novelty.

Whereas the majority of currents in contemporary philosophy take our inability to think any *specified outside* as thought's incapacity in the face of outer-worldly

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- 4 As we will come to see in Chapter 2 and beyond, this difference concerns the logic or general laws of a world: “The general laws of a world are not laws of the things themselves. They are laws of the relations between things in a determinate world. ... A truth [the kernel of novelty for Badiou] is a transgression of the law. ‘Transgression’ first signifies that a truth depends on the law, and second is nevertheless a negation of the law.” (Badiou, 2008a: 1880, 1878; my addition)
 - 5 As Peter Hallward recapitulates Badiou’s stance: “truly radical change can in a certain sense only proceed *ex nihilo*, from something that apparently counts for nothing, from something uncountable.” (Hallward, 2004: 4)
 - 6 For a more elaborate critique of the shortcomings of modern philosophy to think novelty, truth and the outside of thought, see amongst others: Badiou’s “Philosophy and desire” (Badiou, 2005a) or his preface to *Logics of Worlds* (LW: 1-40) and Meillassoux’s *After Finitude*.

difference, we can discern in this nothing that is *generically thinkable* of the outside the proper capacity of thought to found radical novelty and creation. This leads us to assert that creation necessarily proceeds *ex nihilo*, that it operates out of nothing. For now, the notion of creation *ex nihilo* is still hypothetical, since we posited that the nothing from which creation supposedly proceeds is generically thinkable. This assumed ability of thought needs to be demonstrated and given form as a conceptual framework of the procedure of creation. The following chapters will attempt exactly this.

What is at stake in maintaining that genuine novelty be possible and thinkable as creation *ex nihilo*? The significance of this assertion, in general terms, is that it provides an affirmation of the possibility of radical change and presents a rational basis for the hope for genuine transformation of the world in the form of the creation of a radically new present. What is the further relevance today of developing a conceptual framework of the procedure of creation on an abstract, generic level of thought? Not only does a generic conception aim at general applicability beyond the scope of always specific struggles and situations, but, in ‘stepping back’ from the specifics of given situations, it also allows for an understanding that the difficulties of going beyond our present have to be grasped on the level of the totality of the world – and that since we reproduce this totality, we are implicated in the problem rather than simply independent agents of its overcoming.

This sort of distancing is then not only useful for abstract conceptual thought but also in regard of the practices that this thought, ultimately, seeks to get a hold on – first of all the practices by which we reproduce the world that we want to change.⁷ The benefit of a conceptual model of creation that is attained through and based on this abstraction is then, to repeat, that it can operate as a rational basis for faith in the procedure it declares thinkable – thereby serving as an authorisation for the engagement in the radical transformation of the world, since, as Gillespie concludes, “the way philosophy becomes experience is not through a reflection upon the world, but through human activity that effectively transforms it” (Gillespie, 2008: 148).

7 This two-fold employment of abstraction will be developed from Chapter 4 onwards, under the name of materialist abstraction.

From Badiou to materialist abstraction

The principle work discussed in this thesis is the onto-logical⁸ system of Alain Badiou. His philosophy presents a stark counterpoint to the prevalent currents of modern and postmodern thought in that it refuses to succumb to the mere interpretation of meaning of what is given to experience and the postulated impossibility of universal statements by the proliferation of languages and cultural diversity. Central to his work is the insistence that radical change is not only possible but indeed generically thinkable, under the name of the event. An event according to Badiou is a rupture in the state of affairs that exposes, for a brief moment, a truth of the situation that is not accessible in any other way than by a chance encounter with this event. For such an event to have consequences for a situation, a subject must recognise and name it as such and act in fidelity to this event, unfolding the truth the event exposed to its situation and thus creating a new situation that was hitherto unthinkable. That a truth needs to be understood as a process that breaks with the consistent presentation of the world radically opposes (as has been outlined above) the intuition of prevalent philosophies which, if at all, think truth merely in diluted forms as either a veridical statement or fact or something to be discovered or uncovered, implying that this something necessarily already exists – just is somehow ‘blurred’ by imprecisions in language, ‘covered’ by power or ‘barred’ from knowledge, forever incomplete in endless deferral, and so on.⁹

The problem of true change is no longer to find glitches in our determinations by language, power or history (via understanding, interpretation, judgement or critique) that would allow for a little difference in what exists, in our world, in our lives. Rather, by asserting the existence and occasional emergence of truths,

8 This is Badiou’s shorthand for ‘ontologico-logical’, naming his combined system of mathematical ontology and mathematised logic (see TO, 115).

9 Consider Brassier and Toscano on this point: “Short of the resort to the unintuitible and the absolute alterity of some sublime instance, such postmodern thinking remains incapable, from Badiou’s perspective, of thinking the determinate emergence of an exception and its systematic yet aleatory disfigurement of an established situation. Situated excess is here pitted against the *universal* variability which, in its amorphous constitution, remains a profoundly conservative image of thought since it precludes the subtractive specificity of a truth – that which renders truth at once ‘illegitimate’ (it is irreducible to the language governing a situation, bereft of any proof or guarantee in the domain of knowledge) and rational (it proceeds through a strict, albeit decisionistic, logic of consequences).” (Brassier and Toscano, 2004: 270)

Badiou shifts the efforts of thought to the ontological conditions and formalisms that allow for truths to come to exist in general:

If all truth is something new, what is the essential philosophical problem pertaining to truth? It is the problem of its appearance and its 'becoming'. A truth must be submitted to thought, not as a judgement, but as a process in the real. (Badiou, 2001: 249)

Adapting his notion of the Real from Lacan – the Real being the outside of language, outside the Symbolic, indeed outside any given situation – for Badiou to think truths requires thinking them in strictly generic terms, by “subtraction” of whatever passes for reality so as to clear the way for a formalization of the real” as Hallward puts it (BST, xxxi). Such a formalisation allows thinking genuine novelty as the consequence in reality of the process of a truth in the real. The formalisations of the event and of the procedure of a truth posit, on the basis of a subtractive ontology, generic descriptions of how something that is not can come to be. That these formalisms are generic is to say that they present a way to think their occurrence or enactment independent of whatever specific reality or situation they may take place in. This is what makes Badiou’s philosophy a principal choice in the present exploration to understand the ontological possibility of and foundation for the act of creation.

The aim of the following chapters is to outline a generic concept of the procedure of creation, laying out its foundational framework and operations in thought and to make the case for its efficacy, its possible enactment, in any worldly situation. The terms for this conception will be developed from, and via a close examination of, two major works of Badiou, *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds*. The first two chapters consist primarily of a close reading of these two works, which will allow the accurate employment, and indeed retooling, of certain concepts of Badiou’s philosophical edifice. These close readings on one hand prepare the ground in regard of terminology and render sensible the components and general workings of Badiou’s intricate system. On the other hand, only by working through the details of his oeuvre in the first two chapters are we then in the position to recognise and unravel some fundamental inconsistencies – as well as to understand which concepts are not directly affected by those issues and

how they need to be repurposed in order to retain their conceptual efficacy. The discussion of Badiou's system makes it necessary to refrain from it as it stands, on the basis of the discovered foundational inconsistency that ultimately stems from his unrelenting Platonism. In its place, the remaining chapters attempt to develop an alternative conception of creation, which, although closely following Badiou's idea of subjective formalisms, transposes the latter onto a materialist foundation with the help of Quentin Meillassoux's work in *After Finitude*. On this new foundation, the necessary framework and procedure of creation will be outlined and linked to subjective capacities in the world so as to ensure their material efficacy. Against Badiou, the argument is eventually made that the event – that which establishes the possibility for the creation of a genuine novelty – is something we can intentionally and pragmatically induce or work towards.

Synopsis

The development of this generic model of creation proceeds in two steps. First with the exegesis and discussion of Badiou's *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds*, in Chapter 1 and 2, respectively.

Chapter 3 consist of an excursus into the late work of Michel Foucault, which is intended to provide a expanded perspective on the subject, both in terms of its complicity in the reproduction of a given world as well as its ability to go beyond that world by breaking with this affirmative reproduction.

The second part of the thesis, Chapters 4 and 5, consists of a more experimental, inventive construction of a model of creation, which entails a materialist foundation for and retooling of some of the central notions of Badiou's system under an approach we will term *materialist abstraction*. That this model of creation is enabled only by the partial invalidation of Badiou's fundamental assumptions does not diminish his overall importance for the former. On the contrary, what will come to stand as the model of creation in the end of this thesis reads at times very close to Badiou's own, although with significant alterations to both its foundation and operations.

In summary then, the aim of this thesis is to reinvigorate the notion of radical novelty and the process of its instantiation through the act of creation. In doing so it proposes a rational basis for the belief that genuinely different worlds are indeed possible and how such possibilities can be thought, occasioned and enacted.

One last remark concerns the absence of examples in this thesis. Considering the present aim to generically think an act that is by necessity situated in a world, that can only operate on the grounds of a capacity specific to its world, this decision not to engage in exemplary discussions of the components of our conceptual model may appear odd. On the other hand, the employment of examples to illustrate some particular part of a generic conception is problematic in that it often narrows the conceptual idea too quickly to the very specificity of its exemplification – attracting counterproductive inferences from the diverging details and logics that any example might suggest. In the end though, it is the oftentimes iterative and fragile mode in which we will proceed in the development of our conceptual model that makes it effectively counter-productive to provide examples, at least during the process of construction that thesis records. Finally, whilst limiting the text to an exclusively abstract (and, at times, highly technical) discussion makes it at times more difficult to follow, the hope therein is to preserve a certain clarity and precision in the conceptual construction of our model of creation.

1

Badiou's Ontological Foundation of Novelty

[A]rt, science and politics do change the world, not by what they discern, but what they indiscern therein. (BE: 343)

How are we to think creation as the act that gives form to genuine novelty? The principal problem raised by this question is that it demands us to think an act that brings to exist a radical difference vis-à-vis the world it is created from. Such difference, as has been elaborated in the introduction, can neither be entirely constructed from nor founded in the world it is created from if it is to qualify as radical difference.¹ To reiterate the argument briefly, it is by assigning the outside a foundational, necessary status for creation that we are faced with two major problems in regard of the mainstream of contemporary philosophy. First, that a proper outside – to any given world, discourse, intelligibility or field of possibility altogether – is an impossible notion, since, even if we assume its existence, it is by necessity unintelligible, indiscernible and inaccessible (for if it would be discernible, intelligible and accessible, it would be localisable within a world, or discourse in general). Second, that subjects, as assumed doers of the act of creation, are thought to be *subjects* of their worldly, discursive setting, which is to say that their subjectivation delimits their agency to the field of possibility and intelligibility of

1 According to our initial definition that opens the field of this investigation it is precisely through the positing of an outside that both foundation and construction of radical difference is enabled.

the given, subjectivating situation. As subjects of a given world then, they have no possible means to either think or practically access and instantiate from the assumed outside of this world, which therefore forecloses the possibility of them acting as subjects of creation (creation *ex nihilo*, strictly defined). From such a perspective, the notion of the outside can only be diagnosed as proper non-sense, and the same goes for the notion of a subject not entirely conditioned by its world, as this deprives such a subject of its constitutive ground, and thereby its basic intelligibility. Instead of prematurely concluding from this an ultimate limit of reason or thought's inability to think the outside at all though, we should rather understand 'non-sense' to be a central property of the outside – which disqualifies any attempt to think of the latter in terms of empirical specificity, requiring us to shift to thinking the outside in generic terms. Today, the work of Alain Badiou presents one of the most rigorous attacks on the mainstream of contemporary philosophy, which is carried out on the basis of his subtractive ontology. His ontological model enables the thought of the outside in terms of inconsistent multiplicity, where the latter can come to be consistently presented by an evental supplementation (from the void/outside) and the subsequent transformation of the situation in fidelity to the truth of this evental trace/supplementation. The subject that comes to carry out this truth procedure is precisely not subjectivated by the given world or situation but by the event that irrupts into the latter – which is why, for Badiou, subjects, like events, are rare occurrences. This renewed possibility for thought to conceptualise the outside, and by extension the creation of radical novelty, makes Badiou's philosophy a principal choice for this chapter, which aims to understand the ontological foundation and possibility for the act of creation.

The main question to be explored below is how novelty can come into being. The objective is to demonstrate the ontological possibility for genuine novelty and the procedure that brings such novelty to be. Since these are the central questions of Badiou's *Being and Event*, the following section will primarily give a summary and exegesis of the crucial arguments of the book – so as to lay the foundation for its discussion and the subsequent development of a more rudimentary – but also, I will claim, materialist, model of creation in Chapters 4 and 5.²

2 A discussion of Badiou's first major work, *Theory of the Subject*, is omitted here in spite of its more situated account because, first, it includes many of *Being and Event*'s main concepts in early form that are more developed in the later work (see Badiou, 2009a and Bosteels, 2001,

How can something new come to be?

[O]ntology does not speak being or participate in its revelation; it articulates, on the basis of a conceptual framework indifferent to poetry and intuition, the precise way in which being is withdrawn or subtracted from articulation. (Hallward, 2004: 5)

Our first problem is to think the possibility of creation, that is, the possibility of giving form to something genuinely new in the world. Given that novelty is what is not conceivable – in the knowledge and language of a situation – prior to its instantiation, we need to turn our focus away from what exists (from what *is-there*) toward an ontological framework that allows us to think being itself, stripped from any specifics. Regarding the question of worldly situated creation this shift implies that we have to postpone the question of how novelty appears in a world in order to first think its generic, ontological possibility.

Badiou's subtractive ontology starts with the statement that "mathematics *is* ontology" (BE: 4). This is not, however, saying that being is itself mathematical but rather that "mathematics ... pronounces what is expressible of being qua being" (BE: 8). With this meta-ontological claim Badiou tries to establish philosophy as "the thinkable articulation of two discourses (and practices) which *are not it*: mathematics, science of being, and the intervening doctrines of the event, which, precisely, designate 'that-which-is-not-being-qua-being'" (BE: 13). The problem in philosophy then becomes to think, on the basis of the mathematical formalisation of being, the possibility of intervening sequences capable of instantiating novelty in being, as traces of 'that-which-is-not-being-qua-being'. Such sequences Badiou calls *truths*. A truth is founded not in the knowledge or encyclopaedia of a specific situation but in what is indiscernible in this situation, what is not presented in it as something we could discern and therefore know or point to. As such, a truth cannot be decided or verified against the consistency of what exists but rather

2002 and 2011). And second, as Oliver Feltham argues, by shifting away from Marxist terminology and dialectics to a completely subtractive approach, Badiou on the one hand "constructs an elaborate ontology that is at once more solid and more complicated than the structures of dialectical materialism. On the other hand, ... here we have an infinite proliferation of processes of radical change, whether political, artistic, scientific or amorous, all for philosophy to think and invent from" (Feltham, 2008: 86).

needs to be affirmed and instantiated according to its own conditions, founded in the real of the situation in which it is deployed. We will come to see that an instantiation of a truth is founded in the real of its situation because a truth procedure is conditioned by ‘some real’ of the situation that makes up the event itself. In other words a truth does not confirm to a world but creates a new world in confirmation to itself. It is “the process that, sparked by a break with routine, persists in an affirmation whose progressive imposition transforms the very way things *appear* in a situation” (Hallward, 2004: 2).

The break that starts such a process is, in Badiou’s terms, an *event*. It is a rare and exceptional occurrence which, again, does not register according to established criteria but can only be named retroactively by those that recognise it as having taken place and henceforth cannot but bring its truth into being, making themselves *subjects* to its truth. Hence the narrow definition of the subject in Badiou’s thought as only those individuals that act in fidelity to an event, that decide their lives are liveable only as the labour of bringing a truth to exist in the world.

The central thought for Badiou’s work is the *generic*, a concept appropriated from the mathematician Paul Cohen. The generic is understood to be the being of any truth (once mathematics is posited as the proper discourse on being), subtracted from knowledge and as such unrepresentable but – and this is the endeavour of *Being and Event* – possible to be thought. With the generic as the being of truths and the foundation of what is not yet, Badiou lays out a rigorous framework for thinking the supplementation of being, that is the possibility for radical novelty to come to be.

By equating mathematics with ontology, Badiou posits that mathematics is the only discourse that allows for the articulation of being *qua being*, subtracted from the specificities of any being-something. More so, mathematics and specifically set theory is the only discourse that is suitable for the discussion of being as pure multiplicity, a requirement that follows from his refutation of ontologies of the One. To think being as one means to ultimately rely on a foundational One (resulting in theology) or all-inclusive unity (immanence). Both forms, according to Badiou, cannot admit subject-driven creation of novelty in the strict sense of allowing an outside of the One, since anything that could be already is, either as units of which everything is necessarily composed or as unity within which

everything is given. Maintaining (with modern science) that God is dead and (with Cantor's theorem) that numerical totality or any thought of an all-inclusive whole is incoherent, the only reasonable way to think being is as pure, inconsistent multiplicity (BE: 28). For this, set theory's formal axiom-system³ provides the only way to think multiplicity without any reference to the one, as it does not posit any-*thing*, no property in the strict sense but expresses solely the relation of belonging between variables of a single type, the multiple, with the requirement that the multiples under discussion be already presented (BE: 43-5).

In Badiou's 'translation' of set theory into ontology, he terms *situation* any presented multiplicity (of multiples). But since the one is not, everything that can be discerned to *belong* to a situation are multiples resulting from an operation of counting, the count-as-one: "What has to be declared is that the one, which is not, solely exists as *operation*. In other words: there is no one, only the count-as-one" (BE: 24). Every situation has its own particular operator or regime of the count-as-one, which produces its *structure* and that makes it a specific situation, presenting the multiples it presents and not others. Such a composed multiplicity, the effect of structure, is *consistent multiplicity* since every-thing that is presented in it is necessarily counted as one thing, thereby producing consistency according to the regime of the count-as-one. With consistency being the result of the operation of the count-as-one, what is being counted can be established only in retroaction or as after-effect of the count (as it *is not*), as not-one and therefore as multiplicity, anterior to any count (BE: 24). Not being presented before the operation of the count that itself results in any discernible and presentable one-terms, all we can say about this multiplicity is that it is *inconsistent multiplicity*. Since everything in a situation is the result of its count-as-one, inconsistent multiplicity is both excluded from presentation (not counted) and included, as 'phantom' of the counting operation, as a must-be-counted (BE: 53). It is therefore necessary, "from the standpoint of the immanence of the situation, that the pure multiple, absolutely unpresentable according to the count, be *nothing*." (ibid.) This being-nothing, crucially distinct from non-being, is what any count-as-one composes its situation from. The *void* is the name Badiou gives to this unlocalisable "nothing particular to

3 Badiou uses Zermelo–Fraenkel's system with the axiom of choice, in short ZFC, which is the most common foundation of mathematics today.

the situation, ... in which it is manifest both that the situation is sutured to being and that the *that-which-presents-itself* wanders in the presentation in the form of a subtraction from the count" (BE: 55). Although the void is not presented within a situation – as it is uncountable not-one – it is nonetheless specific to a situation, from the perspective of the situation under consideration (its structure), "inasmuch as presentation gives us therein an unrepresentable access, thus non-access, to this access, in the mode of what is not-one, nor composable of ones; thus what is qualifiable within the situation solely as the errancy of the nothing" (BE: 56). Not being presented, the void is nonetheless that which is necessary for anything to be presented and in that way is what *sutures*, according to Badiou's vocabulary, any given situation, via subtraction, to being. We can see now how Badiou can posit that the void is "*the sole term from which ontology's compositions without concept weave themselves*" (BE: 57). If the void 'is' nothing and multiple, the only way to grasp it is that all presented terms "be 'void' such that they are composed from the void alone" (ibid.). In set-theoretical terms this presentation/non-presentation of the void is the empty set, which is posited by the axiom of the void-set, stating the existence of a set to which no elements belong.

To all presentation, the void poses the danger of inconsistency. Although structured by the count-as-one, everything in a situation is counted except the count itself. In order to ward off the "catastrophe of presentation" – that presentation be exposed to its own void – the count needs itself to be counted; structure needs, itself, to be structured (BE: 93). This need is based more precisely in the set-theoretical impossibility "for *everything* which is included (every subset) to belong to the situation", because there is "an irremediable excess of sub-multiples over terms" (BE: 97). This excess of parts (subsets) over elements shows that there are always parts included in a situation that are not counted as terms in that situation. In order to secure the structure of presentation, the excess of parts (inclusion) over elements (belonging) needs to be counted again, resulting in a second structure. This metastructure is what Badiou calls the *state* of a situation and it consists in a second count of all subsets of the situation which amounts to all the possible recombinations of its elements, thus producing its powerset, in set-theoretical terms. What the state does is to secure presentation with the seal of *representation* by counting all the possible subsets of what *belongs* to the situation as parts *included* in it (BE: 81, 96).

Terms that are both presented and represented are called *normal*, whereas represented but not presented ones are termed *ex crescent* and those presented but not represented *singular* (BE: 99). From these different relations between presentation (belonging) and representation (inclusion), only singular multiples, since they are subtracted from the re-securement via the state, harbour the potential to destabilise structure, and therefore for change and novelty, in a situation. More precisely, this can only be attributed to what Badiou calls an *evental site*, which is a singular (presented) multiple of which none of the elements that compose it belong themselves to the situation. An evental site is said to be *on the edge of the void* since although it belongs to the situation, ‘beneath’ it there is *nothing* presentable (BE: 175). This implies that an evental site is also foundational insofar as it presents (should it be ‘officially’ noticed), for the count-as-one, some primary yet-to-be-counted. It is in this way that a site opens the situation to radical re-structuring (genuine change) based on the possibility for what is included in but does not belong to a situation, to be “admitted” into the count” (*ibid.*). This is then the creation of something genuinely new in the situation, which means, also, a new situation altogether. For such radical change to take place an *event* has to happen at the evental site; to rupture not merely the state of affairs but the very structure of the situation by exposing presentation to inconsistency, the situation to its void. But although an event can be localised within presentation, it is itself never presented or presentable: “It is – not being – supernumerary” (BE: 178). As such it is extra-ontological, concerning ‘that-which-is-not-being-qua-being’, as are the interventions it might prompt.

We can already recognise, at this point, how Badiou’s ontological project can provide for a foundation, in thought, for the praxis of creation. The concept of the evental site is what presents the un-ground from which novelty can arise, which therefore, for a situation, means that creation proceeds *ex nihilo*. It is important however to note that the void to which the evental site borders is specific to the situation of the site, it is not in regard of what the situation presents. What we need to turn to now is the very ‘how’ of creation, how the void or specific nothing of a situation is summoned into a genuinely new situation, or simply, how some of what inconsists is made consistent. What will become apparent is, that on the basis of set theory ontology, Badiou can propose a formalism of the act of creation (the coming into being of a truth) which itself is strictly and necessarily extra-on-

tological. If ontology is what thinks the presentation of presentation, whatever radically transforms the being of a presented situation can only be imposed by an inconceivable, illegal outside to not only a singular presentation (a situation) but also the presentation of presentation as such (ontology). In the following paragraphs we will therefore work towards Badiou's extra-ontological interventionist formalism of the subject of creation.

For Badiou, an event is a purely "hazardous", aleatory exception, one "which cannot be inferred from the situation" itself (BE: 193). And although an evental site can be localised within a situation, it presents "only ever a *condition of being* for the event" (BE: 179). Furthermore, positing that an event is a paradoxical multiple "*that is composed of, on the one hand, elements of the site*" (which are indiscernible within the site's situation), "*and on the other hand, itself*" (ibid.), the event proves to be properly impossible to the discourse of ontology. It is so since, as a multiple that necessarily belongs to itself, it is in violation of the axiom of foundation (BE: 190). The axiom states that within every non-void multiple, there always exists a multiple that is presented (belongs) but whose elements in turn do not belong to the initial multiple, are not presented in it. In other words, the assumed multiple and the multiple that belongs to it have no element in common, they have nothing in common apart from being multiples (BE: 185-6). An event violates this axiom because it is a multiple that belongs to itself, which means that the multiple and its element, being both the same multiple, do have an element in common, namely the multiple they both are (BE: 190). Being barred from both presentation (the situation) and presentation of presentation (ontology), the event is both *undecidable* in regard to its situation and *unfounded* in regard to ontology (BE: 181; TO: 61). "What truly happens" writes Peter Hallward, "is always unfounded" (BST: 116) and only by means of breaching what founds presentation can a new situation come to be.

Since from the standpoint of a situation, the belonging of an event to this situation is undecidable, "only an *interpretative intervention* can declare that an event *is* presented in a situation" (BE: 181). Such a decision of a 'there is' of an event, that an event does belong to the situation, is always a wager. Hence the ephemeral nature of any event, as once decided that it belongs to its situation, it is annulled as such an exception, having implied nothing other than a new term of the situ-

ation (BE: 202). In order for an event to be effective, it has to be recognised and nominated as such. This is what Badiou understands as *intervention*: the recognition and decision that something (not of this situation) did indeed take place, naming this evental occurrence and subsequently unfolding its consequences in the situation to which its site belongs (BE: 203), thereby radically transforming the situation. For a nomination of an event, an intervention has to “*make a name out of an unpresented element of the site to qualify the event whose site is the site*” (BE: 204). This naming is complex, since it involves a double function of the unpresented element that comes to bear the name the event. On the one hand, this element, from the viewpoint of the situation, remains unpresented and therefore *anonymous* – all we can say about it is that it belongs to the evental site, in which we can discern nothing. On the other hand, this element, as supernumerary name, is the result of an *illegal* act of nomination, since, as unpresented element in the situation, it cannot conform to any law of representation (BE: 205). The state of the situation, once it encounters the supernumerary name of an event, tries to re-secure this name’s belonging to the situation. The only parts the state can ‘know’ in regard of an event is its site and the suspicion that there is some novelty in the situation. In order to properly register the self-belonging name of the event, the state produces (forms-into-one) a singleton of the name of the event – which is to say a multiple to which only the name of the event belongs (BE: 207). On this basis, the state fixes a term as the canonical name of the event, which is made up of the evental “site (already marked out) and the singleton of the event (put into circulation by the intervention)” (BE: 208). What the intervention, by the declaration of an event, thus introduces to its situation is the name of the event as “incoherent state excrescence,” as an as of yet empty multiple that is represented (included) but not presented (belonging) in the situation (BE: 208-9).

Badiou draws the form of this post-evental intervention from the set theoretical idea of the axiom of choice. This axiom states that “given a multiple of multiples, there *exists* a multiple composed of a ‘representative’ of each non-void multiple whose presentation is assured by the first multiple” (BE: 224). This is to say that from a set of multiples, one can choose an element (representative) of each of these multiples and gather them together in a new set; this set so constructed is consistent. But since, for an infinite set, the construction of this function of choosing representatives cannot be given a rule in order to be defined, precisely because

the multiple is infinite (BE: 225), the existence of the representative multiple is “*indistinguishable* insofar as the condition it obeys (choosing representatives) says nothing to us about the ‘how’ of its realization” (BE: 227). In a way, the function of choice, the concrete procedure of choosing representatives is suspended from existence since its operation cannot be decided and presented. As such, the function of choice is both *illegal* in regard to what structures presentation and *anonymous* in regard to its result, the representative multiple (BE: 229). These two characteristics link the axiom of choice to Badiou’s notion of the intervention, as the intervention is outside the law of the count (it is an illegal decision) and declares the name of the event from the void (from indiscernible anonymity) (BE: 230). We can see how the axiom of choice describes the existential *form* of any intervention, or in other words intervention thought in its being, without the event. But in order to come into being, an instantiation of an intervention draws its singularity from the event (*ibid.*). Badiou concludes that the “most profound lesson delivered by the axiom of choice is therefore that it is on the basis of the *couple* of the undecidable event and the interventional decision that time and historical novelty result” (BE: 231).

On this basis, an intervention starts a *truth procedure*, since what is at stake is precisely the bringing into presentation of a truth, a specific truth of the situation in which the event was decided to have taken place. The unfolding of the consequences of an event is what Badiou calls the procedure of *fidelity*. Fidelity consists in a series of *enquiries* evaluating which of the elements from the existing situation *connect* to the truth of the event, element by element (BE: 232-4). Badiou identifies *deduction* as the operational principle of fidelity (BE: 242). In order to determine the connection of a presented element to the event, a subject places herself in the fictive situation constructed out of the evental truth supplemented by the element under investigation in the form of an axiom (BE: 246). From this fictional placing, it can then be deduced, according to the criteria of the assumed (fictionally supplemented) situation, if the presented term is compatible with the evental truth – either by reasoning via a hypothesis (*ibid.*) or by reasoning via the absurd (*reductio ad absurdum*) (BE: 251). Only if the term does indeed connect will it be added to the result-multiple – the excrement multiple created by the event’s nomination – that collects all positively evaluated elements (termed *conditions*) of the situation. In this way, a procedure of fidelity traverses the existing situation erratically, without

concept, by chance, submitting each encountered element to its evaluation and thereby constructing, step by step, from the elements that prove to connect to its truth, “the *new-multiple* that is a post-evental truth” (BE: 335).

Badiou takes the concept of this multiple – that “will found the very being of any truth” (BE: 327) – from the corpus of Cohen: the *generic*. What Badiou sets out to demonstrate is nothing less than the compatibility of ontology and truth, implying that “the being of a truth, as generic multiplicity, is ontologically thinkable, even if a truth is not” (BE: 355). The meditations in *Being and Event* devoted to the description and demonstration of the generic subset are rather complex and are discussed here only in a general but condensed fashion.⁴ The problem that the concept of the generic addresses is that of the relation “– which is rather a non-relation – between, on the one hand, a post-evental fidelity, and on the other hand, a fixed state of knowledge, or what I term below the encyclopaedia of the situation” (BE: 327). Given that the generic subset indiscerns a truth in its situation, it cannot be constructed according to the knowledge of the situation, the counting by the state, because the latter would every time lurch forward to “trump fidelity with a peremptory ‘already-counted!’” (BE: 333). Therefore, the generic subset needs to be infinite (*ibid.*), to ‘evade’ its capture or its being counted by the state. Also, the generic subset needs to contain at least one enquiry that avoids the encyclopaedic determinant (BE: 337-8), in order to be subtracted from the knowledge of its situation. Such a subset is then indiscernible because it harbours something that is already known, together with something that is not, something that is subtracted from the language and encyclopaedia of the situation itself (BE: 370). It thereby designates “that what does not allow itself to be discerned is in reality the truth of a situation, the truth of its being, as considered as foundation of all knowledge to come” (BE: 327). It then follows that in order to construct a generic subset, it is in vain to try to rely on already available principles for grouping a situation’s elements. Rather – and this constitutes the generic procedure, the very *doing* of truth – every element of the situation has to be evaluated for its positive connection to the event, one at a time, in order that it come to belong, as condi-

4 For the detailed argument the reader be referred to Meditations 31, 33 and 34 of *Being and Event*, as well as to Hallward’s lucid outline in the second half of Chapter 5 in his *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*.

tion, to the generic subset. This demanded rigour, as opposed to reliance on or the repetition of what is known, is what Badiou understands as *militancy*.

The generic procedure constructs the generic subset and thereby makes it immanent to the situation, yet the generic subset is still indiscernible therein (BE: 342). In order to become discernable, the generic subset, being an indiscernible part, has to become an element of the situation; it needs to be counted as one to come to belong to the situation. In a sense, it needs to be ‘legalised’ by the count-as-one but since it constitutes what the current situation cannot discern or know, it is the language of the situation that must be altered radically to accept (i.e. discern) this new term into its encyclopaedia, to make sense of it (*ibid.*, 375). Badiou names this procedure *forcing* – a concept again appropriated from Cohen – and its exposition presents probably the most challenging part of *Being and Event*, and, as such, we will sketch it out here in a rudimentary fashion only.⁵ The supplementation of a situation with a new truth – for the former to recognise the latter as belonging to it – necessitates the complete transformation of this situation on the level of its regime of counting. For a generic subset to come to belong or be counted as one in a situation, the language of the situation needs to be transformed to accommodate it, that is, the situation has to be ‘forced’ to discern it. “The striking paradox” of this undertaking, Badiou points out, “is that we are going to *name* the very thing which is impossible to *discern*” (BE: 376). In order for this to work, a name that already exists in the situation must be able to *hypothetically* designate elements of the generic extension – the situation supplemented with the generic subset. This can be achieved by binding together in a name a multiple of the situation with a condition that intersects with that multiple (*ibid.*). Such a condition, resulting from the procedure of fidelity (a positively evaluated element resulting from a truth procedure), encodes information about the multiple of the existing situation in regard of the multiple’s belonging to the situation to come. Therefore, a condition, resulting from a positive enquiry that connects it to the event, “*forces* a statement of the subject-language” (BE: 403), a statement that involves the name it helped to construct. Which means, “that the veracity of this statement in the situation to come is equivalent to the belonging of this term to the

5 Building on the Meditations on the generic (primarily 33 and 34), Badiou’s adoption of forcing is outlined in the last two sections of Meditation 35, discussed in depth in Meditation 36 and given a ‘calculatory’ example of in Appendix 7 of *Being and Event*.

indiscernible part which results from the generic procedure” (*ibid.*). A new name informs, so to say, via the condition, the sense of the existing multiple it concerns so as to *verify* its referred (but still indiscernible) term of the generic extension, in the supplemented situation to come (BE: 411). Having no referents in the existing situation – because they refer to terms of the generic subset, which is indiscernible – the new names designate terms “which ‘will have been’ presented in a *new* situation: the one which results from the addition to the situation of a truth (an indiscernible) of that situation” (BE: 398). In this way, forcing creates terms that are verifiable by the future knowledge of the situation to come, or as Badiou puts it: “The essential character of the names, the names of the subject-language, is itself tied to the subjective capacity to anticipate, by forcing, what will have been veridical from the standpoint of a supposed truth” (BE: 433).

An important note concerns the extent of the transformation the use of forcing implies. Namely that, being an extension of the situation, the generic extension maintains many (or most) of the situation’s terms, especially its ‘natural part’ (in mathematical terms: all its ordinals) (BE: 384) and the laws of the multiple themselves (ontology), which therefore guarantees consistency for the generic extension, meaning that a generic procedure cannot ruin the situation or presentation in general (BE: 417, 426). Certain statements though cannot be established as veridical in the situation (as has been shown above) nor be demonstrated by ontology, yet they can retroactively be proven to belong to (be veridical in) the generic extension. Such statements are *undecidable* from the standpoint of the situation (BE: 419).

The particular connection “between an indiscernible part of a situation and the forcing of a statement whose veracity is undecidable in the situation” – but veridical in the situation-to-come and thus decided (in the future anterior) – is what presents us with the “possibility of the being of the Subject” (BE: 417). Only a subject, whose being depends on the fidelity to an event and which is therefore extra-ontological – ‘that-which-is-not-being-qua-being’ – is able to make such decisions concerning the situation to come. In the meditation that Badiou dedicates to the theory of the subject, he makes a number of preliminary remarks that concern the attachment to modern metaphysics by which subjectivity is still thought –

unsurprisingly dismissing any such orientation.⁶ In short, a subject cannot be thought as either substance or meaning or void point because a generic procedure draws from what is indiscernible and is realised as multiplicity. A subject is also not an organisation of experience, since experience, in ontological thought, might at most designate presentation as such but can say nothing of a truth – which is both subtracted from presentation and the constitutive possibility of being of a subject – since a truth is, again, indiscernible. The subject is not a structural necessity or principle of situations, since generic procedures are exceptional and rare, nor is it thinkable as being removed from or somehow independent in regard to a situation (having an essence by or in itself), since it only emerges as subject of a truth that is necessarily specific to a situation. And lastly, a subject is neither result nor origin, since the procedure that constitutes it is infinite and begins with an event. What a subject is, according to Badiou, is “any local configuration of a generic procedure from which a truth is supported” (BE: 391), a configuration that is in excess of its situation (BE: 392). Let’s clarify this last point by recapitulating the procedure of a truth from the perspective of the subject, step by step. In response to an exceptional occurrence, an intervention is what names this event as having happened and the operator of faithful connection to the nominated event is what founds the generic procedure. The subject, “as local situated configuration, is neither the intervention nor the operator of fidelity, but the advent of their Two, that is, the incorporation of the event into the situation in the mode of a generic procedure” (BE: 393). Considering the local status of a generic procedure, it becomes clear that the former depends on the procedure’s encounters with terms of the situation, one after another. If we assume these enquired terms, as multiples, to be “*the matter of the subject*” (BE: 394), this matter is not what the subject is reducible to, since the subject exists as procedure. A subject, being finite, can neither be coextensive with the infinite truth it supports, nor coincide with the statist knowledge of a situation, since the subject’s being unfolds in the aleatory encounter of those terms that form its ‘matter’ by chance. As Badiou puts it: “If the subject does not have any other being-in-situation than the term-multiples it encounters and evaluates, its essence, since it has to include the chance of these encounters, is rather the trajectory which links them” (BE: 395-6).

6 See Meditation 35, specifically pp. 391-2. Hallward provides a concise overview, see: BST, 140.

In supporting the realisation of a truth that it can never ultimately know (since being finite, it cannot have access to a completed truth, whose procedure is infinite), the only relation a subject can entertain to the truth whose construction it sustains is the ‘knowing belief’ that there is a truth, which Badiou also refers to as *confidence* (BE: 397). What supports this belief are the nominations a subject generates, the names of which are from the situation (therefore discernible) but whose referents are in the future anterior, their signification being suspended “from the ‘to-come’ of a truth” (BE: 398). With these names, a subject-language makes hypotheses about that unfinishable result that a truth is by “*displac[ing]* established significations and leave[ing] the referent void: this void will have been filled if a truth comes to pass as a new situation” (BE: 399). Only by having come into presentation can an indiscernible part retroactively assign the meaning of such names according to its truth or verify a statement from a subject-language. As has been touched upon above, a subject can *force* veracity at the point of an indiscernible (BE: 411), since, after Cohen, it is possible “to determine under what conditions such or such a statement is veridical in the generic extension obtained by the addition of an indiscernible part of the situation” (BE: 410).

For every encounter in a procedure of fidelity, a subject can therefore know, under condition, if a statement will prove either certainly wrong, or has at least the chance to be veridical, still being “suspended from the will-have-taken-place of *one* positive enquiry” (BE: 404). If then, for a statement that has the chance to be veridical, certain terms force it and others force its negation, the decision of this undecidable statement depends on an enquiry “in which a term which forces the statement, in one sense or another, is reported to be connected to the name of the event” (BE: 407). Belonging to the indiscernible truth, this term allows a subject to know that the statement it forces will have been veridical or not in the generic extension. Whereas for a ‘normal’ inhabitant of the situation there is neither such term or name nor, of course, any access to the indiscernible truth that would allow it to recognise the disruptive sense of a forced statement. Badiou condenses this in yet another definition of the subject as “that which decides an undecidable from the standpoint of an indiscernible” (*ibid.*).

Finally, Badiou insists, against Lacan, on the rarity of the subject. With Lacan, we could still hold that there always are some subjects, thinking them as delo-

calised, empty places within representation. The issue here, Badiou argues, concerns the localisation of the void. Lacan sides with “a structural recurrence, which thinks the subject-effect as void-set, thus as identifiable within the uniform networks of experience” (BE: 432), which ultimately presents a structure dependent on language, however ex-centred or delocalised. For Badiou, the subject is born from the rare occurrence of an event, which returns “the void to, and reinsuring it within, a function of suture to being, the knowledge of which is deployed by mathematics alone”, which is to say dissociated from language and networks of experience (*ibid.*). The subject is what supports the infinite and aleatory procedure of a truth – a truth is rather the matter of the subject than its cause. If we were to ask for the cause of a subject, we would ultimately have to return to the event itself (BE: 433), as it is the event that ‘causes’ the conditions of the subject: the indiscernible, a generic procedure, fidelity, an intervention (BE: 434). For these reasons, Badiou states that:

*The ‘there-is’ of the subject is the coming-into-being of the event, via the ideal occurrence of a truth, in its finite modalities. By consequence, what must always be grasped is that there is no subject, that there are no longer some subjects. What Lacan still owed to Descartes, a debt whose account must be closed, was the idea that there were always some subjects. (*ibid.*)*

This conception of the subject presents, in a way, the inversion of the constitutive role it takes up in relation to conventional theories of agency. Rather than trying to think how an existing subject can initiate radical change – an undertaking that has been outlined at the beginning of this chapter as impossible within the boundaries of mainstream contemporary thought – Badiou shows how the subject is born from its affirmation of an evental irruption.⁷ Contrary to the notion of the subject of Descartes, Kant or Hegel, he writes, “this subject will be singular and not universal, and it will be singular because it will always be an event that constitutes the subject as a truth” (Badiou, 2005a: 42). In being constituted as the oper-

7 There is, however, a problem of circular reasoning in the foundation of both the subject and the event. Sam Gillespie briefly discusses this point in his *The Mathematics of Novelty*, stating that: “The problem with this [incomplete foundation of the conditions of an event] is that it is tautological: subjects constitute events at the same time that subjects are miraculously constituted by the naming and recognition of events” (Gillespie, 2008: 102).

ative part of the truth it participates in unfolding, Badiou's subject is purged of the immense obstacles that common notions of the subject face in the task of radical change – at least on the completely subtracted, generic level of the conception at hand. Put bluntly, a subject that is instantiated from the seed of the future that it cannot but bring about is never confronted with the limitations of the situation it is born to subtractively transform. The militancy of a faithful subject never meets a limitation but only ever a next evaluation of terms in the infinite series of enquiries (truth procedure) that is already founded on and informed by the radical difference (truth) that it is to bring about. This practical annihilation of the question of subjective agency then shifts the foundational problem of creation of radical novelty to the conception of the event and its (non-)relation to both being as such and the situation from which it arises and that it comes to rupture.

To recapitulate: On the one side (the side of the situation), the event can only be axiomatically posited as exception, an impossible, illegal occurrence in regard to being as such, since it presents “that-which-is-not-being-qua-being” (BE: 13), that which disrupts the consistency of presentation of being. On the other side, it is because being is founded on the void that the event – as a multiple constructed from the specific void of the eventual site of a situation – can both be thought and gain traction on the situation that a faithful subject is consequentially to transform. The void (inconsistent multiplicity) is the condition of possibility for both, a situation (consistent multiplicity) and that which comes to supplement it (the event and the following generic procedure), which eventually requires that situation's radical, structural transformation (by way of forcing). The way consistent presentation of being comes to be, we recall, is that the operation of the count discerns and makes consistent some inconsistent multiplicity. Such resulting multiples make up the elements of the situation for which the count is the structuring operator, by coming to belong to the situation-multiple. In order to secure the situation from the excess of parts over elements (of what is included over what belongs), a second structure needs to be established (state of the situation) which counts all the parts of the elements of a situation, resulting in the representation (powerset) of the situation. When an event occurs, it is precisely this level of representation or inclusion that the eventual multiple surges from: the eventual site, the multiple that belongs to the situation but of which nothing is included in that situation, therefore presenting the edge of the void. That an event is con-

sequential though requires a subjective intervention, a decision and wager by a subject that something indeed took place, which is properly undecidable in regard to the situation and unfounded in regard to being. This assertion of the event will itself “bring about the conditions for its own verification: in drawing the consequences of that assertion, we slowly transform the parameters of cognitive possibility governing the logic of the situation in such a way as to render what was previously unthinkable thinkable (the situation’s generic truth) and what was previously unknowable knowable (‘forcing’ the generic supplement of the situation)” (Brassier and Toscano, 2004: 263-4). The conceptual rationalisation of this unfounded decision – Badiou terms this an intervention, which is formalised in the axiom of choice – is itself made possible by his own meta-ontological decision that exceptions, in form of events, can occur. With this postulation, the void is not only the foundation of structured being but becomes also the thinkable (even if anonymous) foundation for the former’s radical transformation.

The force of Badiou’s argument in *Being and Event*, as we have come to see, lies in what follows from the void as foundation of being. That being is not-all, untotalisable, means that what is is not all there can be, that our situation is but one contingent instantiation ‘out of’ inconsistent multiplicity, out of nothing, and that what is not can be thought in terms of the void and can rupture into being as exceptional event. The simple and undeniably powerful upshot thereof lies in the affirmation that radical novelty (truth) is indeed possible and can come to be. In this way, Badiou separates the question of creation and novelty from the limitations of human experience (language, finitude, meaning, perception, etc.), demonstrating that radical novelty can come to be via an event, based on our capacity to think an outside as nothing, as inconsistent multiplicity. For this crucial point of affirmation of the possibility of radical change, it is of no importance that Badiou’s system, as an exercise of maximal subtraction, is without any real relation to existing worlds and with often debatable connections to historical events. As Gillespie remarks: “Whether or not there has ever been a true event is therefore beside the point: it is simply enough to know that there can be events insofar as we are capable of thinking nothing” (Gillespie, 2008: 148).

At the same time, the severe subtraction of Badiou's ontological system presents difficulties once it is to inform practices and subjective enactments in actual existing situations, like our world today. By exclusively considering being as such in set theoretical terms, it is far from clear how some of the central notions of his system are to be understood in a worldly situation.⁸ It is nearly twenty years later, in the second volume of *Being and Event* titled *Logics of Worlds*, that Badiou comes to address many of the questions and problems raised by the first volume – some of which have been outlined above and will be discussed at end of the Chapter 2. Its discussion will take place in the following chapter.

8 This difficulty can be illustrated with one of the examples Hallward uses on more than one occasion when trying to clarify what the central notion of a singular term is (an element that belongs but is not included in the situation, i.e. an evental site). For Hallward, the proletariat is a prime example for an evental site in that “the working class occupies the edge of the (proletarian) void: the situation certainly counts this class as one of its elements, but has no significant ways of counting *individual* workers as thinking or creative people, as opposed to more or less diligent and deferential employees, or as consumers, or as patriots ...” (Hallward, 2004: 9). Or in a slightly different version: “The canonical example, of course, is the evental location of the proletariat ... in the site defined by the exploitation of waged laborers. Having nothing than its own being ... the proletariat is the void that sutures the capitalist situation to its be-ing; it is the one fragile link between this situation and the general inconsistency of human be-ing as such” (Hallward, 2003: 118-9). The major problem here is the radical simplification, or the metaphorical employment, of the central assumption of the evental site and the void. That the individual worker would not in any significant way count in the capitalist situation grossly ignores that it is precisely by keeping count of individuals, in the quantification of the workforce, that capitalism not only acknowledges every worker (probably not as individual human being but as number) but quantifies her every move, efficiency, etc. (For this simple objection, one only needs to consider capitalisms own milestones in the exploitation of its workforce, for which Taylorism might be one obvious historical reference.) If Hallward is simply to point out that capitalist exploitation produces a whole class of (systemically highly relevant) individuals that are denied full recognition as human beings and deprived of the means to unfold their human potential, then why force this correct assessment onto a conceptual construct whose central claim is precisely that there is no way, from within a situation, to distinguish these elements of an evental site – which either renders the possibility of any such assessment void in the first place (unless one occupies a transcendental position) or implicitly enforces, on the other hand, the maxim of human fulfillment (vaguely detectable in Hallward's formulation) as the criteria for the count of the situation. Taking the proletariat with its long history in struggles and theoretisation even before its appearance as subject of history (1917) as an example for something that is not representable, or void (as in the second quote), is simply not taking seriously the conceptual notion that is to be exemplified. The evental site, as that which is not representable in a situation, cannot have a name, and what is void cannot only not be named but simply doesn't exist at all in a situation.

2

The Appearance of Novelty in Existence

In the previous chapter an account has been given of how, within Badiou's set theory ontology, we can think generic situations (the presentation of being), as well as that which can rupture such situations and initiates their transfiguration into radical new situations under the name of the event. This ontological model provides a foundation for the act of creation by asserting the latter's generic possibility and operation subtracted from all worldly contexts. This assertion is based on Badiou's postulate that what is is consistent multiplicity, presenting what results (is made discernible) from inconsistent multiplicity or the void by a regime of counting (the operator of structure), whereas what is not can come to erupt and be constituted (as genuine novelty) by way of truth procedures enacted by subjects in the wake of (and in fidelity to) an event. Whilst Badiou presents a forceful reinvigoration of ontology within contemporary philosophy – combined with his pronounced insistence on the notions of event, truth and subject freed from discourse, experience, knowledge and language – his ontological model as formulated in *Being and Event* cannot readily be connected with procedures of change and creation in actual existing worlds. As Sam Gillespie writes, “it seems that it is not enough to have a formal system that could work to produce change and innovation in and through the production of truth – it also has to account for the very real possibility of change occurring under these conditions [the limit conditions of experience, in a world]” (Gillespie, 2008: 147). What is required here is on one side a clarification of the relation between the ontological and the ontic realm – between being and being-there, existence – and on the other, a supplementation of the ontological model with a compatible concept of existence, in

which the former provides the conditions in thought for genuine novelty through creation that is linked with a transfigurative capacity in existence, for any kind of situated world.

Regarding our central concern with the act of creation, the guiding trajectory for the remaining chapters can be subsumed under the question of how radical novelty comes to appear in existence. After the assertion and conceptualisation of the ontological possibility of genuine novelty in the previous chapter, what needs to be laid out is how radical novelty (that which hitherto in-existed) can break into and manifest itself in existence. In order to develop the question of what constitutes such a novelty and what causes it in a world, an account has to be given of what existence is, how it can be thought and how it relates to the ontological realm, so as to base our further investigations on this foundation. To outline such an ontic extension, following Badiou's more recent work, is the task of this chapter.

To address such an extension of his subtractive ontology is the objective of *Logics of Worlds*, and the collection of essays leading up to this second volume of *Being and Event*, namely *Briefings on Existence: A Short Treatise on Transitory Ontology*. Before turning to those two books, let us briefly clarify what we need such a conception of existence to accomplish. First, and again, existence is reinvigorated as problem for thought (and not mere analysis) once we shift our efforts from merely interpreting the world, what is given to us in experience, to thinking existence as such, taking on whatever worldly form (including our world today). This orientation results from the assertion that genuine novelty can indeed come to exist, imposing on us the task to account for the conditions and constitution of the appearance of worlds in general, so that we gain a foundation to think radically new instances of existence as consistent worlds. The decision to think genuine novelty under the name of creation therefore entails a non-specific, generic concept of existence, which understands existence as the framework of presentation of whatever specific instance of it, in the form of a world. Existence is therefore thought to be the framework within which radical change can come to appear. As regards the phenomena that appear as existing within a world, we are then looking for a way to understand their appearance in general, abstracted from the phenomena's worldly context, that defines their being-*there*. Badiou terms this undertaking, which lies at the heart of his *Logics of Worlds*, a *calculated or objective phenomenology*

(LW: 38). To term his undertaking objective phenomenology is to express that the existence of the objects that appear (that are-there) is thought independently of any consciousness that might perceive them, and is instead purely based on the immanent existential organisation that governs the appearance of an ontological situation as world. This does not mean that there might not be a problem in the different ways we individually perceive and understand the objects of a shared world or this world itself. But this question of perception, with Badiou's approach, poses rather a complication than a challenge to the more fundamental questions regarding the possibility and mode of appearance in general. In that sense, we can posit that first of all, 'stuff' exists as the being-there of some multiple-being and only second, that there might be an inherent problem for consciousness to fully access objects in existence. The way in which 'stuff exists' can be understood, again in Badiou's term, as *appearance*, as the generic way that allows any multiple of an ontological situation to appear as material or non-material object in the consistent, ordered presentation it is situated in – a world. On the one hand, this is a powerful claim of Badiou's: to understand worlds according to some ordering principle that is inherent to the specific world in question, whilst stating that what appears is precisely the elements of its ontological situation. This amounts to postponing the problem of perception, since the ontological situation prescribes exactly what is and therefore what comes to appear (rendering subjective perceptions of what appears unproblematic, or at least secondary). On the other hand, this raises the question or problem of how to justify such an ontological 'primacy' over existence, meaning that the being of anything that appears is primary to its appearance. In order to discuss this assumption properly we need to elaborate on the general relation between being and being-there, between Badiou's ontology and objective phenomenology. In order to do this we need to delineate their respective realms (in thought and existence) as well as to delineate their points of connection and the ways these connections are to be understood.

The decision for a generic approach to thinking existence means once again (similar to set theory ontology) an abstraction from all specifics of what there is, except at the topological level of appearance itself, as that which makes being appear as one consistent world in the first place, that which localises being so it *be-there*. It is therefore again a matter of abstraction – although in a different way than that performed in ontology – where we want to abstract from all specifics of

a world, but still maintain the category of ‘world’ as the being-there of an ontological situation. At the same time we need to account for everything that makes it possible for a world to exist as a specific world (including objects, relations, logical consistency, etc.). In this understanding the level of abstraction is less ‘severe’ than it was exercised in Badiou’s set theoretical conception of being in that it needs to provide a model of how a world can exist in its specificity, without this model being determined by any specifics of a particular world, e.g. ours today.

Now what is the precise sense of the abstraction Badiou employs in order to think being-there generically? The question here is, as Badiou puts it, “to understand the birth of objectivity” (Badiou, 2007b: 66), which is to say the foundation of the appearance of things (as objects) in a world. He continues:

How can a pure multiplicity, a set, appear in a world, in a very complex network of differences, identities, qualities, intensities and so on?

It is impossible to deduce something like that from the purely mathematical thinking of the multiplicities as set of sets, ultimately composed of the purity of the void. If ontology as a theory of things without qualities is mathematics, phenomenology as the theory of appearing and objectivity concerns the relationship between qualitative differences, problems of identities and of existence. And all that is on the basis of a place for appearance, or for being-there, a place we name: a world.

After the mathematics of being qua being we have to develop the logic of the worlds. Unlike the logic of things, which are composed of sets of sets, the logic of worlds cannot be purely extensional. The logic must be that of the distribution of intensities in the field where multiplicities not only are, but also appear here, in a world. The law of things is to be as pure multiplicities (as things), but also to be-there as appearing (as objects). The rational science of the first point is mathematical ontology. The rational science of the second point is logical phenomenology ... Existence is a general category of the logic of appearance, and we can talk about existence completely apart from any consideration about subjectivity. ... “existence” is an a-subjective concept. (Badiou, 2007b: 66-7)

Contrary to the set-theoretical conception of being-qua-being, where consistency is the result of an operation of counting that exposes inconsistency as the real principle of being, the “mathematics of appearing consists in detecting, beneath the qualitative disorder of worlds, the logic that holds together the differences of existence and intensity” (LW: 39). In other words, the central issue in the conception of being-there is to posit a framework that can account for the consistency of a world, that can explain the constitution, by appearing, of “an always linked and connected world” (TO: 163). If we consider a set of objects in a world, we can say that they appear in different intensities in this world – more or less ‘prominent’ or ‘recognisable’ – and that the degrees of intensity of appearance are specific to the configuration of that world. This presents us with “a system of degrees, with an elementary structure which authorizes the comparison of degrees” (Badiou, 2007b: 67). These degrees can be thought of as being organised in the formal structure of an order of intensities of appearing, which Badiou names the *transcendental* of a world. The transcendental is the ordering principle that makes a world appear as coherent and as one, a principle that is both objective and internal to the world it orders. Hallward clarifies that unlike “Kant’s idealist conception of the transcendental (attributed to the structural, a priori operation of a subject), Badiou’s transcendental regime is entirely a function of the objective world it governs and in which it is itself included; it is part of the sphere occupied ... by an ‘object without subject’” (BST: 297). The transcendental regime orders its objects by their intensity of appearance, which Badiou understands as their self-affirmation in the world, representing their degree of self-identity that ranges from non-existent to maximally existent. Although the structure of any transcendental regime is understood to be uniform, its “sophistication or range of degrees is infinitely variable” (BST: 299). Which is to say that the structure of order is simply one from minimal to maximal intensity of appearing, whereas the infinite complexity and relational multi-dimensionality of what a world’s appearance is constituted by can be understood as being inherent to the specific world under consideration. In summary, worlds, “as infinitely diversified figures of being-there, ... effectively absorb the infinite nuances of qualitative intensities into a transcendental framework whose operations are invariant” (LW: 38). Where the invariance is the fact that there is always an immanent, singular logic and transcendental to a world that orders the objects of this world into one coherent appearance. This is, in a

nutshell, the sort of abstraction Badiou performs in his conception of being-there, which is to think “the being of appearing” (TO: 164).

In as far as “appearing is an intrinsic determination of Being” (TO: 162), and objective phenomenology is the rational science of appearing, we need to clarify how being-there or appearing is conceptualised by Badiou to be connected or compatible with his mathematical ontology presented in *Being and Event* – and moreover how such thought prescribes this determination of being (to appear) to be intrinsic to being itself. For logic to be compatible with set theory ontology, it has “itself to be a component of the science of Being, and hence of mathematics. Logic is required to be mathematical logic” (TO: 164). The problem Badiou faces is epitomised in the understanding of logic as formalisation of language or form of syntax, which was popularised under the banner of the linguistic turn and by analytic philosophy. The kind of mathematisation of logic resulting from the formalisation of language authorised the seizure of philosophy by language and “the cost of this was the destitution of ontology itself: either in the shape given to it by Wittgenstein, namely, statements of ontology are non-sense; or in the version Heidegger gives to it, namely, statements of metaphysics are in the epoch of their nihilistic closure” (TO: 110). The event in thought that, according to Badiou, allows philosophy to wrest itself from the consequences of this disastrous mathematization of logics (i.e. the dominion of linguistics) is the development of category theory (*ibid.*). This new mathematical framework heralds a “complete shift in perspective” (TO: 113), which allows for a mathematised logic to emerge from and be enveloped by a mathematical (ontological) decision. It is worth quoting Badiou at length here:

The theory of Categories proposes a complete reversal of perspectives. Whereas the syntactical presentation of logic as formal language disposes its universes, or models, as semantic interpretations, in the categorical presentation what exists are Universes, of which logic is an internal dimension. ... Logic now appears as an immanent constraint enveloped by mathematics. And above all, logic is localized. It is a presented, situated dimension of universes whose possibility mathematics describes. ... The problem of the delimitation of mathematics and logic thus takes on a completely different turn. This delimitation no longer lets itself be decided by linguistic criteria

that would exhaust its power. It is referred back to distinctions, themselves ontological, that are far more fundamental, and that concern two conceptual pairs: that of the real and the possible, and that of the global and the local. It marks out what we might call an essential ontological geometrization of the relationship between logic and mathematics.¹

In advancing a strictly formalised, logical conception of structures, their abstract properties and regulated relations between them, category theory is a description of possible mathematical universes (TO: 145). In this way logic structures the field of global possibility for any specific mathematical and ontological universe. On the other hand side “it is also, by the same token, a merely possible dimension, and thus empty of any real prescriptive force” (BST: 303). A mathematical or ontological universe has to be decided upon, and for this, logics in the form of the descriptive framework of possible universes provides no means to infer such a decision. Operating not in a merely descriptive or definitional mode but axiomatically, only real mathematics decides a universe (TO: 119) in a primary and self-foundational manner, and thereby determines the local logic of its particular universe as a consequence. In this sense, logic cannot found any mathematical or ontological universe, “and as soon as we begin speaking of the real rather than the merely possible, we speak from the practical priority of mathematics over logic” (BST: 303).

The condition under which Badiou placed his ontology within the first volume of *Being and Event* is prescribed exclusively by the mathematical developments of set theory. With his more recent investigations into logic and category theory this commitment in no way suffers, indeed, its domination has even been bolstered to envelop the condition of the thought of being-there by logics. As Hallward summarises, Badiou “accepted the condition imposed by a duly mathematized logic, but in such a way as to make this condition itself subordinate to the more fundamental condition of mathematics itself (i.e., of mathematics as truth procedure) ... In this way, the hierarchy of decision over logic and truth over language is preserved and reinforced” (BST: 312-3). Badiou terms this double condition of his

1 This is Hallward’s more lucid translation as it appears in BST: 302-3. The same section can be found in Madarasz’ complete but slightly confusing translation here: TO: 113.

endeavour around *Logics of Worlds* “onto-logical” which “is the domain described, by category theory, of the logical consequences of an ontological decision” (BST: 308-9).

What of existence can be apprehended with Badiou’s objective phenomenology? What kind of perspective on being-there does it establish? For Badiou, as we came to understand above, the problem in thinking being-there or existence hinges on the question of consistency, of how an infinitely complex world nonetheless appears as one consistent world. His conception is again abstracted from whatever qualities a specific world would present in order to formalise the generic and objective laws of appearance that apply for the appearing of any being as being-somewhere. This is how a world can then become “a transcendental framework whose operations are invariant” (LW: 38) at the same time as the transcendental organisation of any world is immanent to this world, allowing for potentially infinitely many ways of being-there for even a single multiplicity in being (LW: 114). The consequence of this abstraction is that Badiou can now more or less easily link the procedures of real change developed in *Being and Event* (concerning the radical reconfiguration of a situation in being) to the transfiguration of the transcendental order of a world. In short, he thereby succeeds in giving an elaborate answer to the question of how novelty can appear, how radical change can occur in general.

Logics of Worlds: How can genuine novelty appear?

The issues that *Logics of Worlds* sets out to resolve concern both the appearance of radical novelty and the local support, in a world, of a truth procedure that enacts such a radical transformation of its world. Badiou subdivides the work into seven books, starting with a refinement of his theory of the subject, a theory that is “essentially formal” (LW: 46) and can therefore be formulated before and independent of any principles of the logics of appearing that take up the next three books, subsumed under the title of a Greater Logic. Proceeding from the transcendental organisation of worlds to a new thinking of objects to what constitutes relations, the Greater Logic presents the core of *Logics of Worlds* and Badiou’s theory of the being of appearing, or objective phenomenology. In a somewhat similar broadening gesture that refined the theory of the subject in Book I, Book

IV attends to the notion of change, ranging now from simple becoming to true change. It follows a theory of ‘points’, which concerns the localisation or crystallisation of decisions in a world. The last book discusses the body as material support of a subject in a world, capable of treating such points.

Turning now to an exegesis of Badiou’s sequel to *Being and Event* we will proceed again by first engaging in a close and rather technical reading of *Logics* which is then followed by a discussion that focuses on a problematic and fundamental inconsistency in Badiou’s system. The lengthy engagement is necessary in order to present the intricacies that, in the end, unbind some of the foundational assumption of not only *Logics* but also *Being and Event*. Regarding *Logics of Worlds*, we shall concentrate on the conceptual expositions and, for the most part, skip over the formal, mathematical sections. This omission starts with and mainly concerns the Greater Logic (Books II-IV) and is for two ultimately related reasons: First, the considerable level of abstraction and formalisation that allows Badiou to put forward a generic concept of the appearance of worlds (his objective phenomenology) also makes it quite impossible to establish any tangible connection for his overall thought to the situated concerns and struggles taking place in the world of ours today. As such, although the elucidation of the question of appearance or being-there promises to clarify the question if and how we can wilfully ‘provoke’ and enact procedures of radical change, Badiou himself notes that the “transcendental analytic of being-there, or formal theory of worlds, or Greater Logic, leaves the question of change untouched” (LW: 357). This evaluation accentuates an undertone of the whole of *Logics*, namely Badiou’s vague (but effective) reluctance to envisage any kind of meaningful connection of the set-theoretical, ontological framework of his theory of radical change to any specific, actual worldly situation and transformational enactments therein. As we will come to see, this is connected to the second reason for our cursory treatment of the Greater Logic, namely Badiou’s insistence on the primacy of ontology over existence or of being over being-there.² Arguably this choice is also what necessi-

2 An assumption that is indebted to Badiou’s commitment to Plato, on which Hallward notes: “Badiou’s own neoplatonic option, then, implies (at various stages of the argument) the destitution of the categories of ‘substance,’ ‘thing,’ ‘object’ and ‘relation’; the ontological primacy of mathematical over physical reality; the distinction of mathematics from logic and the clear priority of the former over the latter. In this Platonic tradition, that mathematics is a form of thought means, first of all, that it ‘breaks with sensory immediacy,’ so as to move entirely

tates Badiou to propose such an intricate and complex apparatus of appearance (in the form of his Greater Logic), a choice and consequence that Hallward sums up as follows:

By adding a ‘phenomenological’ and ‘objective’ dimension to his system, Badiou can fairly claim to have addressed a good many of the questions put to his extra-worldly ontology. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the occasional arcane intricacy of Badiou’s logic in any sense attenuates his fundamental Platonic commitment to abstraction and simplification. On the contrary, it is precisely in order to compensate for the consequences of his enthusiastically simple if not simplistic conceptions of being (without beings), of appearing (without perception), of relation (without relation), of change (without history), of decision (without alternatives), of exception (without mediation), that Badiou must develop such an elaborate and laborious theory of logical worlds. (Hallward, 2008: 120).

We briefly encountered Badiou’s general reasoning for the subordination of logics (of appearing) under mathematics (as ontology, the thought of being) above in the short discussion of his *Briefings on Existence*. More to the point, the implicit leaning of ontological primacy over existence suggests that what is-there (objects, worlds) is what exists or appears locally of being (consistent multiplicity). Which is to say that being not exactly pre-exists being-there (in the sense of cause or time) but that the being of an existent is still primary to that existent’s being-there. Or on the level of a world, that a worldly situation is predetermined by its ontological structure – in terms of both, the counted (but abstract) multiples that belong to a situation and the structure of belonging and inclusion of this situation – and not simply coextensive with it. Badiou expresses this, for example, as “the inscription of a multiplicity in a world” (LW: 36), or “the realization of being-qua-being as being-there-in-a-world” (*ibid.*) – in every case, “Being has the last word” (LW: 302).

within the pure sufficiency of the Ideal” (BST: 53).

The major problem with this tendency of ontological primacy is that Badiou at no point in his oeuvre gives an account of how exactly an ontological situation comes to be, how it acquires its structure – other than stating that its structure is the result of an operation of counting, which is the mechanism that produces consistency. This mechanism, and crucially its operation, would need to be thoroughly exposed if the construction of an ontological situation (and by consequence a world) is to be assumed a purely ontological affair. Otherwise Badiou would need to concede that either being is not primary, that ontological situations are abstractions of what is-there and hence that what is-there is primary. Or he would relinquish the singular and most central question – what creates a situation – effectively to mysticism, which, considering his principal commitments would be utterly absurd.

On a less severe level, the assumption of ontological primacy also poses a problem of credibility to Badiou's labelling of his undertakings in *Logics of Worlds* as being a “materialist dialectic” (LW: 3). What this points to is less a belated set of second thoughts regarding Badiou's strong ontological orientation in general than a need to clarify the general relation between being and being-there. We will return to this question towards the end of this chapter, once we have acquired the necessary foundation for its discussion. For now, this problematisation of the overly complex, formalised and abstract conception of appearance, as well as the assumption of ontological primacy in all of Badiou's thought, is merely raised in order to prepare for the brevity of the foremost conceptual – and not formal – discussion of the books constituting the Greater Logic.

With the preface, Badiou opens *Logic of Worlds* by laying out the general orientation or “ideological atmosphere” (LW: 3) of his undertaking by opposing it to what he identifies as the conviction of our present time, the statement “there are only bodies and languages” (LW: 1). He names this contemporary conviction *democratic materialism*, for the term combines the beliefs that today, on one side, the recognition of the plurality of languages goes hand in hand with the assumption of their juridical equality – hence *democratic* materialism. On the other side, the recognition of “the objective existence of bodies alone” (*ibid.*) and the dogmas of finitude, carnal enjoyments and sufferings that come with equating the body with finite life as individual existence – resulting in the humanist protection of all bodies under the banner of human rights as the norm of contemporary *mate-*

rialism. Badiou notes that “democratic materialism does stipulate a global halting point for its multiform tolerance,” a halting point that enforces unrestrained interventions on those languages that do “not recognize the universal juridical and normative equality of languages” (LW: 2) or languages that claim hold over all bodies, thus asserting themselves as universal. Which in other words means that “bodies will have to pay for their excess of language” (LW: 3).

Badiou opposes the conviction of democratic materialism with his own *materialist dialectic*. The need to counter democratic materialism arises from his understanding of philosophy to develop the means to affirm precisely the previously unknown, unregulated thoughts “that hesitate to become the truths that they are” (*ibid.*) – which is precisely what democratic materialism does not admit. The gesture with which the refutation of democratic materialism is carried out is the *dialectic*, which is to be understood, “following Hegel,” in the way “... that the essence of all difference is the third term that marks the gap between the two others” (LW: 4). Hence, the statement of the materialist dialectic reads: “There are only bodies and languages, except that there are truths” (*ibid.*). Unsurprisingly, as in *Being and Event*, the status of a truth takes the form of an exception. For Badiou, the objection of the “there are truths” reflects nonetheless, with “no doubt whatsoever,” an empirical and *materialist* evidence, since “in our worlds, as they are, truths advance. These truths are incorporeal bodies, languages devoid of meaning, generic infinities, unconditioned supplements” (*ibid.*). Badiou presents four didactic examples of such appearances of truths that match the four realms he assumes truths to advance from: science, art, politics and love.

With his polemics against the ideology of democratic materialism, Badiou effectively positions *Logics of Worlds* as a counter-project to the omnipresent relativist imperatives of today’s prevalent belief systems. As in *Being and Event*, the core of this counter-project is the ‘except that’ of truths, this time with the extension that truths not only are (ontologically) but indeed appear in worlds – or rather result in new worlds. With a twist in his introductory argument, he attempts to wrest the notion of ‘life’ from the annihilating conception democratic materialism has of it by promising to respond to the question ‘What is it to live?’ from the somewhat speculative position that affirms the exceptional existence of truths (LW: 35). Obviously, the active ‘to live’ in question demands a subject, embodied in a world, which Badiou refers to as “bodies-of-truths, or subjectivizable bodies. This

definition,” he continues, “forbids any capture by the hegemony of democratic materialism” (*ibid.*). Bodies are to be understood as material and situated in order to be capable of unfolding truths in their worlds, of making truths appear. Which is why he can modify his question once more, in anticipation of the book’s conclusion, asking what it is “to live, that is, ‘as an Immortal’” (LW: 40).

Book I: Formal Theory of the Subject (Meta-physics)

The intention of Book I – entitled ‘Formal Theory of the Subject (Meta-physics)’ – is to lay out a refined theory of the subject, that is of the general efficacy of a subject in a world. Badiou remarks that this meditation is carried out, on one side, as if the mechanisms of appearance and change within it would already be in place but that, on the other side, such a theory is essentially formal, that it concerns a system of forms and operations that are generic and that can therefore be formulated before and independent of a framework of appearance (his Greater Logic) and of the subjective enactments therein. What makes this reconsideration different from his conception of the subject in *Being and Event* is that he extends this ontological concept with linkages to worldly situations, more precisely with linkages to worldly situated bodies. In line with the statement of his materialist dialectic, Badiou insists that the “‘except that’ [of truths] exists qua subject” (LW: 45). The subject is still the exceptional occurrence that arises in the wake of an event but is now considered to also have a material side, as it were: the body. In short, “the subject is that which imposes the legibility of a unified orientation onto a multiplicity of bodies. The body is a composite element of the world; the subject is what fixes in the body the secret of the effects it produces” (LW: 46-7). According to Badiou – and this presents the second major addition to his thinking of the subject – such effects express three types of dealing with a truth: its actualisation or production (by a faithful subject), its denial (by a reactive subject) or its occultation (by an obscure subject). Considering that what is at stake here is the subject-form (or rather formalism), “it suffices to assume that the subjective formalism supported by a body is that which exposes a truth in the world” (LW: 47). In what is somewhat reminiscent of his critique in *Being and Event*,³ Badiou stresses

3 See Mediation 35 ‘Theory of the Subject’, BE: 391-2.

the need to oppose the dominant determinations of the subject that understand ‘subject’ as either a register of experience (as in phenomenology), a category of morality (as in neo-Kantianism) or an ideological fiction (as in Althusser’s structuralist heritage). If we are to stay true to the exceptional character of the subject it then follows that the subject cannot be deduced or experimented but only be decided in the empirical dimension of an occurring event, which means both that the theory of the subject is axiomatic – is the affirmation of its own form – and that a subject is always only a subject in regard to a truth (LW: 50). To formulate a theory of the subject in absence of his Greater Logic – explaining appearance and founding his theory of the body – and in opposition to the aforementioned dominant discourses, all Badiou assumes is the subject’s “pure act: to endow an efficacious body with an appropriate formalism” (LW: 49), an act that originates in the empirical trace of an event under the materialist condition of a body. Such a theory of the subject is then “a theory of operations (figures) and destinations (acts)” (LW: 50). The exposition of the three proposed subjective figures proceeds by first reworking the conception of the faithful subject (which Badiou, until now, maintained more or less unchanged since *Being and Event*) so it can accommodate the promised linkages to a body. In a second step, the reactive and the obscure subjects are deduced from the faithful subject because, as Badiou argues, both are essentially reactions to a coming into being of a truth and therefore require the initial faithful commitment to an event in order to spark their own operations.

In one sense, the formal relation between a subject and the body that supports it can be found in the operation whereby a body connects to the trace of the event that constitutes that subject. Such operations are borne by a worldly situated body that is determined by the trace of an event. But in another sense, the formal relation between a subject and the body is not reducible to or exhaustive in any ‘identitarian’ nomination of the evental trace or its enactments – especially not if fantasised or idealised as univocal expression. A subjectivated body presents the ‘living proof’ to the world of a former impossibility become possible, in and as a new present. “This institution of the possible as present,” writes Badiou, “is typically a subjective production. Its materiality is constituted by the consequences drawn day after day from the event’s course, that is from a [new] principle *indexed to the possible*” (LW: 51; my addition). The consequences drawn from such a principle manifest themselves in the world as treatments of points within the situation,

where ‘point’ is what confronts the global situation with a singular, binary choice.⁴ But the treatment of points also affects and reorganises the body, which is to say that this operation unfolds “the subjective formalism that this body is capable of bearing ... That is why the treatment of points is the becoming-true of the subject, at the same time as it serves to filter the aptitudes of the body” (LW: 52). The set of consequences drawn from an eventual trace, in the form of their treatment point by point, is what Badiou calls a *present*. The instantiation of a body is then “the realization in the present of a hitherto unknown possibility” that follows from the subordination of that body to an eventual trace, but only under the condition of the production of its consequences, and therefore as literal “incorporation into the present” (*ibid.*). Since the subjectivation of a body is a matter of treating singular points, a body should be understood to never be entirely in the present, because the active part or *organ* of a body suitable (or efficacious) for treating a point stands vis-à-vis a large region of the body that is passive and insensible or even obstructive in regard to the points under consideration. In this sense, “notwithstanding its subjection to the generality of the principle derived from the trace, the body is always divided by the points it treats” (LW: 53). Badiou goes on to summarise these pieces of conceptual formalisation into the matheme of the faithful subject, which reads (LW: 53):⁵

$$\frac{\mathcal{E}}{\emptyset} \Rightarrow \pi$$

For the conceptual explanation, or reading of the formalised matheme of the faithful subject, it is worth quoting Badiou at length:

It is important to understand that the faithful subject as such is not contained in any of the letters of its matheme, but that it is the formula as a whole. It is a formula in which a divided (and new) body becomes, under the bar,

- 4 In this ‘treatment of points’ in a world we can recognise the worldly equivalent to ‘enquiries of terms’ within a generic procedure in ontology (BE: 329-31).
- 5 I decided to include the mathemes for the three figures of the subject, as they are almost intuitively graspable with the brief explanation that follows or precedes each matheme. From the Greater Logic and onwards (in *Logics of Worlds*) we will not engage in the more demanding mathematical formulas and confine ourselves to the conceptual realm as much as it will be possible.

something like the active unconscious of a trace of the event—an activity which, by exploring the consequences of what has happened, engenders the expansion of the present and exposes, fragment by fragment, a truth. Such a subject realizes itself in the production of consequences, which is why it can be called faithful—faithful to ε and thus to that vanished event of which ε is the trace. The product of this fidelity is the new present which welcomes, point by point, the new truth. We could also say that it is the subject in the present. (LW: 53)

The necessity to conceptualise a reactive subject-form arises from the realisation that what resists the new is not simply the old – an assumption that underestimates what Badiou terms *reactionary novelties*. In order to effectively resist a novelty it is important, as Badiou writes, “to create arguments of resistance appropriate to the novelty itself.” In this sense, “every reactive disposition is the contemporary of the present to which it reacts” (LW: 54). Since we saw that a new present is the product of the operation of a faithful subject, the reaction to such a new present can easily be understood as a formalism deducible from the faithful subject-form. What the reactive subject reacts to is the productive operation that is the faithful subject. Therefore, to use Badiou’s vocabulary, the latter – the faithful subject – forms the (active) unconscious of the reactive figure and finds its place in the matheme under the bar. Still, the mode of the reactive subject is both one of negation and of production. On one side it is founded on the negation of the creative power of an event and its trace, whilst on the other side it is productive of a “measured present, a negative present, a present ‘a little less worse’ than the past, if only because it resisted the catastrophic temptation which the reactive subject declares is contained in the event” (LW: 55). Badiou calls this kind of present an *extinguished present*. The matheme of the reactive subject is therefore written the following way (LW: 56):

$$\frac{\frac{\neg \varepsilon}{\varepsilon} \Rightarrow \pi}{\cancel{\varepsilon} \Rightarrow \pi}$$

Therein, the imposition of the negation of any trace of the event forces the form of the faithful subject under the bar, and the resulting present is one of deletion of the present given form to by the faithful subject.

The case is different with the obscure subject, where we do not find any kind of production but “are required to conceive of an abolition of the new present, considered in its entirety as malevolent and *de jure* inexistent” (LW: 58-9). The operation of this figure is focused uniquely on the suppression of the new present, where such obscurantism is achieved through “the invocation of a full and pure transcendent Body, an ahistorical or anti-evental body (City, God, Race...) from which it follows that the trace (of the event) will be denied (here, the labour of the reactive subject is useful to the obscure subject) and, as a consequence, the real body, the divided body, will also be suppressed” (LW: 59-60). The appearance or exposition of this double annihilation (of the trace and the faithful body) is what occults the new present being produced by the faithful subject. What legitimates or demands this destruction is the invocation of a fictional transcendent body, or atemporal fetish, which is paradoxically posited as “the contemporary of the present that demands to be occulted” (LW: 60). The matheme of the obscure subject is thus (*ibid.*):

$$\frac{C \Rightarrow (\neg \varepsilon \Rightarrow \neg \phi)}{\pi}$$

Contrary to the reactive subject, which in some way preserves the faithful subject as its active unconscious (under the bar), the obscure subject, whose unconscious part is the new present, exerts the destruction of the spiritual and material support of fidelity, in the name of the transcendent Body. The obscure subject offers, according to Badiou, a hitherto un-subjectivated, ordinary existence “the chance of a new destiny, under the incomprehensible but salvific sign of an absolute body, whose only demand is that one serves it by nurturing everywhere and at all times the hatred of every living thought, every transparent language and every uncertain becoming” (LW: 61).

Badiou goes on to explain what he calls the *destination* of a subjective figure, which is the “synthetic operation in which the subject reveals itself as the contemporary of the evental present, without necessarily incorporating itself into it” (*ibid.*). Three destinations we just encountered in the subject forms, and after their brief examination it is rather evident that they demand a certain order, namely that production is necessary for denial which in turn is necessary for occultation: “the denial of the present supposes its production, and its occultation supposes a

formula of denial” (LW: 63). The fourth subjective destination becomes discernible only once we regard the subjective field in a broader historical scale. What Badiou terms the *resurrection* of a truth is now easily graspable: it is the reactivation of “a subject in another logic of its appearing-in-truth” (LW: 65). Since every truth is eternal, it can never be said of any occulted or lost truth that it is lost forever. The extraction of an occulted or forgotten truth and its ‘return to life’ in form of a new subject-body, this is what Badiou understands as the subjective destination of resurrection.

In order to complete the classification of subjective formalisms it is finally required to give an account of the different types of truths that inaugurate and determine subjective formalisms borne by a body in its specific world. Badiou here reiterates what he laid out already in *Being and Event*, namely that there are four domains of truth, which are: science, love, politics and art. An interesting remark concerns the contingency of types of truths since, Badiou explains, “a truth procedure has nothing to do with the limits of the human species, our ‘consciousness’, or ‘finitude’, our ‘faculties’ and other determinations of democratic materialism. ... In fact, a truth is that by which ‘we’, of the human species, are committed to a trans-specific procedure, a procedure which opens us to the possibility of being Immortals”” (LW: 71). As such, there might exist an infinity of types of truths “but we humans know only four” (*ibid.*). Badiou goes on to sketch out and name the combinations of subjective figures, subjective destinations and types of truths.⁶

Although it has been put to use in the mathemes of all three subjective figures, the body still awaits its conceptual explanation. In *Logics of Worlds*, the book on the body comes last, after the Greater Logic, the forms of change and the theory of points. At this point – from the perspective of the formal theory of subjective figures – what can be said about the body concerns (more or less) simply its supportive capabilities for a subject in a world. Badiou writes: “The attributes of a body-of-truth must be capable of serving as the basis for thinking the visibility of the True in the manifestness of a world, point by point” (LW: 67). Moreover, the production of this visibility depends on the existence of appropriate organs for treating points in the world, or in general that there be traits of organicity in a body. In order to formally think (instead of empirically deduct) the questions that

6 See LW: 72-8, in particular the two tables on pp. 77-8.

the body poses, “we must establish the *logic* of the body” Badiou writes: “rules of compatibility among its elements, real synthesis exhibited in appearing, dominant terms, efficacious parts or organs...” (LW: 68). This requires, again, the Greater Logic as well as some (general) elaborations about how logic can work together or supplement his already existing mathematical framework of ontology.⁷

Besides further specifying the faithful subject and introducing reactive and obscure formalisms to his list of subjective operations, what seems most promising in Badiou’s re-take on the question of the subject (as ontological concept and formalism) are its points of connection to the body and to its present. As we encountered above, the issue of appearing (or existence in general) poses a very immediate, very justified if not essential challenge to any form of ontological thought, but with a particular urgency to a subtracted, mathematical ontology like Badiou’s. It is the question how, if at all, ontological concepts are reflected, work together, or have corresponding concepts in the ontic domain. At this stage of *Logics*, when justifying his re-examination of the theory of the subject as a formal theory, Badiou still performs a simple projection of his ontological categories onto the realm of appearance: “It is enough for us to suppose that a real rupture has taken place in the world, a rupture which we will call an event, together with a trace of this rupture, ε , and finally a body C , correlated to ε (only existing as a body under the condition of an eventual trace)” (LW: 50). The resolution of this mere projection into a properly formulated connection will happen in his Greater Logic, via the ‘postulates of materialism’. But as we will come to see in the discussion of the Greater Logic, this proposed connection proves to be very problematic and in the end untenable because it does not reach far enough *down* into the messiness of actual worlds and instead stays on the level of their general possibility in thought. In what has the ring of an acknowledgement of this issue, Badiou writes already in the preface that between the projects in *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds* “problems of connection and continuity do remain ... I leave them for another time, or for others to solve” (LW: 39). Still, when looking for points of connection, Badiou does provide slightly cryptic hints like the following one: “Besides the conjunction of the body and the trace, the subject is a relation to the present, which is effective to the extent that the body possesses the subjective

7 For Badiou’s elaborations on the general relation between logic and mathematics see also the discussion of his *Briefings on Existence* at the beginning of this chapter.

aptitudes for this relation, that is, once it disposes of or is able to impose some organs of the present” (LW: 52). To be brief, what a suggestion like this expresses is still an utterly formal side of the efficacy of a subject-body or its enactment of a truth procedure in a worldly situation. Whilst being completely in line with his conception in *Being and Event*, these additions to thinking the subject are neither surprisingly different, nor substantially less abstract. Indeed, less abstraction is perhaps something one would expect when dealing with appearing worlds vis-à-vis set theory ontology – but, if anything, the level of abstraction remains consistent across *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds* (albeit it is, in each case, a *different* operation of abstraction).

The part of *Logics* that Badiou subsumes under the title of the Greater Logic examines the conditions under which we can think pure multiples to appear as multiple-beings in a world. The domain of such thought is declared by Badiou to be that of logic, being the discourse appropriate to formulate a general theory of objects and relations. Above all, he notes, the Greater Logic is “an exhaustive theory concerned with the materialist thinking of worlds, or—since ‘appearing’ and ‘logic’ are one and the same—a materialist theory of the coherence of what appears” (LW: 94). The development of this theory takes three stages (Books II–IV): First the examination of the *transcendental organisation* of worlds, the logic of the latter’s consistent and ordered appearance. This is followed by a theory of the *object*, which also includes the crucial connection between being and appearing. The third part is concerned with the concept of *relation* within appearing, within determinate worlds.

Book II: The transcendental

Stating that “‘logic’ signifies purely and simply the cohesion of appearing” (LW: 100), Badiou again posits logic as the proper discourse of appearing and moreover as the terrain for its formalised thought. He sets out to conceptualise appearing with the notion of the transcendental organisation of a world. Every world is immanently ordered by a transcendental. That every world contains its transcendental means that this organisation of the world is immanent to the respective world, that it is made possible by immanent operations. This also makes clear that the transcendental has nothing to do with a subject or with subjectivity in general:

it “is altogether anterior to every subjective constitution, for it is an immanent given of any situation whatever” (LW: 101). On the grounds of the essential disjunction of being and appearing (LW: 102, 156) and the proof of the inexistence of the Whole (LW: 109-12, 153-5), Badiou makes the point “that every singular being is only manifested in its being *locally*: the appearing of the being of beings is being-*there*” (LW: 102; my emphases). That there exists no uniform or universal operation of identification and differentiation of what appears means that such “identifications and relations of multiples are always local” (LW: 112). Having always only a local scope, operations of identification or localisation of any particular being are carried out (or ‘measured’) against other existing beings, since there exists no universal mode, or system of reference, for such an operation. On this basis, a world is then the place in which a being “inscribes a local procedure of access to its identity on the basis of other beings” (LW: 114). As we will come to see, the identification of a being depends on the difference to its own being (its being-*qua-being*) and to other beings of the same world (LW: 117). One more aspect of the locality of being-*there* is that, because of the inexistence of a universe (the Whole), there are a plurality of worlds, which also means that “the same multiple—the ‘same’ ontologically—in general co-belongs to different worlds” (LW: 114). What Badiou puts forward here is a “minimal phenomenology of abstract appearing,” which means an operational framework identifying “the condition of possibility for the worldliness of a world, or the logic of the localization for the being-*there* of any being whatever” (LW: 103).

A *world*, taken as a uniquely structured place, is identified with the singularity of its logic, the latter “articulates the cohesion of multiples around a structured operator (the transcendental)” (LW: 102). The order that the transcendental operator evaluates relies on the intensity of the *difference of appearing* – or *identities* (LW: 123, 127) – between beings in the world, which is measured by their degrees of identity (and consequently difference). The conceptual core of the transcendental is actually not difficult to grasp and Badiou puts it in a concise way: it is required “that in the situation there exist a scale of these degrees [of identity]—the transcendental of the situation—and that every being is in a world only to the extent that it is indexed to this transcendental” (LW: 119). The measurement of degrees of identity is performed by a function of appearing, which compares two elements of a world by their intensity of appearing. Since there does not exist a uniform ref-

erence or scale for this measurement, the “scale of evaluation, of appearing, and thus the logic of a world, depends on the singularity of that world itself” (LW: 156). The transcendental is itself a multiple that belongs to the situation of which it is the ordering principle.

This level of abstraction (and its disconnectedness from any actually appearing situation or world) makes it relatively straightforward to understand and agree with what is at stake in the concept of a transcendental organisation of any world. The concept states that, however complex and multi-dimensional a world, its objects and the constitutive relations between everything that appears in it, are ordered according to a principle that is itself of that world. Additionally, the transcendental organisation is not even total, or uniform (LW: 157, 159). Indeed, it might be understood in a non-linear sense, that is to say, as bearing internal shifts and breaks of reference, domains, criteria, yet still constituting one complex system of coherence. Although Badiou invests in providing complete formal sections for all three parts of the Greater Logic, it is perhaps clear at this point why an engagement with them might not be of primary interest here. Put bluntly, since the overall conception makes sense of and allows, if needed, for ever more internal diversifications, we might rather focus on engaging and formulating a critique on a more fundamental level than that of the formal workings of the general concept under scrutiny.

Badiou dedicates one section to the question how logic, understood in its common sense, differs from the logic he is putting forward under the banner of his Greater Logic. In confronting his notion of logic with Husserl’s, he notes that Husserl in the end grounds the operations of logic on human consciousness, on a constituent subject. As we have seen in both *Being and Event* and the first book of *Logics*, Badiou’s subject is always constituted by a truth that appears as exception, and as such, cannot be used to base a theory of appearance on. Appearance has to be explained without the exceptional occurrence of a subject. For Badiou, his project of a materialist dialectic goes against not only phenomenology (for which Husserl served here as his opponent) but also analytic philosophy, refuting their claim on the originariness of consciousness and language. “The materialist dialectic undermines this schema” of this originariness, he writes, “replacing it with the pre-linguistic operations which ground the consistency of appearing. As a consequence, logic, formal logic included, not to mention rhetoric, all appear

for what they are: derivative constructions, whose detailed study is a matter for anthropology” (LW: 174). What this establishes in the end is, that “logic, in its usual linguistic sense, is entirely reducible to transcendental operations” (LW: 100), which means being reducible to linguistic appropriations of certain principles of coherence of appearing from the world such logic is constructed from.

Book III: The object

The second stage of the Greater Logic concerns a novel conception of the object. The object is understood as an instance of the One, of what can be counted as and distinguished as this-one in appearing. The notion of the object – and as we encountered already, appearing in general – can be thought independent of any subject or perceiving consciousness, and therefore aspires to be a truly “subject-less object” (LW: 193). Perhaps most importantly, objects (or their components) are understood to localise in appearance determinate multiples, and therefore present the crucial link between appearance and being. And lastly, as units of appearing, objects provide subjective formalisms with the material support they need in order to enact truth procedures in their worlds. The general line of reasoning continues from understanding worlds as organised by a transcendental order, onto which multiple-beings will now be indexed and can thus be understood to appear and be localised as objects in the world under consideration. The suturing of a being-there to its underlying ontological multiple proceeds via an analytic of objective appearing capable of determining the object’s components, identifying the minimal (atomic) form of such a component and finally establishing an intersection between such ‘atoms of appearing’ and ‘atoms of being’.

Starting with the differentiation between beings in a world, Badiou calls *function of appearing* or *transcendental indexing* the measuring of phenomenal identity (or difference) between two beings in a world. This transcendental degree of identity varies from absolute non-identity to maximal identity, with any possible intermediate degree. The values of identity between every pair of beings in a world is indexed to the transcendental of this world. Considering “any being appearing in a world,” Badiou writes, “we call ‘phenomenon’ of this being the complete system of the transcendental evaluation of its identity to all the beings that co-appear in this world” (LW: 201). If the function of appearing is measuring the difference of phenomenal

appearance of beings in a world, how is the intensity of phenomenal appearance evaluated in the first place? For Badiou, the intensity of appearing of a being is nothing else than its self-identity, which is to say a function that reflects a being's self-affirmation in a given world. This is what he terms *existence* of a being in a world (LW: 208, 246). Now that we understand phenomena within appearing, it is time to take them apart again, this time in regard to the components Badiou assumes to be the worldly support of the multiples or sets supposed by ontology. The central question in this analytic approach (or process of de-composition) is whether we can discern, from within a worldly logic, the components that make up a phenomenon. At the same time this necessitates that there be, as in ontology (with the empty set and the singleton), a halting point for such decomposition, that is to say something like atomic components of a phenomenon.⁸ Badiou answers in the affirmative by proposing the functions of a) *phenomenal components*, which evaluate the degree of belonging of an element to a being in the world, and b) *atoms of appearing* that designate phenomenal components which belong to a maximal degree, that is absolutely, to the being-there in question. Finally, the linkage between being and appearing takes the form of a postulate, the 'postulate of materialism,' stating that "*every atom of appearing is real*" (LW: 218). More technically, this means: "given an atomic function between a multiple and the transcendental of a world—that is a component of the appearing of this multiple which comprises at most one element (in the sense of 'absolute' belonging)—there always exists a (mathematical) element of this multiple which identifies this (logical) atom (or atom of appearing)" (*ibid.*). Now, at last, we arrive at the definition of an object. An object of the world is, declares Badiou, "the couple formed by a multiple and a transcendental indexing of this multiple, under the condition that all the atoms of appearing whose referent is the multiple in question are its real atoms" (LW: 220).

In the remaining sections of the conceptual part of Book III, Badiou lays out what he terms *atomic logic* – which constitutes the core of the Greater Logic. Atomic logic proposes "*the theory of the relations which are thinkable between the elements of an*

8 Allow me a polemical side-note at this point: As it is often in *Logics*, such questions, rather than being treated and somehow answered, are seemingly posed by Badiou in order to posit some intuition, formula or proof that pre-emptively describes the function or concept whose possibility was initially the point of the question – thereby ignoring the need to justify the decision for affirming this possibility.

object" (LW: 221), where object-elements denote elements of ontological multiples that appear in a world as real atoms or atomic object components. Crossing or linking the domains of mathematics of being and logics of appearing, this logic comes to project and inscribe transcendental organisation into multiple-being itself, a process Badiou calls *retroaction* of appearing on being (*ibid.*). The operations on which atomic logic is built are the localisation of atoms, compatibility and order of object-elements and real synthesis of objects or objective regions via envelopes of transcendental degrees. The connection between being and appearing on which retroaction relies – or, to be precise: since retroaction is conceptually posited and not deduced, this conception is what establishes the operative connection in the first place – enables Badiou to conceptualise the synthesis of a multiple from its objective appearance, via his atomic logic. He writes that "this synthesis is ultimately realizable in the form of a relation, which is itself global, between the structure of the transcendental and the structure that is retroactively assignable to the multiple insofar as the latter appears in such and such a world" (LW: 226). This relation receives the name *transcendental functor*. The retroaction of appearing on being is probably the most significant conceptual idea in *Logics*, since it is not only what allows for the becoming of a subject in a world (LW: 222) but also and most importantly it is what allows us to think genuine change in a world, since retroaction is thought to guarantee that such change not only and merely concerns appearance but also the ontological foundation of what appears:

The key point of the retroaction of appearing on being is that it is possible in this way to reunify the multiple composition of a being. What was counted for as one in being, disseminating this One in the nuances of appearing, may come to be unitarily recounted to the extent that its relational consistency is averred. (LW: 230)

Book IV: Relation

The last part of the Greater Logic is dedicated to the question of intra-worldly relation. Badiou states it as the rather simple problem of thinking what is between objects or what is their co-existence in the same world, under the same transcen-

dental. Right from the start he establishes that relations have no being, that they are not a matter of ontology, a direct consequence of this is that any bond between objects should be understood as being regulated by those objects: “A relation is a connection between objective multiplicities—a function—that creates nothing in the register of intensities of existence, or in that of atomic localizations, which is not already prescribed by the regime of appearance of these multiplicities” (LW: 301). Continuing from the two-fold determination of the object by being (extensive or mathematical multiplicity) and appearing (intensive or logical multiplicity), the treatment of the question of relation proceeds via an examination of the similar double determination of worlds. On one side is the question how many objects there are in a world, what the type of multiplicity of beings in a world is. Its treatment is an ontological, extensive one. On the other side, there is the issue of what a relation or the appearance of a connection in a world is; a question that is to be thought in logical terms. Regarding the extension of a world thought in its being, the answer should come as no surprise that every world is ontologically infinite (we remember Cantor’s theorem) and that this infinity is of an inaccessible type. “A world makes immanent the dissemination of that which composes it” (LW: 307) at the same time as it “makes immanent every local totalization of the parts of that which composes it” (LW: 308). Inaccessible infinity follows from the impossibility of constructing the concept or measure of this infinite from the interior of any world. This impossibility also guarantees that a world is closed without being totalisable, “every world is affected by an inaccessible closure” (LW: 310). Turning to the question of the relation between objects, Badiou reiterates his claim that within appearing, a relation “is necessarily subordinated to the transcendental intensity of the apparents that it binds together. Being-there—and not relation—makes the being of appearing” (*ibid.*). Relation, according to Badiou, leaves no mark on what it relates, it has no power to alter the objects it connects, but operates under the condition that it preserve existences and maintains identities. The idea is that for two related objects, there exists a function connecting elements of one object with elements of the other, conserving “the atomic logic of these objects, and in particular the real synthesis which affects their being on the basis of their appearing” (LW: 312).

Continuing the thought of the ontological closure of a world, Badiou proposes its logical equivalent: logical completeness of a world. This would suggest that

it is indeed impossible to transcend or ‘leave’ a world (from within that world). The argument unfolds around proving the universal exposition of every relation, which means that every relation within a world is ‘visible’ within that world. Understanding the universal exposition of a relation as index of the dimension of the world, allows Badiou to demonstrate a connection between the dimension of a world and its logical completeness. More precisely it is because of the inaccessible infinity of objects in a world (ontological closure) that every relation is universally exposed within that world (logical completeness). He terms this insight the ‘second fundamental thesis of materialism’ and therewith bolstering – after the first fundamental thesis of materialism that every atom is real – the support for his hypothesis that appearing is subordinated to being: “Since we can establish that this logic is complete—in the sense of the universal exposition of every relation—simply due to the inaccessible infinity of a world, we can affirm here too the subordination of the main properties of appearing to the deepest determinations of multiple-being” (LW: 320).

In the final section of book IV Badiou provides an important, however short, addendum to his theory of the constitution of the object. He declares that every object possesses an element that inexists in the world in which this object appears: “*we will call ‘proper nonexistent of an object’ an element of the underlying multiple whose value of existence is minimal ... , [that] inexists in the world*” (LW: 322). Every relation between objects is said to also conserve its objects’ nonexistents. Since the nonexistent designates the abstract possibility that a world’s underlying multiple composition could appear in other ways (as different worlds), the nonexistent is thought to express within appearing the contingency of being-there.

Summary of the Greater Logic

Badiou’s exposition of the Greater Logic ends herewith; let us revisit the major points of the argument. The main rationale for its conception is to give a “theory of the world, [an] elucidation of the most abstract laws of that which constitutes a world qua general form of appearing” (LW: 299). Badiou starts with the assumption that there is a somewhat primordial realm that comes to appear in a world and this appearance is what needs to be explained. From *Being and Event*, we remember that this is the realm of set theory ontology and what is thought to

appear as worlds are situations, understood as multiplicities of abstract multiples with no other properties than their pure multiplicity. The appearing of a situation as world is governed by the transcendental, the organising principle of the intensive degrees of appearance that is immanent to the world whose logical order it presents. The indexing of the intensity of appearance of a multiple onto the transcendental determines this multiple as object in the world. The object itself is decomposable into atoms of appearing and since Badiou posits that every atom is real ('first postulate of materialism'), they present the points by which appearing is sutured to being. Having established this connection on an atomic basis, he proposes a retroaction of appearing onto being, which is to say that the way a multiple comes to appear as object in a world has an effect back on its being, allowing for an alteration of the multiple-constitution itself. This retroaction is meant to explain the possibility of both, the becoming of a subject in a world as well as genuine change that radically reorganises the ontological situation and worldly appearance. Relations for Badiou are simply connections between objects that are determined by the objects themselves (as prescribed by the transcendental regime of appearance). Ultimately, he writes "a world is ... a system of objects and relations which makes an infinite collection of pure multiples appear, and prescribes for them an atomic composition which relations leave invariant" (LW: 339).

After the complete exegesis of *Logics*, we will return to some problematic points of the Greater Logic or the assumptions upon which it is built. These will be: the origin of a world's structuring (or transcendental) principle, the simplistic conception of relation and the retroactive effect of appearing on being as the most obscure consequence of thinking being as primary to being-there.

Book V: The Four Forms of Change

After laying out his formal theory of worlds, Badiou comes back to the central question of change. The Greater Logic as such "leaves the question of change untouched" (LW: 357) and there is nothing in the account of being or in being-there that would allow for the identification of change. Badiou sets out to describe different intensities of change, starting from the self-modifications of objects that, instead of constituting a break with its being or appearing, is understood as the proper operation of attaining its self-identity and as consequence its degree of

appearing in a world. He calls modification “*the rule-governed appearing of intensive variations which a transcendental authorizes in the world of which it is the transcendental*” (LW: 359), therefore something that is rather constitutive of the appearing of a world rather than disruptive ground for its transfiguration – in short he states: “modification = objectivation” (LW: 391). Real change, as was established in *Being and Event*, takes its cue from the exception that occurs under the name of the event and stems from an evental site. The refinement into four forms of change starts with the evental site, and involves a reworking of its ontological conception as well as a logical, intensive account of this birthplace of the event. The intuition behind the site, as worldly appearance, is that its supporting multiple “*count[s] itself in the referential field of its own indexing*” (LW: 363) – which means that a site exposes, besides the objects it contains, also itself. Ontologically speaking, the multiple that comes to appear as worldly site within appearance is a self-reflexive set. Since the axiom of foundation forbids such self-belonging, the site is necessarily of short-lived nature, it must fade into disappearance as soon as it has been noticed. This ‘noticing’ is precisely the instant of the event, in which the site “carries out a transitory cancellation of the gap between being and being-there,” constituting the “instantaneous revelation of the void that haunts multiplicities” (LW: 369). If the site only appears to disappear, what allows us to gauge the effectiveness of change are the consequences that arise from it. Still, as the origin of such consequences, a site must exist to a maximal intensity for an event proper to result from it. It is then called a *singularity*, whereas a site whose intensity of existence is non-maximal is said to constitute a *fact*, a local disturbance or novelty without further consequences. The force of a singularity lies in its consequences that can, again, be split into maximal intensity and non-maximal intensity. The first, strong singularity comprises an event, whilst the second is called *weak singularity*, a novelty that shines bright but short, as it were, the force of its consequences being not strong enough to sustain genuine change. The strongest consequence in a world is to make appear something that hitherto inexisted in that world. In *Being and Event*, it was still very vaguely the void of a given situation that irrigated in the wake of an event. In *Logics*, what comes to exist in the world as consequence of a maximal singularity (an event) is the inexistent of the object that has been the site. This presents us with a far more specific sense of the immediate consequences of an event in a world, although it cannot say anything about the orientation of the transfiguration of the world or its transcendental that only begins with this

“sublation of the nonexistent” (LW: 394). In the course of evental consequences, a new transcendental or logical base is given to a world that can then be called ‘genuinely new’.

Book VI: Theory of Points

From this very generalised thinking of evental consequences in a world, the obvious question arises about how such consequences materialise within appearing. This is what Badiou elaborates in Book VI, entitled ‘Theory of Points’. Points present those obstacles or challenges that cannot but be treated and decided by a faithful subject-body, since we have to understand a truth procedure as the infinite operation that proceeds point by point (we encountered this already in the discussion of the subjective formalisms). Thought like this, “a point is the transcendental testing ground for the appearing of a truth” (LW: 399). The mode of this testing or treatment that a point commands is that of a decision, specifically that of a binary decision, a question of yes or no. A point therefore presents “the crystallization of the infinite in the figure … of the ‘either/or’, what can also be called a choice or a decision” (LW: 400), where the infinite denotes the infinitely differentiated configuration of the world, or more precisely of its transcendental structure. The basic idea (or desire) on Badiou’s side seems to be that of merging a clear-cut and therefore binary decision (‘this, and everything else not’) with a consideration that involves the world plain and simple. A decision, in order to arrive at a yes or no, requires the compression of a world’s appearance, or “existential densification” (LW: 404), into a point that is then evaluated on the binary level of yes or no. In other words it is “to ‘filter’ the complex transcendental through a binary device and reduce the nuances of evaluation to the simplicity that characterizes every ultimate choice: either 1 (for yes) or 0 (for no)” (LW: 403). If we understand a point to be a local test of the world’s transcendental organisation vis-à-vis a truth, then a point also localises the action or body of that truth. Assuming a plurality of points in a world (or on a world’s transcendental index), this plurality is said to compose a topological space. Badiou attributes to such a congregation of points a power of localisation that results “rather naturally [in] something like the topological summary of the transcendental” (LW: 416). More precisely and interestingly, such topological summary can be thought to

extract from a transcendental organisation the tensions and contradictions that co-organise or co-form this transcendental. If we now conceive a truth procedure as successive decisions of points, where these points (as topology) localise what is conflicting in the ‘beneath’ of the transcendental of this world, then what in *Being and Event* was rather mystically posited as ‘truth of the situation’ becomes more localisable or gains conceptual substance. In short, from the thought that the points of a world designate a topological space, Badiou infers that the essence of appearing is “a *topos*: appearing, considered as the support of a truth tested by the world, is the *taking-place* of being” (LW: 419). Understood this way, it is rather evident that not every world has the same capacity to lend being a place, that a world whose transcendental is devoid of points is a world in which no change can take place. The crux here is a sort of evaluation of a world’s capacity for change or power of localisation, which for Badiou is in direct correlation to the number of points in a given world. He terms *atomic* any world that is devoid of points, nothing can change in such a world because a potential subject-body finds, in a sense, nothing to act on. The opposite configuration would be a *tensed* world, in which points exist in abundance and thereby allow subjects to carry out a truth procedure, decision by decision. Most worlds though are located between those poles of absence of and saturation with points.

Book VII: What is a Body?

Turning to the last book of *Logics*, we come back to the initial question, the efficacy of a subject in a world, or, in short: ‘What is a body?’ What Badiou assumed to be in place whilst elaborating the different subjective formalisms, the laws of appearing and change, is now at hand. The conceptual strategy took the path, starting with the formalisms of the subject, via the Greater Logic (transcendental, object, relation) and the forms of change and theory of points. Asking what a body is happens under the condition that its core features are already established: “a body is this very singular type of object suited to serve as a support for a subjective formalism, and therefore to constitute, in a world, the agent of a possible truth” (LW: 451). In addition, since the question is about the appearance of a subjective formalism in a world, Badiou supposes that there also exists an evental site in the world that might give rise to the body. That is to say that the

whole analytic framework of his Greater Logic and the forms of change act as the now completed foundation for the discussion of the body. Under this orientation, Badiou is now ready to ask what a body is, or “what marks out a body among the objects that constitute the appearing of a world” (LW: 454). Under the attribution that a body be the material bearer of a subjective formalism, how does a body come to be, or how does an object of a world become or assume the task of a subject-body? How is a body born? Since it is the worldly support for a subject, its birth must coincide, on an existential plane, with the birth of a subject, thought ontologically. That moment is, as has been established previously, the event, or more precisely what in *Being and Event* was referred to as the act of affirming the event – the instant when fidelity commences. Within a world, this is the moment when the nonexistent of a site comes to appear maximally, that is to say when an eventual trace is established in the world. Therefore, the eventual trace is a general condition for a body (LW: 488) that makes a body, in abstract terms, “the set of elements of a site … which entertain with the resurrection of the nonexistent … a relation of maximal proximity” (LW: 466). Or slightly clearer, although even less specific: “a body is the set of everything that the trace of the event mobilizes” (LW: 467). This capacity of the body to mobilise or incorporate eventual consequences into a new material present is founded in its ability to make determinate choices or decisions in the world, point by point. “It is a matter of formalizing what it means for a body to *treat a point*. This basically comes down to formalizing the efficacy of a ‘decision’ for a determinate subject.” (LW: 487) As we recall from the first book, an efficacious body is supposed to be in possession of a variety of organs that are apt to deal with the local specificities of some points, to decide them and in that way unfold the consequences of a post-evental truth. These regional specialisations of the body in the form of organs are locally and immanently synthesised by the faithful body vis-à-vis the points of the old, declining world. This organic synthesis necessitates to “stratify the body, defining within it a completely new link between previously separate, or even ill-defined … structures” (LW: 472), which is to say that to establish a new organ is to envelop the efficacious part of the body in new concepts (LW: 474).

Badiou reiterates these last points rather than adding clarity or specificity to the concept of the body. This results, in a sense, in nothing more than the formal theory of the subject that has been outlined in the first book, which boils down to

positing that a body is the material support in a world for a subjective formalism, and that its efficacy depends on being able to synthesise the appropriate organs for the treatment of the points it comes to face. Additionally, in order for a body to arise in a world, the following five conditions need to be fulfilled: There must be some *points* in the world, an *event* has to occur and be consequential enough to constitute a coherent *body*, this body must contain an *efficacious part* which is organised according to new concepts, resulting in *organs* capable of treating the points the body encounters in the world (LW: 474, 491). Badiou argues that this sequence of conditions presents a generic form of the coming-into-existence of truths. Accordingly, “this authorizes the materialist dialectic to contend that beyond bodies and languages, there is the real life of some subjects” (LW: 475).

Conclusion: What is it to Live?

Under the heading ‘What is it to Live?’ Badiou concludes *Logics of Worlds* by revisiting the stakes of the book outlined in the preface, namely the merits of his material dialectic over democratic materialism. He takes up the question what it is to live ‘as an Immortal’ (LW: 40, 507), which meant to wrest the notion of life from democratic materialism’s equivocation of life with mere existence. The possibility of a living that reaches beyond contemporary ideologies of finitude cannot be found in what is given in a world, in what appears. It is rather the trace of a vanished event that bears the potential of life, by demonstrating the exceptional possibility for some nonexistent to come to exist. For those who are in search of the true life, Badiou advises: “You can only put your hope in what inappears” (LW: 507). Of course, hope is never enough, the point of identifying an evental trace is to enact “what the trace authorizes in terms of consequences” (LW: 508) into a new present. Where the body presents the material support for the continuous creation of, or its incorporation into, this new present. In order to enact the consequences of a trace, we recall that the world needs to contain some points, in which the infinite is filtered through the Two in form of a subjective choice and decision. Also, for a body to truly live requires it to be in disposition of a subjective formalism, and more precisely, since neither conservation (reactive subject) nor mortification (obscure subject) count for such true life – as both work against the coming into existence of a post-evental truth – such a body has to incorporate a

faithful subjective formalism. Badiou goes on to link his description of the faithful subject as creating “the present as the being-there of eternity” (LW: 510) with the notion of the *Idea* as the exceptional experience that authorises, and in a vague way guides, the creation of this present by a subject-body. Therefore, he writes, “for the materialist dialectic, ‘to live’ and ‘to live for an Idea’ are one and the same thing” (*ibid.*). Or again, more specifically phrased towards finite human existence:

Several times in its brief existence, every human animal is granted the chance to incorporate itself into the subjective present of a truth. The grace of living for an Idea, that is of living as such, is accorded to everyone and for several types of procedure. ... To live is possible. Therefore, to (re)commence to live is the only thing that matters. (LW: 514)

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Discussion of Logics of Worlds

Let us return to what Badiou, in the preface to *Logics*, presents as the broader objective of his book, which consists in establishing what he term a materialist dialectic. The central intent is to validate the exceptional existence of truths and to prove that the appearance of truths (as new presents and worlds) is possible and furthermore compatible with his set theory ontology. After having gone through the arguments of the book, we are now in the position to examine *Logics of Worlds*, in respect of our interest in supplementing the edifice of *Being and Event* with linkages towards enactments of creation in situated worlds. There is no question that Badiou succeeds in delivering a scintillating theory of appearance inspired and supported by contemporary mathematics (logic, category theory and topology) and that his model of subjective embodiment of ideas into radically new presents and worlds misses neither rigour nor compatibility with his formalisms in *Being and Event*. Then again, we still need to assess if Badiou does in fact succeed in providing a soundly founded theory of the process of creation of radical novelty.

Let us get more precise on the criteria for this discussion. The objective for discussing the book in the first place was to probe it for capacities to found and advance a proposition on the act of creation. Whilst this proposition still has to take form, the reasons for turning to *Logics* in the process can be summarised as follows. By taking up Badiou's central notions from *Being and Event* in the previous chapter – the distinction of consistent and inconsistent multiplicity, the void, exceptional event, subject, truth procedure – the question became how a concept of creation that is based on these ontological notions and formalisms can be brought to matter or work in actual worlds, where acts of creation ultimately take place. As such, the problem became how *enactments* of the ontological conception of creation (post-evental truth procedure) can be thought to work in existence. Since *Logics of Worlds* states an intention to venture into exactly this question of the appearance of novelties, its choice seemed obvious, at least in the beginning. The trouble we will be facing now originates from collapsing the question of the worldly enactment of creation with the problem of the appearance of novelty in general, which was performed at the outset of this chapter. Now though, these two questions need to be separated again in order to gain the initial criteria to gauge *Logics*: first Badiou's own attempt to conceptualise the appearance of novelty, then my focus on the worldly enactment of the procedure of creation. The following short examination starts from the tensions the two questions evoke in relation to the discussion of *Logics* (and to a lesser degree of *Being and Event*). The principal tension derives from the obvious difference in what is asked: Badiou is interested in a theory of being-there (as generic appearance) in the form of an objective phenomenology that can be subsumed under his ontology in order to account for the appearance of novelties and the subject-bodies that give rise to them. Whereas my interest lies in a minimal linkage of the ontological foundation of the formalisms of creation with a capacity in existence for creation in order to affirm creation's generic possibility and tighten its most crucial concepts to worldly subjective capacities. To put it bluntly, Badiou thinks it necessary to give a complete model of how being can be thought to appear as being-there, and how the very discourses that make this thinking possible (set theory, mathematised logic) can be understood to be related with each other (category theory, dominance of mathematics over logic). Until now we went with Badiou on this view but it becomes clear that to think what makes genuine change does not, in fact, require a complete model of being and existence. What is required is a concise, rudimentary theory of ontic-ontological

connections that allow, for any kind of situation, a subjective worldly enactment of the conceptual operations of creation. In fact, it is precisely this which will be developed and discussed in the Chapter 4. The task for now is to present and get into the intricate knot of problems in *Logics*, their symptoms, covers and possible ways out. The following outline of a critique presents an attempt to foster an understanding why Badiou's system as it stands is unnecessarily complex for thinking the act of creation and presents some fundamental problems in how it conceptualises the relation between being and existence (not least because of its complexity). But as we will come to see, it can nonetheless provide the central inspiration and some crucial corner stones for a new, more materialist concept of creation.⁹

In the conceptual presentation of *Logics of Worlds*, the pivotal point regarding the operative relation between being and existence is the mechanism of retroaction of appearing on being – which is meant to ensure that changes in worlds are consequential or reflected in their ontological multiple-composition, thereby founding the possibility of real change by demonstrating the effectiveness of subject-bodies on the ontological composition of their world. On closer inspection though, it appears as a rather dubious conception, since the discussion of retroaction marks Badiou's first notable attempt to actually formalise a functional correlation directed from appearing to being, in a system that until then knew only the opposite direction - from being to appearing. It is somehow telling that the parts of *Logics* that try to found, conceptualise and formalise retroaction (based on the postulate of materialism and atomic logic), are the most complicated and opaque of the whole book (hence, in part, the need for my somewhat technical and detailed exegesis), and this seems suggestive of the apparent difficulties of implementing this first trait of materialism in such a (still) utterly subtractive model of worlds and their logics. Although retroaction presents possibly the most crucial nexus of *Logics*

9 The precise understanding of Badiou's materialism is not straightforward or simple, as Brassier and Toscano attest: "In a sense, the classical question of materialism is rescinded by Badiou to the extent that he does not permit of any operative distinction between the (material-) real and the ideal, displacing that traditional trope into the distinction between the real of the event and the knowledge, language or representation of the situation. ... Badiou's is ultimately an anti-naturalist materialism. It rests on the provocative proposition that nature, far from being the arena of savage becoming, is a domain of perfectly adjusted representation, of seamless normality, and that the event-history is the only site of the upsurge of inconsistent immanence." (Brassier and Toscano, 2004: 273)

(and, in this sense, might be a prime target for further and more detailed study and discussion), my point here is that retroaction and its complicated conceptual and formal construction present a symptom of a more fundamental problem in Badiou's system. It will be argued that this fundamental problem revolves around the aforementioned assumption of a primacy of being over being-there,¹⁰ which is expressed in unidirectional prescriptions of what appears by what is – with the exception of retroaction.¹¹ What a situation in being can prescribe for the world in existence whose being it presents is of course solely the multiple composition (structure) of otherwise non-descript multiples. Nonetheless, what this prescription establishes is an empty – in the sense of quality and substance – but fundamentally real structural framework of belonging of everything that comes to appear of an ontological situation.

To clarify how the mechanism of retroaction presents a symptom of ontological primacy, let us first briefly consider how situations not only change but can be understood to come to be in the first place. We know that an ontological situation (consistent multiplicity) acquires structure from inconsistent multiplicity by the operation of the count. How are we to think the operation of ontological counting to be carried out, or in other words, since it requires execution, what or who enacts this operation? In Badiou's framework, it is exclusively the subject that is endowed with such efficacy, the subject and its embodiment are the only formalisms he grants the capacity to create and modify situations and worlds, as Hallward points out: "At the operational foundations of Badiou's ontology we

10 See Hallward's question in his introduction to *Think Again*: "In what sense is there being and then *also* (if not afterwards) appearing? What sort of separation – temporal, causal, phenomenal – is implied in this 'then' or 'also'? This remains a little obscure since, though Badiou generally insists that the pure being of a being puts no constraints on its being-there, on how it appears in the situation, nevertheless both at what he calls the 'atomic' level of an object (the level that includes the irreducibly characteristic elements of an object) and within the circumstances of a 'site' (defined now as an element which itself comes to determine the way it appears in the situation), a being *does* prescribe the immediate nature of its being-there. So does the logic of appearing have anything more than a derivative force? Is this force really strong enough to account for the issue that, by Badiou's own admission, was left more or less unexplained in *Being and Event*, namely the way in which a situation is *structured* (since the concept of set is itself more or less structure-free)?" (Hallward, 2004: 19)

11 There are plenty of illustrations for this in *Logics*, for example in the introduction to Book III, concerning the conception of the object: "we are obliged to establish that an object is indeed the being-there of an ontologically determinate being; or that the logic of appearing does not exhaustively constitute the intelligibility of objects." (LW: 195)

find neither revealed word nor reconstituted thing but the subject in its purest form” (BST: 76). How are we then to answer the question of constitution or genesis of ontological situations if the subject is the only formalised performer in Badiou’s ontology? With this model, we run into the problem that his subjective formalisms can only arise from and work on already established situations and their appearing as worlds – since an event, as that which constitutes the subject, requires an established situation to compose its paradoxical multiple from. Consequentially, the subject cannot create ontological situations since a situation is its condition of possibility in the first place. Since this would have presented the only viable account of situational genesis *within* Badiou’s system, his system proves to have no account for such genesis and consequentially his model seems to lack this central foundation.¹²

Putting the question of genesis aside for now, if we try again to think through the creation of new situations (starting, this time, from already existing ones) combined with the idea of ontological primacy, we run into another foundational problem. It has been established by Badiou that every ontological situation is to appear, that it be-there. It assumes that everything that exists is the appearance of ontological multiplicity, meaning that for something to exist (to be-there), this something has to already have a consistent being (be counted-as-one in being). Therefore everything that appears is prescribed in its existence by its ‘underlying’ multiple-composition, which is to say that what appears is ontologically determined (although not how it is to appear, since this is the work of transcendental evaluation). Because of the imperative of being to appear as being-there, Badiou needs to come up with a concept that allows a situation’s multiple-composition (in being) to be altered by genuine changes in its localised appearance as world (being-there). The mechanism of retroaction of appearing on being is supposed to ensure such ontological reflections of worldly changes. Confusion now arises if we understand both, ontological prescription and retroaction as constitutive of

12 Both Ray Brassier and Sam Gillespie point to the open question of what creates consistency: “It is precisely the failure to clarify the connection between ontological inconsistency and ontical consistency that obliges Badiou to resort to hollow tautologies such as ‘consistency must be consistent’. *If unity is only ever the result of an inexistent operation, then what non-tautological instance accounts for the necessary ubiquity of consistency?*” (Brassier, 2006: 72, my emphasis) And: “What is missing is thus an account, on the one hand, of the process through which possible situations or possible worlds are formed, as well as the various categories that are transitive to both ontology and the situation itself, on the other.” (Gillespie, 2008: 99-100)

each other's realms, that an ontological situation prescribes (as anonymous structure of the situation's multiple-composition) what appears as world but that at the same time changes in this same world re-constitute its ontological multiple-composition. This way, retroaction ultimately suggests, thanks to its eventual anchorage, that ontological structure is the effect of worldly structuring or change, which destabilises the grounds for Badiou's assumption of ontological primacy since, in this case it no longer holds that "being has the last word" (LW: 302). Out of the necessity to account for true change arising from the embodiment of a truth procedure within appearing, Badiou undermines with the concept of retroaction his own presumptions of ontological primacy and thereby also, in a way, the viability of his subtractive approach in conceptualising genuine change. Or more precisely is it the necessity to conceptualise appearing as prescribed by being that is suddenly problematised, which means that Badiou's objective phenomenology, and especially its Greater Logic, looses its initial urgency to be formulated in the first place.

The above reasoning is sensible only if we assume the idea of retroaction to be valid and crucial enough to confront the rest of Badiou's system with the confusions it provokes. In our reading, retroaction presents the most materialist idea of *Logics* in that it presumes that true change in worlds is real. In this sense, to paraphrase Hallward's polemic that "the retroactive effect ... might best be described not merely as immaterial but as simply esoteric" (Hallward, 2008: 120), retroaction rather appears to be the only 'sober' concept against the backdrop of Badiou's far more 'esoteric' assumption of the primacy of being over being-there. Considering his focus on genuine, material change, it is strange that this very material process and all the concepts it involves or employs (subject, event, site, truth procedure, etc.) are not only thought possible exclusively via ontological subtraction from all specificity and materiality but are also prescribed by it. A truly materialist theory of change would need to have a much stronger foundation within worlds, however much it abstracts from them.

In a way, *Logics of Worlds* appears as an immensely rigorous yet ultimately unconvincing attempt to console Badiou's own fundamental Platonism with his desire to think the real possibility of materially effective, genuine change. In holding on to a conception of being and its relation to being-there that can easily be read like that of a primary Idea and the ever incomplete appearance of its existential instan-

tiations, it is difficult to understand why one would even set out for an endeavour on such conflicting foundations. Then again, it is precisely through this relentless work of a convinced Platonist, yet believing materialist, in developing his idea to its clear consequences, that its ultimate inconsistency comes to appear – exactly by trying to make it a consistent system.

Apart from this brief discussion of Badiou's ontological primacy and the resulting questioning of the necessity of his Greater Logic, *Logics of Worlds* nevertheless proposes a host of valid and fundamental concepts, like the revisions of the subjective formalisms and forms of change, transcendental organisation of appearing and logics of worlds, points and their treatment by subject-bodies. We will revisit – and, indeed utilise – some of these concepts in the following chapters.

Since the above critique concerns Badiou's assumptions of both foundation and necessity of most of *Logics* and tries to point to some of their problems, any specific critique of the concepts and mechanisms of the Greater Logic would not really change the more fundamental issues with it. What we will try to do in Chapter 4 though is to sketch out a rudimentary model for thinking change that is based on fundamental ideas and parts of Badiou's system. It stems from my conviction that an explicitly materialist approach is necessary for an effective model of radical change and creation, where the capacity of transformation is founded in the world in which it unfolds whilst the very idea of the new world to come (its truth) is still founded in an extra-worldly event (the being of which can only be thought but not encountered in existence). In this conception, the capacity for materially effective change aims to be co-extensive with the subtractive thought that enables the dedication (fidelity) to it, which otherwise would be conceived impossible.¹³ We will unfold this thought after the following excursus.

13 Gillespie outlined this task, for his own, unfinished project as follows: “The goal, for a philosophy of novelty, is to determine the void beyond its empty designation as a mere name, and for this, something other than ontology is required. The movement beyond a ‘pure’ ontology will consist of making that indetermination of being determinant in and through the production of a truth ... It is at this point that a shift must be made from ontology as a foundation for Badiou’s system to a theory of the event and truth as the possible arenas in which a determination of the limits of any given system occurs. That is, the move beyond ontology will consist of various efforts to redetermine knowledge precisely at those sites where it encounters its own failures: that is, around the void of any given situation. And these redeterminations will not be the exclusive project of philosophy, but rather will occur in *specific* situations, in which knowledge and truth operate: politics, science, art and love.” (Gillespie, 2008: 61)

3

Excursus: Foucault's Problematisation of the Present

This chapter takes the form of an excursus from the main part of the thesis. It sets out to further clarify the notion of radical novelty and its creation by looking at a different inflection on the latter in the late work of Michel Foucault, and specifically his concern with experimental productions of subjectivity. Indeed, like Badiou the question of the subject is crucial to Foucault's account of change. We will come to understand that Foucault's notion of an experimental, counter-normative subjectivity is not straightforwardly connected to the notion of radical change that this thesis is concerned with, but that it shares the same impulse of transgressing established configurations of power and subjectivity. This shared focus on the subject as agent of change, and the practices it employs vis-à-vis a given worldly structure, will help us sharpen these notions – power structure, subject, agency, practices of freedom and change – and their interrelations in regard of the project at hand. It will be argued that Foucault's notion of the experimental work on one's self (on one's subjectivity) presents a crucial way of understanding the production of difference from within the worldly situation it is carried out. On the other hand, Foucault's work does not provide any clues for a conceptual foundation of an outside – or a proper ontological approach, allowing for a higher level of abstraction – and therefore precludes a notion of radical change going beyond mere modification of what already exists. In the end though, and with the consideration of Badiou's onto-logical system in the previous chapters in mind, we will come to understand that although (or perhaps precisely because) Foucault did not engage in arcane abstraction, his notions of experimenting, attentive and

self-determining subjects are ultimately what will help us to bring some of Badiou's abstraction back to the material, embodied realm of praxis.¹

Power and the subject

When approaching the question of change and radical novelty, it might be instructive to situate and scrutinise this operation in the field into which it intervenes: an always historically situated present, within history in general. Considering worldly situations as embedded in history – as historical – entails that every situation is to be seen as the dynamic *result* of historical processes. This simply means two things, first that there is no ‘natural’ or neutral situation, that what seems to be given as world is rather to be understood as produced. And second, that by analysing the movements and struggles that produce changes and differences throughout history, we might come to understand not only some of the forces of history and their agents that give form to a specific era but also some of the mechanisms and tendencies that are functional or are made use of across different times in history. In short, it is less the specific indexes of historical times that are of interest here but rather the shifts in how these times themselves were thought, made sense of and acted upon.

1 It is important to acknowledge why the work of Gilles Deleuze is absent from the discussion in this thesis, as it is more often than not his writing that is engaged with when it comes to notions of creation, actualisation of difference and the virtual.

First and foremost, my specific interest is to investigate the creation of radical novelty, which entails rupture and is dependent on an equally radical outside (or void). We can find in Deleuze, in this regard, a philosophy of immanent becoming – which does not at all rule out ways of thinking creation of novelty but does present us with a fundamentally different way of thinking about the creation of radical novelty.

Second, the choice to stage an encounter between Foucault and Badiou (however timidly) rather than between Deleuze and Badiou comes from the intuition that Foucault could, by way of this excursus, be a more explicit interlocutor for Badiou. For both Badiou and Foucault, but not for Deleuze, the subject takes up a pivotal position in their respective work, and it is the contrast in belabouring this central concern – philosophical conceptualisation contra theorisation via genealogical analysis – that makes them a more interesting pairing. Specifically, in Foucault's elaborations on technologies and care of the self can we find a resonance but also explicit differences with Badiou's truth procedure – especially when we look at what the subject actually carries out. It is really Foucault who can challenge Badiou on his contestable idea of putting forward a materialist thought, not least because Foucault, perhaps more so even than Guattari, was a non-philosopher. This challenge will not, however, take the form of a direct encounter – or engagement with Foucault's writings beyond this excursus – but rather will inform my attitude towards Badiou. Badiou's system will be probed in the spirit of Foucault, as it were. This will become especially apparent in the following two chapters.

The work of Foucault is of seminal importance in this respect, insofar as it can be understood to trace – in different historical periods and with shifts in methodological approaches and subject matters – the ways in which historical configurations acquired the appearance of internal coherence and consistency. For Foucault, what opened history to this kind of analysis was the notion of problematisation, the concern with “why a problem and why such a kind of problem, why a certain way of problematising appears at a given point in time” (Foucault, 1989a: 414). He states that the “development of a given into a question, this transformation of a group of obstacles and difficulties into problems to which the diverse solutions will attempt to produce a response, this is what constitutes the point of problematisation” (Foucault, 1989b: 421). The implication of this genealogy of problems is that it can make visible some of the forces that constitute a historical situation. It can do so by tracing backwards from manifest, diverse and often contested propositions of an era to their general form of problematisation, and from there to the practices or constitutive fields of action that tried to deal with the specific difficulties and uncertainties of their time. A problematisation then opens an indirect access to the understanding of the construction of a given situation by exploring the practices that try to intervene in and modify the ways this situation has been and is being produced, thus exposing these constitutive operations. For Foucault, such an historical analysis of problematisations is at once specific to the era under consideration and generalisable on the level of what acquired this or that historically unique form, that is to say in regard to the configuration of knowledge, power and ethics. Such diverse inquiries, he writes, “have their theoretical coherence in the definition of the historically unique forms in which the generalities of our relations to things, to others, to ourselves, have been problematized” (Foucault, 1997: 118-9).²

Now, on the basis of this genealogy of problematisation, Foucault describes the objective of his work – at least in retrospect – as “to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects,” and hence that “it is not power, but the subject, which is the general theme of my research” (Foucault, 1982: 208-9). The main fields of practices that he investigated all present

2 This is how Foucault situates his genealogy of problematisation within a wider philosophical ethos, which he sees introduced by the Enlightenment; see “What is Enlightenment?” (Foucault, 1997).

different ways of turning the subject into their object: the sciences (regimes of knowledge), “dividing practices” (normative discourses) and the ways one turns oneself into a subject (technologies of the self) (*ibid.*). Foucault’s analyses of how human beings – in different discursive practices and at various historical moments – have been objectified brought to the fore the respective and specific mechanisms of how these discourses exerted their force on (and thereby produced) the subjects they tried to grasp. In bringing to bear determining forces on the subject, such practices and discourses raise the question of power since they come to define and enforce what a subject can reasonably be, how it is to be understood, how it is to be governed and how it is to think of itself. Yet, the form power assumes vis-à-vis the subject is not some one-directional oppressive force but rather a formative process of relations of power that permeate and constitute the social body:³

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. (Foucault, 1982: 212)

With his approach of analysing power through the diverse forms of resistance against it and the antagonisms of strategies that find expressions in a situation, Foucault aimed to shift the focus from the manifestations of a given power structure towards the ways in which power is exercised. Asking how and by what means power is exercised brings into play the relations between individuals since we can speak of power only as that which structures or produces a modification in the field of possible actions. “In itself the exercise of power”, Foucault writes,

3 This understanding of power as a complex and productive discursive operation rather than oppressive force pure and simple is of course what Foucault is most well known for. For an exemplary elaboration, see his refutation in *The Will to Knowledge* of what he called, in regard to (post-)Victorian sexuality, the “repressive hypothesis” (Foucault, 1978: 10-3, 47-9).

is not violence; nor is it a consent which, implicitly, is renewable. It is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. (Foucault, 1982: 220)

Understood in this way, power relations are based on and require acting subjects in order to come to exist and exert their effects on the social network in which they find their material foundation: “Power exists only when it is put into action” (Foucault, 1982: 219). So, instead of conceiving of power as something that governs ‘from above’, Foucault urges us to understand power relations to be “rooted deep in the social nexus” (Foucault, 1982: 222), being based on the possibility to interact with, interfere in and modify the actions of others, “which is co-extensive with every social relationship” (Foucault, 1982: 224).

Power relations need therefore be understood as relations not between power and subjects but as relations between subjects where the form of these relations is both conditioned by the contemporary configuration of power and reproduces this arrangement of power in a more or less faithful/close manner. To produce such relations is what subjects do, and, indeed, what they are constituted by in that power subjects a human being by conditioning its possible fields of action – i.e. prescribing, to a certain degree, the possible ways for subjects to form and maintain these relations. Hence not only is power productive of the subject – the subject constituting “one of its prime effects” (Foucault, 1980: 98) – but it is also the subject which actualises and reproduces forms of power. Subjects “are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application” (*ibid.*). This last point – that individuals are vehicle, rather than points of application of power – is worth keeping in mind as it will form the kernel of the operation that re/produces the logics of a world in the model of creation developed in the following two chapters.

Agency

Foucault's analysis of power relations presents us, as one of its aspects, with a possible model of how power assumes structure, how a manifold of power relations are produced and upheld in the form of a historically specific configuration of power. In his conception of the subject we can identify something like an agent of history since only subjects actively articulate relations of power, embody them and thereby grant them material reality. So far however, this articulation has been framed only in direct relation (be that affirmative or negating) to existing power structures, to the configuration of power relations that have been productive of the subject by making it re-articulate the former. How are we then, within this conception, to think agency, the possibility of an act that is not exclusively (or even not at all) prescribed by dominant power structures and hegemonic discourses? That is to say a possibility of subjects being not merely "vehicles of power" but agents of something not already determined by a given power structure or established field of possibilities? It should be remarked at this point that the question of agency does not yet involve the notion of free will or self-determination, but simply concerns the general possibility of acts that are not entirely prescribed by the situation they are carried out from. Such an account of agency would allow for an understanding of how the production of power relations can become the locus of a mutual, interdependent development of power and subject, instead of a uni-directional determination of the subject by power. I would like to briefly discuss two related approaches to this question of a general possibility of agency before turning to Foucault's own trajectory that in some senses struggles with, but also anticipates and lays the ground for, aspects of both those approaches.

In the work of both Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler, we can find notions of agency that derive from a critical reworking of J. L. Austin's concept of performative speech acts, that is acts that do what they say, that allow us to do something by means of language. The following, brief outline of Derrida's notions of iterability and iterative citation does not directly connect to Foucault's work as it is discussed here but provides an important 'background' for understanding Judith Butler's own reworking (which follows after the brief discussion of Derrida) of Foucault's politico-ethical project.

In his essay “Signature Event Context”, Derrida formulates a critique of Austin’s speech act theory by problematising the latter’s central assumption that every performative utterance is to be issued within an ordinary, shared context. He identifies Austin’s trouble to account for unsuccessful utterances (“infelicities”) in the attempt to reduce, contain and exclude such infelicities as non-serious, parasitic uses of language. Derrida proposes that in order to grasp this general possibility for every speech act to fail, we have to understand this possibility of failure – of a signifier breaking with its context – as the very condition for language to operate, instead of detecting therein a problem of im/proper use of language:

Every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written (in the usual sense of this opposition), as a small or large unity, can be cited, put between quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion. This does not suppose that the mark is valid outside its context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center of absolute origin. This citationality, duplication, or duplicity, this iterability of the mark is not an accident or an anomaly, but is that (normal/abnormal) without which a mark could no longer even have a so-called “normal” functioning. What would a mark be that one could not cite? And whose origin could not be lost on the way?

(Derrida, 1982: 320-1)

Now if we understand such different contexts as embedded within a wider discursive framework, governed by a particular configuration of power, one could counter, or relativise, that although contexts are being broken all the time, these shifts are still operating within discourse and therefore according to its immanent power structure. So whilst the sense of an utterance changes when it crosses contexts, the different meanings of this utterance still make and produce sense according to the structure of discourse and power in order to remain legible – otherwise they would be, precisely, non-sense.

But when we move from difference constituted by shifts across contexts to difference within the originating, ‘proper’ context, Derrida points to a more fundamental erring of signifying form from both its referent and its intention. With

what he terms “iterability”, Derrida describes the inherent possibility of every utterance to never fully succeed in the citation (repetition) of a mark:

This iterability (iter, once again, comes from itara, other in Sanskrit, and everything that follows may be read as the exploitation of the logic which links repetition to alterity), structures the mark of writing itself, and does so moreover for no matter what type of writing (pictographic, hieroglyphic, ideographic, phonetic, alphabetic, to use the old categories).” (Derrida, 1982: 315)

Even if we assume that an act of reproducing power is determined by power, and that such an act would be intended to fully affirm the current power structure, Derrida’s iterability points to the necessary possibility inherent in language (and indeed in every form of act and experience)⁴ for such citational ‘reproductions’ of power to stray from and miss their intention. Iterability thus conceived could be read as a weak form of agency in that this fundamental feature of language and discourse – its iterability – prevents power from being reproduced self-identically.

Then again, from the perspective of subjective agency, this inherent erring from prescription and intention does not present much of a possibility for directed differing (or strong agency), since the erring of the citational act is completely independent of its specific context and intention. Although it requires a context to operate, the differing operation entertains no functional connection with both global situation and subjective situation or intention because it is the citational exercise of language itself that intervenes in – and with complete indifference to – a given context and intention. This missing interface to the differing operation precludes any navigational employment of such operation by a subject. This is to say that with iterability, because it is intrinsic to the citational practice of language, speaking subjects introduce modifications into discourse without having any influence on the direction or orientation of those modifications.

4 “I will extend this law [of the structural possibility of every mark to be severed from its referent and intention] even to all “experience” in general, if it is granted that there is no experience of *pure* presence, but only chains of differential marks.” (Derrida, 1982: 318; my addition)

In short, Derrida's conception of every mark and utterance being able to break with its originating context, as well as the inherent impossibility of any such utterance to identically repeat or cite its referent, allows us to account for the evident modifications that any configuration of power undergoes without those modifications being determined by the power structure they 'cite' from. But in respect of agency, iterability contributes little to an understanding of the possibility, foundation or mechanism of acts that are not completely determined by a given configuration of power, since iterability operates indifferently to any given context and thereby forecloses any way of employability— the erring in the iteration happens by itself and independent of any intention and context.

In her work on gender performativity, Judith Butler picks up Derrida's notions of iterability and iterative citation and brings them to bear on Foucault's conceptions of power and discourse. Butler's concern is to show that gender is not a natural, neutral and unproblematic category, that there is no such thing as gendered essence. Instead, she argues, we need to understand gender as discursive effect of the ritualised repetition of norms, which is to say that only through such repetition do we gain a sense of gender identity. This conception is very close to Foucault's understanding of power being productive of the subjects it regulates, but further specifies it in regard of Derrida's iterative citation in that power structures must be understood to be upheld only through their compulsive repetition – perpetuating their normative presence in the form of dominant citational chains. Butler terms this discursive operation *performativity*, which “must be understood not as a singular or deliberate ‘act,’ but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names (...) not as the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names, but, rather, as that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains” (Butler, 1993: xii).

If performativity is not an act that originates from a subject but denotes instead the reiterative power of discourse which produces and enables the subject, what does this mean for the subject's capacity to act? How are we to think agency within this framework of performativity? Butler argues that it would be a mistake to construe the subject's constitution by discourse as its complete determination by the latter, which would result in the foreclosure of agency tout court (Butler, 1999: 182). Rather, she writes:

... when the subject is said to be constituted, that means simply that the subject is a consequence of certain rule-governed discourses that govern the intelligible invocation of identity. The subject is not determined by the rules through which it is generated because signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. In a sense, all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; "agency," then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition. (Butler, 1999: 185)

Subjectivation thus understood does not happen through – and is therefore not determined by – a singular founding act (once and for all, as it were) but rather in the iterative process of signification which a subject cannot but enact and so gains recognisability and intelligibility as a subject. It is for this reason that we can speak of the subject as an effect of its performative enactments of the norms of a given configuration of power/discourse. According to Butler, agency has to be located within this reiterative process of signification and is by consequence entirely “immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power” (Butler, 1993: xxiii). Agency would then be the volitional interference in, or play with, the citational process whereby repetition is made to coincide with alteration and resignification: “The critical task is, rather, to locate strategies of *subversive repetition* enabled by those constructions, to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity and, therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them” (Butler, 1999: 188; my emphasis). Subversive repetition would aim at displacing the very norms that enable subjectivation under a given discursive configuration, thereby opening the possibility for these contested norms to be negotiated and transformed.

Now, as a conception of agency that is situated within iterability and is entirely immanent to power/discourse, what can be considered as its scope? How much acting and doing, especially doing differently, can it allow? Does this immanence to power not inherently determine the subject in its capacity to act, despite Butler’s arguing to the contrary? Whilst she makes a convincing case for the subject not being directly determined by norms but rather enabled by the iterative processes

that nonetheless form and frame the subject in relation to those norms, Butler arguably focuses too exclusively on normative terms and categories (in regard of their resignification) and pays less attention to the broader discursive prescription understood as the field of intelligible possibilities. Normative terms and categories can be understood as local or specific determinations within the broader, global field of discourse. It is then this localisation of norms within the general regime of intelligibility that poses a constraint on the efficacy or scope of Butler's subversive repetition, since the latter works on locally specific expressions of a global way of making and enforcing sense – however incomplete this regime of intelligibility is, or can be, expressed as a whole.

Whereas such a regime of intelligibility surely allows agency to unfold according to Butler's conception, it must also be understood as that anonymous force of power/discourse that compels any resignification of terms to settle tightly within and, most importantly, according to, the general intelligibility of a given power structure. Any given configuration of power, conceived as a (more or less) total, multidimensional space of intelligibility, delimits a space of possibility in which terms can be resignified locally without necessarily propagating difference beyond such local realms, where global tendencies stay undisturbed or get even enforced by discursive resolutions (be they emancipative or oppressive) of embattled terms and categories.

Agency conceived within the process of performativity can then be considered to have subversive effects only insofar as it lays bare the normative force of hegemonic discursive terms and the inherent constructed-ness of every signifying category or index within discourse. Although it can thereby provoke the negotiation and local resignification of normative terms and categories, there is no further conception (and, as we will come to understand, no conceptual foundation) for the production and incorporation of difference beyond those challenged terms, beyond their local scope.

Subversive resignification merely employs established – however marginalised – categories against their normative function within their context and in that sense can be understood to be more of a 'troubling non-compliance' on a local level than producing difference beyond this limited scope. Performativity affirms the efficacy of subjective agency in regard of normative terms within the general

configuration of power and discourse but it is not clear where difference – as that which introduces change into the incessant reproduction of discourse and power – could come from or be founded in.

In this sense then, Butler's conception of agency as subversive resignification faces two critical problems or restrictions: First, it considers only the local scope of normative terms without accounting for a broader notion of change; broader in the sense of not merely concerning the former's potential resignification within a given historical situation that can easily accommodate such local modifications, but one that intrinsically effectuates change on that global level of a situation (at the level of what I have called general intelligibility). Second, subversive resignification (which is really the opening or provocation to renegotiate the signification of a given term) misses a foundation for the difference that would be instantiated by such a process. Butler does not clearly elaborate how or from where this difference is supposed to emerge but seems rather to entrust performativity an always positively productive capacity to propagate and effectuate reevaluations of norms on the level of power/discourse in general. A more expressed foundation of difference is necessary for a model of agency, on one hand, since a model is expected to give a complete (however hypothetical or speculative) account of what it sets out to model. On the other hand such a foundation – in either sense of material for or operation or methodology of construction – would be helpful to gauge the scope of change this model of agency allows for.

The intention of this brief digression (from Foucault) into Derrida and Butler has been to lay out a different but related approach to the question of agency at a point in our discussion of Foucault's conception of power relations where the latter appeared to come up against a problem, namely of how to account for the possibility to act without being completely determined by a given power structure. Foucault himself proposed that the key for non-determinacy is freedom, without which power would not be possible – this notion will be explored in the following section. Within his extensive work on power though, the notion of freedom appears rather sparsely and late, and is built, as we will come to see, on a vague conceptual foundation. This might explain why Butler (besides others) chooses a different route to tackle the question of agency, namely her own reformulation of Foucault with the help of Derrida. As has been shown above, Butler's conception of agency comes with its own problems or restrictions, which concern the

scope of resignification as well as its foundation, more precisely the foundation of difference that subversive resignification claims to produce. These shortcomings effectively reduce agency to an operation of troubling non-compliance, of merely provoking a renegotiation of a normative term instead of conjuring a real capacity for change within the iterative operation that produces subject and power.⁵

Freedom

Returning to Foucault, how does he then negotiate the question of a subject being wholly determined by a given power structure? As mentioned above, it is the notion of freedom that ensures that the subject is never completely determined by a given configuration of power. In fact, for Foucault, freedom is the condition for power, for it to be exercised, and a precondition for power to be an operational category in the first place:

Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized. ... there is no face to face confrontation of power and freedom which is mutually exclusive (freedom disappears everywhere power is exercised), but a much more complicated interplay. In this game freedom may well appear as the condition for the exercise of power (at the same time its precondition, since freedom must exist for power to be exerted, and also its permanent support, since without the possibility of recalcitrance, power would be equivalent to a physical determination).

(Foucault, 1982: 221)

Freedom here is the condition for a meaningful differentiation between “physical determination”, or slavery, and power as a more dynamic interplay between the subjects it produces and their reproduction of it. Subjective agency – the subject’s

5 Notwithstanding this critique of Butler’s conception of agency, her work did provide an important intuition for my conception of a world (in Chapter 3 and 4) through the understanding of power as a complex network of relations of power that derives its material, worldly reality from the compulsive, iterative reproduction of a given (normative) power structure.

capacity to act not entirely determined by a given power structure – can then be understood to be enabled by this freedom, and enacted in form of a conduct, as Foucault terms it. To conduct involves both a mechanism of coercion (the normative side of power) and of acting according to a field of possibilities at a distance to this normative force (freedom as capacity for free action).

Before discussing this exercise of freedom though, the notion of freedom itself needs to be unpacked a little further. Foucault gives us almost no clues beyond the sentences cited above, which makes this task more of an interpretation than a close reading.⁶ If freedom presents or opens “a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized” (*ibid.*), this field of possibilities is to be understood as an outside to a given power structure, which is why it can enable various conducts and modes of behaviour that are not determined by this power structure, that manifest a recalcitrance without which “power would be equivalent to a physical determination” (*ibid.*). This field of possibilities is also located, qua possibilities, within the wider field of discourse, since a possibility is necessarily something that can be comprehended, or simply, uttered, in order to be taken as a task and realised. Therefore freedom, like power itself, is situated within discourse. Whilst power continually weaves discursive entities and formations into a network of normative power relations, freedom is the space containing those discursive formations not yet included in the power structure. Freedom, then, can be understood as that space within discourse which is not yet stratified by power, rather than a transgressive force or a radical outside to its discursive, worldly situation. This is to say that the discursive situation presents the horizon of possibility for this freedom, or for every act that embodies or exercises this freedom. Although this notion of freedom successfully establishes a space outside of power whilst being situated on the same plane as the latter (providing a strong foundation for agency), we can see therein a certain delimitation of freedom by discourse, since the space and horizon of possibility is established by discourse, regimes of knowledge, ways of understanding and approaching the world and oneself.

6 In *The Use of Pleasure*, for example, Foucault devotes a chapter (Foucault, 1985: 78-93) to the discussion of freedom in classical Greek thought and we can find in this historical analysis some inspirations for his own conception. These elaborations should nonetheless be considered primarily within the analysis they are carried out in, since they do neither present a part nor readily fit into Foucault’s own, slightly more abstracted conceptual edifice around power and the subject.

For Foucault, this idea of delimitation of freedom by discourse would probably make no sense, rather discourse should be understood as enabling freedom in relation to power in the first place. The demarcation of the space of freedom by discourse becomes intelligible as a problem only once we shift and expand the object of transformation – that which is acted upon and transformed through subjects' capacity to act – from power relations within a power structure to the world as such, of which discourse presents, in Foucault's edifice, the broadest expanse of intelligibility. This shift is required if we want to think the creation of radical novelty, its foundations and operations of instantiation, once we understand radical novelty as that which is precisely unintelligible before its instantiation. Now even though his account of freedom (and the concept of agency we can derive from it) falls short in regard of this more global scope, it would not do justice to Foucault to close the case on him just yet, since the transfiguration of the given field of possibilities ("the present") is what his late work around ethics and technologies of the self is focused on – practices he considers as exercises of freedom.

Experimentation

Freedom is the ontological condition of ethics. But ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection. (Foucault, 2000b: 284)

Freedom, again, is not only the condition for power to be exerted but also for the subject's capacity to act in difference to a given power structure. The actualisation of this capacity to act freely, Foucault says in regard of Greek antiquity, is itself "an ethical problem ... ethical in the sense in which the Greeks understood it: *ethos* was a way of being and of behavior" (Foucault, 2000b: 286). To problematise freedom through ethics means to engage in the quest for a way of living that takes its rules not from any given power structure but instead from an experimental practice that aims at establishing such rules through its own problematisation of the present. To give form to freedom then requires work on one's self, one is to

analyse, reflect and change one's ethos – one's relation to the world and oneself expressed as a way of living. It is not merely a matter of self-awareness but of:

self-formation as an “ethical subject,” a process in which the individual delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal. And this requires him to act upon himself, to monitor, test, improve, and transform himself.

(Foucault, 1985: 28)

This work on the self can be understood as a limit-attitude that consists in the analysis and reflection upon the limits of ourselves, and a practical critique of a possible crossing-over, an experimentation of going beyond those limits of what we are today. Such a practical critique “has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them” (Foucault, 1997: 118).

In face of the subject's determination by power, ethics presents precisely not a ‘way out’ of determination altogether but a practice that constructs the terms (or determinations) for the subject by that subject's situated problematisation of the present. Instead of simply accepting and enacting dominant norms, the subject decreases its determination by power through the experimental construction of rules that increase its self-determination. In that sense, “ethics can be a very strong structure of existence, without any relation with the juridical per se, with an authoritarian system, with a disciplinary structure” (Foucault, 2000a: 260). It is in this trajectory that we can understand Foucault's subtle shift from freedom as “field of possibilities” to freedom as practice or exercise, where the ground of one's actions is neither dictated by power nor given by freedom in the sense of a field of possibilities untouched by power (but still somehow prescribed, by discourse). Instead, the basis of one's actions is constructed by the subject from within, but with a reflected distancing to, established discourse and power. This reflected distancing is an exercise of freedom in that a subject takes determina-

tions by power and transforms them into its own rules of conduct (self-determinations) through the act of critical reflection – a mode of reflection that distances its subject from immediate immersion within power relations, thereby enabling perspective, reflection, and modification of these relations. The enactments of the subject's rules of conduct then result in difference and liberty expressed in form of a way of living.

How then are we to think such exercises of freedom? In what way does the problematisation of the present feed into the experimental task of going beyond the limits this present imposes on us? And how can this experimental practice be understood to construct the rules for the way of living it gives form to? The operational core of this experimental practice is constituted, in Foucault's terms, by technologies of the self. These technologies "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault, 1988: 18). Technologies of the self are themselves situated within a broader ethical practice of the cultivation and care for the self, since it is only through taking care of oneself that one obtains and comes to employ these technologies.⁷ Care of the self implies labour, focussed concern and attention, and generally entails a host of directed occupations, the common goal of which "can be characterized by the entirely general principle of conversion to self" (Foucault, 1986: 64). Such rejoining, reverting to or reviewing oneself means to break free from dependencies and enslavement (or, subjection) by acquiring mastery over oneself, a relation to the world and one's self that enables defining – and is dialectically developed on – one's own rules of conduct.

7 For the most part in his late work, Foucault concentrated on ethical practices in Hellenistic and Roman culture and investigated specifically the shifts those practices underwent in relation to shifts of the major aspects of ethical concern – ethical substance, mode of subjectivation, self-formation and telos (Foucault, 1985: 26-8; Foucault, 2000a: 263-5). This voluminous work is beyond the scope of this brief overview to be considered in its detail and will only be selectively referenced for the sake of a more focussed and brief discussion of the technologies of the self, since the latter can be considered as the central practices and exercises that establish the basis for free action. For an in-depth genealogical account of the cultural and philosophical settings of the technologies of the self, see *The History of Sexuality*, Volumes 2 and 3 and Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France from 1981 onwards (particularly *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*), as well as Pierre Hadot's *Philosophy as a Way of Life*.

In his analysis of the Stoic technologies of the self, Foucault points out three main aspects: disclosure of self, examination of self and conscience, and *askesis*. In writing about one's self – in the form of notes, letters, treatises, by keeping a notebook and so forth – one describes and relates the experience of oneself, disclosing one's self to oneself. Examination of conscience can be seen as an administration of one's deeds, often at the end of a day, where one considers how what one was going to do corresponds with what one did, both in order make adjustments to and reactivate one's rules of conduct. Ascesis is the self-forming activity by which one becomes an ethical subject; it “means not renunciation but the progressive consideration of self, or mastery over oneself, obtained not through the renunciation of reality but through the acquisition and assimilation of truth” (Foucault, 1988: 35). For such assimilation of truth to contribute to self-formation, it has to become part of oneself, be transformed into one's principles of action. But how is truth acquired and transformed into rules of conduct? Foucault puts together a range of activities in relation to true discourses (*logoi*), which are attitudes and exercises that aim at being attentive and conscious about oneself in connection to the world, to have ready the fundamental rules of life and the intellectual exercise of appropriating truth,⁸ through listening, writing and self-reflection. He remarks though that:

it is not a matter of discovering a truth in the subject or of making the soul the place where truth dwells through an essential kinship or original law; nor is it a matter of making the soul the object of a true discourse. ... On the contrary, it is a question of arming the subject with a truth that he did not know and that did not dwell within him; it involves turning this learned and memorized truth that is progressively put into practice into a quasi-subject that reigns supreme within us. (Foucault, 2005: 501)

Through the exercises of meditation (*melete*) and training (*gymnasia*), one then enacts and puts to test – and is in return able to revise – the truth one acquired, memorised and transformed into one's rules of conduct. Whereas in meditation

8 Truth here refers to the essences of a master's teachings in the philosophical schools. As is briefly elaborated below, truth is not simply a category of knowledge but is to provide the foundation for one's actions.

we find the reactions to imaginary events to train thought, *gymnasia* concerns training in real situations which is “to establish and test the independence of the individual with regard to the external world” (Foucault, 1988: 37). In what Foucault calls the control of representations, one is to pay attention to if and why one is affected by things represented, with the aim of finding “in these representations, as they appear, the opportunity for recalling a number of true principles concerning death, illness, suffering, political life, etcetera. By means of this reminder we can see if we are capable of reacting in accordance with such principles” (Foucault, 2005: 504). When truth is acquired and transformed into the guiding principles of one’s conduct by these exercises, what does such truth consist of, and where is it acquired from? According to the Stoics, truth is not to be found in the self but is “in the *logoi*, the teaching of the teachers” (Foucault, 1988: 35). These *logoi* are to be understood not merely as true propositions or axioms but to have material existence, in the sense that they bring about actions, and not only conviction. In this sense, *logoi* “must actualize the soundness of action rather than the perfection of knowledge” (Frédéric Gros in Foucault, 2005: 528). Ascetic exercises are then the practical, material work through which one is to assimilate and inscribe *logoi* in the self as the rules of one’s conduct.

We can begin to see how the problematisation of the present, in the form of technologies of the self, can contribute to a possible crossing-over of the limits presented by that present. A problematisation makes the conditions we are situated in – which, in more or less direct ways, exert normative power on our subjectivities – and particularly our relation to them, into the object of heightened attention, reflection, experimentation and transformation. The capacity to go beyond the limits of the present resides in the independent and self-devised construction, enactment and revision of one’s rules of conduct through a set of practices that are nonetheless situated within but exercised in reflected distance to the conditions of the present. In this diverse and interrelated nexus of practices, we can find a foundation for agency that is more attuned to the complexities of its present, which presents a more effective and reliable conceptual basis for self-determined action. In a more abstract way (fashioned to the generic language of the preceding chapters), technologies of the self can provide a foundation of subjective agency that is immanent to concrete situations yet not determined by the latter’s specifics, since conduct itself is a result of, or founded in a *mode of problematisation, reflected*

difference and transformational experimentation that is working on, rather than being determined by a specific power structure.

Radical change

In what way is this discussion of Foucault's conception of the subject and power, and his genealogical analysis of technologies of the self, illuminating for the question of radical novelty and its creation? As has been argued above, Foucault's late work can be understood to lay a sound foundation for agency, for an acting not determined by a given power structure or an existing discursive situation altogether. This provides us with a conceptual basis for mechanisms of enacting and producing difference, difference in regard to the present in which such practices, as well as its subjects, are situated in. What then is the relation between difference thus produced and radical novelty? Whilst Foucault, with his subtle shift from freedom as field of possibility to freedom as exercise, can indeed claim to have found a set of practices that produce difference from within power/discourse that possibly go beyond the limits of this same discursive world, the discussion of what such difference manifests, 'how much' of a difference it constitutes and what this difference is founded on is left open. In short, we get no clear guidance from Foucault whether independent, different ways of living constitute real novelties – instead of, for example, merely different subjective perspectives on an otherwise unchanged world and thereby still abiding by its general structure of power/discourse – and where such novelty (if that's what this difference constitutes) is founded in or derived from,⁹ since Foucault only discusses the 'how' of their production.¹⁰

9 A critique that is brought forward by Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens in a less balanced way (see Feltham and Clemens, 2005: 4).

10 Foucault never really posed or engaged with these questions of scope, degree or radicality of difference, nor with the question novelty. We cannot really extract from his oeuvre if and how one's independent ethos, attitude or way of living affects, transfigures or changes the broader worldly setting of power and discourse. It feels necessary to remark though that in the last lectures at the Collège de France before his death, he started to discuss the Cynics' understanding of the care of the self as something that not only changes the conduct of individuals but also changes the general configuration of the world – which could have marked another shift in his investigation, in the direction of the effects of independent conduct on the world. In his manuscript he writes: "... the most important historical core of Cynicism is clearly expressed: namely, that the true life will be the life of truth, which manifests the truth, which practices the truth in the relation to self

The approach of Foucault is of course very different from the present investigation into creation. Namely in that he sets out from archaeological and genealogical analyses of shifts in the mechanisms that make individuals subjects, and from there how subjects can exercise freedom in constructing their own rules of conduct independent of those former mechanisms of coercion. The approach in this thesis is to start with positing that radical novelty can indeed come to exist and that it has its foundation necessarily outside of the situation – which means also the discursive – it started out from. The task then is to formulate both the ontological model that allows for the act of creation’s foundation and the mechanisms or procedures that can bring about, through that act, radical novelty. The aim here is to think, in a generic conception, the most ‘radical’ or ‘pure’ form of creation – that which brings radical novelty into existence *ex nihilo* – in order to provide thought with a kind of generic anchor against which we can gauge practices that intend to instantiate radical change or genuine creation. That the conception of creation be generic means that it must be thought – constructed – without recourse to history, case studies, or any specifically situated account but that it also be formulated so that it might be ‘applicable’ (albeit in the form of an abstract concept) in whatever specific worldly setting, present or future.

There is a slightly seductive simplicity inherent in historical analysis or situated accounts of change in that we, today, already inhabit the outcome, or its remnants, of past revolutions or historical ruptures, and are therefore in the position to easily manufacture pseudo-linear/causal explanations about how change came about in retrospect. From the perspective of a rupture yet to come, or whose process of rupturing has not started yet, it is much more difficult (if not outright impossible by definition) to foresee how such a break might even be possible, be imagined, approached and carried out. This is one of the reasons why we need a generic conception of radical change and novelty, since the apparent continuity of history (however constructed and only retrospectively available) cannot, by definition, help us in approaching and carrying out the task of radical change, that is, creation in the strongest sense. In the end, a generic conception of creation that is based on the notion of the outside is completely devoid of established narrations

and others. So that the objective of this life of veridiction is the transformation of humankind and of the world” (Foucault, 2011: 315). Unfortunately, Foucault could not return to or engage further in this investigation.

and connectors for affective identification. In its proof though, that change is not only possible out of any situation but that this change is radical in the sense that it has the power to establish a genuinely different world, we can find a strong reasonable basis for the belief and hope that is needed to take on the task of creation.

How are we then to think difference as radical novelty? What does genuine difference manifest itself as, what is its scope ('how much' difference does it constitute) and what is this difference founded on (what is its 'origin' or generative procedure, as it were)? These questions have been discussed in the framework of Badiou's onto-logical system and for now, we have to postpone the complete argument to Chapter 4 and 5, where we will come to see that the instantiation of radical novelty is equivalent to the creation of a new world altogether.¹¹ This means that genuine difference manifests itself as radically different logic of a world, and therefore as a new world *tout court* – it does not really make sense to speak of radical novelty as object, a set of specific relations, subjective perspective, orientation or set of rules, and so on. Therefore, its scope is always a world – the global set of relations, or more precisely the logic that organises the latter, rather than local modifications thereof – since for it to be instantiated, a genuine novelty demands the logic of the given world to be transfigured beyond its inherent possibilities. The foundation of radical novelty, as has been argued in the introduction, needs to be located outside the given world and its logic, outside the given configuration of power/discourse. Novelty thus understood is not thinkable within the ethico-politics of Foucault, since he does not include the thought of an outside in his oeuvre. On the other hand, we can understand his coupling, in the technologies of the self, of problematisation (of the present) and ethical practice (of constructing one's rules of conduct) to produce possible trajectories towards the outside. By establishing self-determination as the ground of one's actions, one attains (at least potentially) a capacity of unfolding new spaces of intelligibility

11 This can be grasped intuitively when trying to think if and how one would be able to apprehend a radical novelty within the world that pre-dates it, from which its creation started out from. It would be impossible to understand this thing as either new – instead merely indexing it to an appearance that comes closest within the established system of understanding, or logic, of this world – or as a thing at all – when the logic of the world can neither accommodate this thing nor 'fake it' into something similarly and already established in appearance. A genuine novelty can only exist in a world whose logic allows it to be accommodated, a world in which such novelty has a proper, sensible place. Therefore, this world's logic, in order to shelter a genuine novelty, needs itself to be radically different from the one its creation started from.

not conceivable in advance – not conceivable in the sense of both intelligibility and possibility. It is the self-devised rules and a recalcitrance towards the given and established configurations of power that allows such routes to the outside to acquire orientation and substance – routes that then venture beyond the present situation and draw out new spaces of intelligibility manifest in new forms of life that reconstitute their discursive foundations.

Regardless then of Foucault's missing foundation for radical difference and novelty, or an account of the outside, he does provide this immensely useful framework for a practice that is both abstract and immanent enough to principally work towards an outside – regardless of the latter not being embraced by Foucault himself. In this respect – of the centrality of practices a subject comes to employ to effectuate change (in regard of itself, its immediate context or the world at large) – we can see a close similarity to Badiou's project, where we find the subject at the heart of the post-evental truth procedure – even though the latter's subject is a much more abstract and generic conception. To bring these two (hardly compatible) strands into a closer relation is the undercurrent of the following, last two chapters.

4

Materialist Abstraction

So far, in the first two chapters of this thesis, we discussed Badiou's onto-logical system in *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds* so we can now gauge its aptness as explanatory framework for the procedure of creation of genuine novelty. It became clear that Badiou's work is of primary importance due to its conception of radical change founded on the irruption of the ontological void into existence and carried out by subjects born from such an event. What is also evident is that the issues raised in the discussion of Badiou's system now complicate the undertaking of employing the latter as foundation for a model of creation. To summarise, these issues unfold in the following way. In his ontological framework, Badiou does not give any account of how a specific situation comes to be, how it acquires its structure, which is more precisely the omission of the question what exactly does the counting that produces consistent multiplicity from inconsistent multiplicity. The only specified formalism that has traction on the formation of situational structure is that of the subject but the obvious problem here is that the subject requires a situation that pre-exists it. This is both because the event that brings forth the subject can only break into an existing situation (it necessitates a site) and in turn, the subject can only unfold its fidelity, in form of a generic procedure, on the basis of this already existing situation (since there needs to be some structured multiplicity to evaluate and ultimately force the resulting generic subset into). When shifting to Badiou's supplementation of his ontology with the logics of appearance, the unresolved issue of what produces ontological structure extends to the veritable impasse that worlds and their transcendental organisation loose their sound foundation in ontological situations – since it is the latter

that appears as world, or is indexed on a world's transcendental. His postulate of materialism – “every atom of appearing is real” (LW: 218), meaning that every atom of appearing is the appearance of an element of a multiple in being – is insufficiently founded, if not invalidated, because the multiple composition that is to appear misses itself the *functional* operator that would allow it to come to be in the first place. Since this postulate is the central and exclusive point of connection between being and appearing – or more precisely, this connection takes the form of a prescriptive relation *from* being *to* appearing (ontological primacy) – we end up with the two spheres of being and appearing completely detached, even though conceptualised in a highly analogical fashion. A further problem raised by the operation of retroaction (which posits that true change in a world effects the ontological multiple composition of what is changed in appearing) is that in absence of a functional operator of count in being, retroaction presents the only viable or explicitly formulated operation of construction of ontological structure. This though violates Badiou's fundamental assumption that always “being has the last word” (LW: 302), that there be a primacy of ontology over logics of appearance, since in this way, ontological structure would be sculpted from operations in appearing.

Polemically speaking, the process of formation of both situations and worlds is addressed by Badiou either in a completely subtracted manner (although equally simple and concise), as in *Being and Event*, where it is founded on a functionally inexistent operator and misses any elaboration regarding its presumably more complex enactment in existing worlds. Or it is elaborately discussed (yet still completely abstract), as in *Logics of Worlds*, where it is exclusively founded in and ultimately incongruently linked with the ontological model of the earlier book – as has been argued in Chapter 2. In a way, Badiou's work can be seen as polarising between being either simple, concise but ultimately unfounded and subtractive beyond any chance of material effectiveness, or being allegedly materialist, overtly complicated and again inconsistent in its foundation (since being and appearing ‘lose touch’), whilst still being incapable of accounting for the actual complexities of both how worlds come to appear and what allows for things to happen in those worlds.

Finally, as has been touched on above, the central notions for the procedure of evental change – the event itself and by consequence the subject too – are without actual foundation in Badiou’s system as it stands. That he does not provide an explanation how an ontological situation actually comes to be, what exactly performs the operation of counting that lends structure to the presentation of being, leaves us with three options in regard of his system’s viability. First, the complete system as such must be considered unfounded and therefore be suspended until such foundation is provided. Second, the fact that the subject is the only formalism that Badiou explicitly conceptualises to possess efficacy on both ontological multiple composition and transcendental organisation should be taken to its last consequence, meaning that the subject is ultimately at the heart of how a world is established – and potentially, via retroaction, the latter’s situation in being. (This goes obviously against Badiou’s fundamental decision of being having primacy over appearing, as well as it renders the concept of being-as-being itself somewhat redundant, at least to some degree.) Third, that there be some active force in the realm of being that generates ontological situations by way of forging consistent multiplicity out of nothing, out of inconsistent multiplicity. (A proposition that is incompatible with Badiou’s notion of ontology and his materialist commitment, if not outright absurd in itself – by implying a necessary, God-like entity.)

Faced with these options, how are we now to conceptualise, in a *generic yet materially effective* way, the general possibility of genuine novelty and a framework and embedded formalism of the procedure that brings such novelty about – with still some support from Badiou’s central concepts? The argument of the remaining chapters will take the path of the second option, namely that the subject must be understood as the active force in the process of both the constitution and radical transformation of worlds, but will also reconsider the notion and scope of being as such by negotiating aspects of the third option. The main issues to be addressed in the development of a conception of creation are then the following. First, staying true to the commitment of thinking creation as instantiation of radical novelty, an account has to be given as how the outside of any given world can be thought – since the process of creation is necessarily constituted at least in parts by what is not of its world (the outside or void), as has been discussed in the previous chapters. Second, we require a conceptual framework of the generic space in which the procedure of creation takes place, understood as both, worlds creation intervenes

in (starts from) and worlds that it creates. Third, the procedure of creation itself has to be outlined – a procedure that is understood, in some aspects close to Badiou’s intuition, as subjective formalism. And last, we need to secure the material efficacy of the subjective formalism in regard of the world it is enacted in.

Let us consider the role of Badiou’s onto-logical system for the following argument, or more precisely which concepts of it will be sustained. On one hand, we want to uphold the basic structure of Badiou’s procedure of change: that from the irruption of an event, the outside (void) of a situation is exposed, which then determines the constitutive moment of the faithful subject and the post-evental ‘truth’ the latter labours to unfold through an infinite procedure (enquiries, generic subset, forcing) thus creating a new situation. What allows for radical novelty in Badiou’s system is the rupturing of a situation’s consistency by the event’s exposition of the situation’s foundational void. If we now want to maintain the basic idea of this procedure of creation – the subjective formalism of the faithful subject and its immediate conditions of possibility – whilst transposing it onto a materialist foundation, then the evental exposition of the void (or inconsistency) needs to be accounted for on an existential level. Therefore it is the inexistent of a world that needs ‘material’ foundation and its evental exposition that needs to be explained.

On the other hand, if we abandon the idea of ontological primacy, what does this entail for the concept and scope of being-qua-being? What is arguably lost is the directed and necessary correlation from being to being-there.¹ For if we grant that material reality is not in any way prescribed by being, then every effort of thought to make statements about being on the basis of what exists – arguably by way of abstraction or subtraction – is again enforcing the very idea that there is a *being of* a thing or world. This resurrects the idea of a superiority of being beyond what-is-there and therefore – by way of implicitly pointing to the incompleteness of the material existence of a thing or world – re-establishes an essential relation from the (complete but inaccessible) being of a world to that world’s (incomplete or partial) material existence. The problem lies in this very attempt to think a determining *being-of* of any entity or world, instead of thinking being as such,

1 The problem of ontological primacy in Badiou’s work is elaborated in the discussion of *Logics of Worlds* at the end of Chapter 2.

being-qua-being. The idea of ontological primacy is inextricably bound up with the thought of a being-of. Hence we can infer that it makes little sense to think the being-of of a world or entity but only to think being-qua-being, without prescriptive correlation in the direction of being-there or existence. The scope of being-qua-being is then rather to be concerned with the existential possibility of any being-there in general and not with thinking some being-of of whatever instantiation resulting from such possibility. In short, faced with the impasse in Badiou's system to think being as the *prescriptive* foundation of existence (since there is no actual operator that would be able to instantiate a situation in, or presentation of being), the decision taken here is to think being as that which opens the very possibility of material existence as such, without any prescriptive relation.

Materialist abstraction

In the following part of this chapter, we will attempt a reformulation of the notion of being and its relation to existence on the basis of Quentin Meillassoux's work in *After Finitude*. With a minimalist conception of being and a materialist foundation of the nonexistent, the aim is to formulate a rudimentary model for the procedure of creation under the banner of what could be called *materialist abstraction*. The idea here is to start, on one side, from actual, material worlds from which the generic possibility of change and radical novelty can be thought by way of abstraction, and on the other side from a more radical, minimalist notion of being that aims to simply guarantee (materialist) objectivity. Materialist abstraction then designates, in the first instance, the movement that allows the nonexistent of a world to be thought on the basis of abstracting from this world – which is to say on the basis of a generic thought of worlds.²

Returning to the idea of thinking genuine change in a generic yet materially effective way, we have to clarify two points to begin with. First, how we are to think the *generic possibility* of radical novelty with the foundation of Badiou's system suspended? In which realm of thought is the foundation of novelty and creation to be situated? Second, how can this generic foundation be ensured to be *materially effective*?

2 This generic conception of worlds, as we will come to understand, finds its foundations in immanent material practices that re-produce a given world – materialist abstraction is therefore considered materialist because it abstracts from these immanent practices.

The first point is an open question again, given the ramifications of Badiou's omission to provide an operational foundation for the presentation of being ('what does the counting?'), namely the loss of foundation for both, the event and the subject, and the constitutions of worlds. Instead of trying to somehow fix Badiou's system and maintain his idea that the foundation for change and creation is to be found in the realm of being (that it should just be conceptualised some different way), we shall try to base this foundation in the realm of being-there, in the sphere of material existence. Now, to perform for a moment a rhetorical shift from an utterly subtracted to a completely immersed approach, a situated foundation in a specific, actual world would of course assure that whatever is enacted under the idea of change has immediately to do with the world within which it is immersed in. The problem here is, unsurprisingly, that we not only loose the generic aspect that would allow us to speak of a model in the first place (that is, a thought applicable to many situations) but also that we are without criteria as to what radical change hinges on or what the novelty it creates is drawn from, as it were.

This would also run against our initial reasoning, which stated that radical change or the creation of genuine novelty is dependent on an outside of the worldly situation that is transfigured by such a radical transformation. Therefore, if the foundation of genuine novelty is to be based in being-there, the only way to conceptualise it generically is to perform an abstraction from and across the worlds in which it is to operate. This approach we will call *materialist abstraction*.

The second point, to ensure the material efficacy of a concept of genuine novelty founded on materialist abstraction, requires two assertions: First, that this sort of abstraction is indeed generic, meaning that it breaks away enough from its material specifics in order to be transferable to other, different situations whilst still allowing connections 'back' to specific points of any world so to be relevant and effective for the enactment of the generic concept. Second, since we posited that the criterion for genuine novelty is that it derives from something that hitherto did not exist, materialist abstraction is required to provide a legitimate conception of the nonexistent of a world. Which is to say that we have to be able to explain, on the basis of an abstraction from what exists, that which does not exist, and how it can come to exist.

On the basis of an objectively existing universe – provided by a minimalist conception of being – it is through our discussion of Foucault’s late work (in the previous chapter) that worlds will be understood to be re-produced by subjects, and further, that this process of re-production can be geared towards the production of an event that founds the creation of a new world. The experimental practices that Foucault investigated, by which subjects attain (partial) self-determination vis-à-vis otherwise determining power structures, combined with the thought of the outside in the form of the nonexistent (derived from Badiou), will provide the underlying intuition for the development of a rudimentary model of the procedure of creation. Before launching into this development though, we will turn to a last primary text that will allow us to drastically simplify the notion and scope of being.

Meillassoux’s minimalist conception of being

The reasons for invoking Quentin Meillassoux’s *After Finitude*³ here (to outline them quickly in advance), are to gather support for a radically minimalized conception of being, to purge the idea of ontological primacy (of what we called being-of) from such a conception and to found in being thus conceived the objectivity of (material) universes. It is important to note though that Meillassoux’s own project is not (primarily) concerned with these issues – his is the question of how to reintroduce the thought of the absolute into contemporary philosophy – but, as will be argued below, we can employ some of his arguments to our own ends.

The task Meillassoux sets out with is the rehabilitation of Locke’s theory of primary and secondary qualities, which quickly turns into the particular problem for contemporary, post-Kantian thought to think the in-itself and, indeed, of the nature of thought’s relation to the absolute in general. The problem unfolds around the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, where secondary qualities arise from my relation to the thing and primary qualities are supposed to be inseparable from or residing in the thing itself. For post-critical thought,

3 The following summary of *After Finitude* has been compiled with the help of the transcripts of Meillassoux’s lecture “Time without Becoming” (Meillassoux, 2008b) and the Speculative Realism conference (Brassier et al., 2007), specifically the latter’s Q&A session.

the latter presents an absurd and “indefensible thesis because thought cannot get *outside itself* in order to compare the world as it is ‘in itself’ to the world as it is ‘for us’, and thereby distinguish what is a function of our relation to the world from what belongs to the world alone” (AF: 3-4). Meillassoux terms this orientation *correlationism*, which expresses and deems insurmountable the idea that ”we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other” (AF: 5). What is thereby lost to correlationist thinkers is “the *great outdoors*, the *absolute* outside of pre-critical thinkers: that outside which was not relative to us, and which was given as indifferent to its own givenness to be what it is ... that outside which thought could explore with the legitimate feeling of being on foreign territory – of being entirely elsewhere” (AF: 7).

The argument against correlationism and the subsequent demonstration of thought’s ability to again think the in-itself and the absolute begins with the formulation of a paradox for correlationism. It consists in the fact that science is able to make statements about the universe before the emergence of human consciousness, even anterior to any form of life on earth, or the accretion of earth itself. Meillassoux terms this reality anterior to human thought *ancestral* and the material that indicates the existence of such ancestral reality an *arche-fossil* (AF: 10). That an ancestral statement of modern science presents a paradox, or indeed non-sense, to correlationism is because the referent of such a statement cannot possibly have been correlated to thought, since the referent pre-dates the emergence of human consciousness and is therefore anterior to givenness. The only way correlationism can interpret such ancestral statements is in admitting that the latter “is true, insofar as it has its basis in an experience which is by right reproducible by everyone (universality of the statement), without believing naïvely that its truth derives from its adequation to the effective reality of its referent (a world without a givenness of the world)” (AF: 16). If we want to uphold the ancestral statement’s strong realist sense, that it be taken literally, the question shifts to “the conditions under which an ancestral statement remains meaningful ... the condition that legitimates science’s ancestral statements” (AF: 26-7). What is at stake here, and what presents the urgency of Meillassoux’s argument for this thesis, is to grasp the possibility, or indeed the capacity, of thought “to access *an absolute*, i.e. a being whose *severance* (the original meaning of *absolutus*) and whose separateness

from thought is such that it presents itself to us as non-relative to us, and hence as capable of existing whether we exist or not” (AF: 28).

Meillassoux’s route for thought to access its outside, or an absolute, proceeds by way of embracing the ultimate consequences of an argument which correlationism itself employs against thinking the in-itself: the notion of *facticity*. Facticity concerns the invariants that determine the world’s logicality and representation, and that govern its existence. These invariants constitute a fact and not an absolute, since we can only describe them but cannot find either their necessity or their contingency. Meillassoux writes that:

What I experience with facticity is not an objective reality, but rather the unsurpassable limit of objectivity confronted with the fact that there is a world; a world that is describable and perceptible, and structured by determinate invariants. ... what is operative in facticity is not knowledge of the actual possibility of the wholly other, but rather our inability to establish its impossibility. ... Facticity is the ‘un-reason’ (the absence of reason) of the given as well as of its invariants. (AF: 40-1)

Now, instead of concurring with correlationism in that facticity would present thought with its intrinsic limitation in the quest for ultimate reason, Meillassoux proceeds by employing facticity as the key for thought to gain access to an absolute. His move is to absolutise facticity, to “convert facticity into the real property whereby everything and every world *is* without reason, and is thereby *capable of actually becoming otherwise without reason*” (AF: 53). By ascribing unreason to the things and world themselves, facticity becomes thought’s proper knowledge of the absolute. The absolutisation of facticity results in the absolute impossibility of a necessary being or entity, and of a necessary reason for things to be the way they are. This allows Meillassoux to demonstrate the absolute necessity of everything’s non-necessity, or what he terms *contingency*, as the only necessity alone. He calls the absolute that is rescued by this demonstration ‘hyper-Chaos’, an extreme form of chaos “for which nothing is or would seem to be impossible, not even the unthinkable” (AF: 64).

But how are we to assert, on the basis of such a hyper-chaotic absolute, the legitimacy of ancestral statements and of the in-itself? What we know about this absolute is that contingency is necessary, and that contingency alone is absolutely necessary. But in order for a thing to be contingent, Meillassoux maintains that it cannot be anything whatsoever, which means that we have to establish “the constraints to which an entity must submit in order to exercise its capacity-not-to-be and its capacity-to-be-other” (AF: 66). He goes on to demonstrate that any entity must be non-contradictory (otherwise it would be both what it is and what it is not, thus defying contingency), and that it is necessary that something exist – and that this existence takes place in the realm of the in-itself, rather than in the correlational realm of the ‘for-us’. As Meillassoux writes: “Since contingency is thinkable (as an absolute), but unthinkable without the persistence of the two realms of existence and inexistence, we have to say that it is necessary that there always be this or that existent capable of not existing, and this or that inexistent capable of existing” (AF: 76). In seeking a positive determination of the realm of the in-itself (vis-à-vis absolute hyper-Chaos), the argument proceeds from the necessity of contingency to what Meillassoux terms the ‘principle of factuality’, meaning that facticity itself cannot be thought as fact, that “only the contingency of what is, is not itself contingent” (AF: 80). This part of the argument secured the conceivability of the thing-in-itself, but what is still to be achieved is the validation of mathematics as the appropriate means to make statements about this in-itself. Meillassoux devotes one chapter to refute the objection that if not only things but also physical laws are contingent, then the laws that govern our world could change at any moment and that we would already have noticed this – or, rather than having noticed it, to have been eradicated by such a cosmological event. Contingency seems to be contradicted by our experience of the stability of the laws of nature. Meillassoux approaches the problem via a reformulation of Hume’s problem (the problem of demonstrating that the same effects will always follow from the same causes): “*how we are to explain the manifest stability of physical laws given that we take these to be contingent*” (AF: 91-2). He goes on to refute what he labels the ‘frequentist implication’, an objection which states that if the laws of nature were contingent, then they would change *frequently* for no reason. What is identified as the problem with this implication is that it builds on probabilistic reasoning, and therefore can be disproved by showing that probability needs a numerical totality from which a possibility can be selected. Such a totality can

only be found within the universe (in what can be experienced) but cannot be extended or applied to the universe itself (what can be thought) – a reasoning that follows from the detotalisation of number that Cantor introduced under the name of the transfinite.⁴ What this means for the question of the stability of our world and its physical laws in the face of contingency is that by detotalising the possible we are “able to think the stability of laws without having to redouble them with an enigmatic physical necessity” (AF: 107). This removes another obstacle for thinking the principle of factiality, by way of demonstrating that from the contingency of the laws of nature (or the universe) does not follow any necessary instability of those laws (or the universe).

The more fundamental movement in the argument though is the incorporation of the mathematical, which Meillassoux brings to bear fully in the last chapter of *After Finitude*. There he returns to the question of the conditions of meaning for dia-chronic statements (designating not only ancestral statements but also including events “ulterior to every terrestrial-relation-to-the-world”; see AF: 112) and more precisely to the capacity of scientific discourse to give meaning to this possibility of the dia-chronic. It is the development of modern science, i.e. the mathematisation of nature after Galileo and the decentring of thought in relation to the world after Copernicus with which science acquired “the possibility of transforming every datum of our experience into a dia-chronic object” (AF: 116). According to Meillassoux, the historical paradox of science’s revelation that “what is mathematizable cannot be reduced to a correlate of thought” (AF: 117) is that what after Kant became known as ‘the Copernican revolution’ designates the exact opposite, thereby undermining the Galilean-Copernican revolution and foreclosing the import of its speculative character into philosophy. He traces this catastrophe back to what he terms the ‘de-absolutizing implication’: the idea, after Kant, “that *there is an irrefutable inference from the end of metaphysics to the end of absolutes*. Since science has convinced us that all metaphysics is illusory, and since every absolute is metaphysical, then it follows that, in order to think science, we must renounce every form of absolute” (AF: 125).

4 We encountered and briefly discussed Cantor’s implication for Badiou’s thought in our chapter on *Being and Event*, and Meillassoux designates a section to discuss his own take of Badiou’s discussion; see AF: 103-8.

Meillassoux then outlines the task of contemporary philosophy to finally return to and embrace (in opposition to correlationism) the Galilean-Copernican revolution, which consists in re-absolutising the scope of mathematics, without falling back on any sort of metaphysical necessity. This absolutisation of mathematics brings together two threads of Meillassoux's argument: The first deriving from the principle of factuality, stating that what is mathematically conceivable is not necessarily true but absolutely possible. The second point derives from the discussion of Hume's problem and concerns the necessity to establish the stability of the laws of nature as absolute in order for empirical science to be actually possible. This is thus “a question of establishing that the laws of nature derive their factual stability from a property of temporality that is itself absolute, which is to say, from a property of time that is indifferent to our existence, viz., that of the *non-totalizability of its possibilities*” (AF: 127; my emphasis). We are confronted with a two-fold absolutisation of mathematics, of ontical and ontological scope. The *ontical absolutisation* concerns the contingent yet absolute possibility of every entity to exist once it is mathematically describable. The *ontological scope* addresses “*the structure of the possible as such*, rather than ... this or that possible reality” (ibid.), asserting the necessary un-totalisability of the possible as such, via the absolutisation of the Cantorian non-All. Meillassoux concludes this outlook by stating that:

What must be demonstrated at this juncture is that only those theories that ratify the non-All harbour an ontological scope, while those others, which allow for some sort of conceivability of the All, would be merely ontical in scope, since the totality which they invoke, or the non-totality which they refuse to ratify, betray the fact that they are describing a totalizable entity, or a totalizable world, as opposed to the un-totalizable being of worlds. (AF: 127-8)

After Finitude sparked a veritable discussion after its publication and although Meillassoux's most rigorous readers were quick to pinpoint the book's most difficult and problematic arguments, many of the efforts to severe one of its fundamental assumptions or methods often seem themselves to be based on specific projections brought to the reading of Meillassoux's argument than are manifest in the latter itself. These concern, amongst others, the exact scope of Meillassoux's concep-

tion of being and ontology,⁵ the supposed mismatch of spheres of problematisation and explanation,⁶ his alleged confusion of pure and applied mathematics and the general disqualification of his materialism or realism.⁷ Some of these points have been addressed subsequently by Meillassoux or are still under discussion.⁸

- 5 Adrian Johnston ostensibly reads too close a similarity into the “teacher-student duo” (Johnston, 2011: 103) of Badiou and Meillassoux in that he applies Badiou’s ontological system (via some shared foundations in set theory) to Meillassoux’s entity- and law-less notion of being. The issue here is that Meillassoux has a non-prescriptive conception of the relation between being and existence (he does not think any being-of, as we termed it earlier), or as Brassier notes in an earlier discussion: “unlike Badiou, [Meillassoux] does not characterize ontology as a situation within which the presentation of being is subtractively inscribed in such a way as to obviate any straightforwardly metaphysical or phenomenological correlation between thought and being” (Brassier, 2007: 45-6). Thereby Johnston’s argument that contingency applies to the entities or laws within a universe and therefore subverts the possibility of scientific statements (Johnston, 2011: 102-4) does not hold – since absolute contingency (or un-reason) operates on the level of universes themselves and not within them (see AF: 105-6 and Meillassoux, 2007: 64-5).
- 6 Alberto Toscano’s critique of Meillassoux’s argument for the absolute necessity of contingency hinges on an apparent misreading of its use of Cantor’s detotalisation of infinity. When writing that “Meillassoux poses the ontological presuppositions of correlationist epistemology, but resolves it by logical means” (Toscano, 2011: 91), Toscano seems to miss the point that the logical means employed (the possibility of probabilistic reasoning) are themselves conditioned (and ultimately refuted) on the *mathematical* foundation of Cantor’s transfinite set theory.
- 7 Peter Hallward states that “if Meillassoux can be described as a ‘realist’, then, the reality that concerns him does not involve the way things are so much as the possibility that they might always be otherwise” (Hallward, 2011: 131). Whilst Meillassoux’s absolutisation of contingency surely insists on the possibility that any universe – which also Hallward seems to not demarcate enough from realities within such a universe – might be otherwise (see e.g. Meillassoux, 2010: 463), the crucial and indeed radical materialist claim of his argument is that material reality does exist in-itself, regardless how we try to think (or doubt) it. At the same time, Meillassoux’s intentions in *After Finitude* is not (rather obviously, in my view) to give an account of why the reality of our present world is the way it appears to us or to provide some anchorage for changing a specific ‘contingent’ situation like our world today. Against the latter accusation by Hallward, Nathan Brown points out that: “The obvious fact that *After Finitude* does not address possible ways of changing social and political situations does not imply that Meillassoux’s philosophy impedes or compromises our capacity to do so. A speculative demonstration that whatever-situation is contingent rather than necessary (despite its manifest stability) does not undermine the political urgency of working toward the contingent stability of *another* situation–toward just and equitable ways of structuring or distributing relations among the given” (Brown, 2011: 156). On a side note though, Brown himself seems to blur absolute contingency (which concerns universes) with more relative forms of contingency (which concern situations within universes) that have no absolute necessity but might be better understood in terms of general causal reasons like historical development or intended construction or struggle.
- 8 See for example his “Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition: A Speculative Analysis of the Meaningless Sign” (Meillassoux, 2012).

The points of *After Finitude* that are of central import for our following engagement are not amongst the fiercely discussed ones – the latter usually circling around the notion of contingency as the destructive rupturing and becoming of a radically different universe for no reason, or as the (misunderstood) possibility of laws or entities changing within a given universe for no reason. What is most useful for us in Meillassoux’s work is that it allows, via facticity and the principle of factuality, to think the universe and our world to have an objective material reality. Nathan Brown summarises this as follows: “It is this *generic* principle of materialism—the existence of matter ‘beyond the consciousness and sensation of man’—that the principle of factuality seeks to buttress by novel means, through a counter-intuitive argumentative strategy responsive to the effects of null traces whose displacements are refractory to common sense” (Brown, 2011: 161). The conception of being that ‘is behind’ this reality is so minimal that it is completely non-prescriptive – it constitutes, for no reason, a universe that is otherwise utterly severed or relieved from any doubling in form of a prescriptive ontological structure. The reason that objectivity of material reality (and a minimalist, non-prescriptive conception of being) is important for the development at hands is that it can provide the basis on which to think the nonexistent – a basis that seems at first unimpressive, asserting that material existence in itself is a non-negotiable fact, but as it became apparent during the engagement with *After Finitude* does indeed require an exceptional argumentative effort.

Rudimentary model of a framework and procedure of creation

In what follows, we will lay out a conceptual sketch of a rudimentary model for the foundations and operations of the procedure of creation. This model is inspired by and draws from our discussions of the systems of Badiou and Meillassoux and the late work of Foucault – although we will not always engage in the exact demarcations of the respective intellectual territories. The intention here is to outline a working hypothesis for the foundational framework and operations of creation in form of a coherent model that may come to find a stand on its own (once expanded with a more thorough argumentation).⁹ This sketch tries to clear

9 We will not be able to go beyond a preliminary outline of this model, as it would take a separate thesis that sets out with this task at its very beginning. The reason this thesis is not

and circumvent some of the problems raised by the impasses we encountered in the discussion of Badiou's system, particularly by taking a materialist approach (a foundation in what actually exists) and a minimalist notion of being, largely disconnected from the realm of existence (only connected by exceptions). It will do so by building on the previous discussions of the works of Badiou, Foucault and Meillassoux in the way that the latter are understood as depository of concepts and vocabulary, which will now be employed as either referential shortcuts (however specified or modified) or to span a conceptual space by composing these terms and concepts in specific ways. This also means that the format of this sketch explicitly requires to be read with the previous discussions in mind (and, indeed, it is for this reason that the rather technical exegeses – especially of Badiou – have been laid out in the detail they have). We will start with the conception of being and the ontico-ontological relation, continue to being-there and worlds within it, where the latter will be understood as depending on the reiterative efforts of subjects to sustain them and turn finally to the discussion of the nonexistent (its possibility within the proposed materialist framework), its eventual occurrence and the subjective involvement in the latter's unfolding.

Minimalist conception of being and the ontico-ontological relation

The fundamental issue with Badiou's system as it stands is that it thinks situations in being to prescribe, in a structural sense, worldly appearance without accounting how these ontological situations *de facto* acquire their structure – this is the unanswered question of what is doing the count that produces consistent multiplicity from inconsistency. As a consequence, any form of change becomes unfounded as well, since neither that which changes can be established from within Badiou's model, nor the active operator of change itself (the subject), since the latter is born exclusively from the event, which in turn requires (a site in) a situation in order to erupt (out of nothing) into being. But since we want to uphold, with Badiou,

that project is that the necessity for such a novel model can only be grasped after the kind of conceptual exegesis (and ground clearing exercise) that this thesis attempts. Indeed, the model itself could only have arisen out of the impasses we have encountered in the close examination of Badiou's work. The necessary challenge of a more thorough development of this model I leave for another time – for now this sketch shall suffice for giving a ground for thinking the procedure of creation of radical novelty.

that genuine change is necessarily founded in nothing within a world (the latter's outside or nonexistent) and that the subject is the active operator of such change, we need to account for the outside without invoking a conception of being that prescribes what appears as world.

We inferred from this that being needs to be thought as that which only provides the possibility for being-there to exist, without entertaining any further, prescriptive relation to this existence. The ontico-ontological relation envisioned here could be described as exceptional (not without allusion to Badiou's denotation of the event) in that being is thought to exclusively account for the genesis (and possibly the destruction) of existence.

In *After Finitude*, Meillassoux develops the argument that allows for such a minimal conception of being, as well as a bare and exceptional ontico-ontological relation, by way of establishing that what exists (as a universe) as contingent, and that this contingency is the only absolute necessity. The principle of unreason ensures for a minimal conception of being precisely by securing the ultimate ground of material existence in unreason rather than via an elaborate model that seeks to give the former's reason in a structural doubling (founded on nothing but also never instantiated) that is said to found and structurally prescribe what exists, as in Badiou's model. In Meillassoux, being takes the form of hyper-Chaos that, in a sense, can be thought to cause or instantiate (for no reason) existence as the definite, material existence we encounter – where the term universe delimits the totality given to our experience. There is no further correspondence between being and the existence it brought forth, other than the possibility (in its absolute, non-probabilistic sense) of being to destroy existence for no reason (from tiny alterations on a universal level – which nonetheless destroys the conditions of possible experience within it – to outright annihilation). In a sense, Meillassoux's minimalist conception of being liberates what exists not only from us in that it reinstates the in-itself and an independence of existence vis-à-vis our experience of it (against correlationism), but also liberates what exists from prescriptive ontology (like Badiou's) and from any ultimate reason for its existence and particular form.

We will designate as *universe* the totality of material existence that exists in-itself, which is given to us in experience and is validated, or in the process of validation,

by science as a systemic totality that is endowed with (some underlying) consistency and laws. The necessity that what appears in (and as) a universe to exist independent of us thinking it – that is to say objectively – is what Meillassoux establishes from the absolute necessity of contingency, since the latter can only be thought if there exist things that could also not exist, and inexistent things that could exist (AF: 76). That the universe's existence is indifferent to us thinking it means first of all that our access to it is no longer a problem of the correlationist 'for-us' – the dilemma that we can never step outside our thinking of the universe and things, resulting in our inability to say anything about the things in-themselves, separate from us. A universe therefore provides the foundation for any materialist orientation in thought, if we understand materialist thought as starting from actual, material existence.

In short, our access to the universe and the things-in-themselves can now be thought in what Meillassoux called the spirit of the Galilean-Copernican revolution, meaning that this access is no longer dictated by either short-circuited thought (correlationism) or inaccessible, prescriptive and ultimately inexplicable being (as with Badiou's ontology), and that making statements about the things-in-themselves is possible in the form of speculative advancements. The importance of proving the necessary existence of the objective reality in-itself lies in the implication that it is indeed the material universe – and not human consciousness, absolute being, or language, discourse, etc. – that provides the ultimate foundation of everything within it – including human consciousness and agency. It shifts the ground for thinking radical change within the universe to the generic conception of worlds within the universe.¹⁰

Worlds and logic

With the notion of the universe we designated the singular totality of material existence – vis-à-vis the non-totalisable hyper-Chaos of being. Within the universe an abundant multiplicity of worlds can be thought, where the latter are understood as local logical augmentations of the universe. A *world* delimits and

10 That radical change within the universe requires the generic conception of worlds and not of universes themselves is because alterations on the universal level arguably change (and thereby destroy) the very conditions of possibility for our life and experience.

endows this augmentation with an *immanent logic*, similar to Badiou's conceptual idea of worlds introduced in *Logics of Worlds*.¹¹ We can speak of augmentation here since a world adds a logical dimension to the material, objectively existing universe. A world organises itself around such a dynamic, multifaceted logic and can be seen as expressions of it, in the sense of Badiou's transcendental order. But contrary to the latter's conception, a world is 'onto-logical' only in the sense that it has an objective, material foundation in the universe (that derives from its contingency vis-à-vis being and not from a prescriptive being as in Badiou) and a self-generated and therefore immanent organisation or logic that makes a world appear consistent. The logic of a world makes sensible what exists and is organised as a world from within that world. That worlds are governed by an immanent logic means that they cannot be apprehended in a completely 'objective' way – in a sense they are conglomerates of entities endowed with primary and secondary qualities (in-itself and logical augmentation), to ventriloquise Meillassoux's invocation of Locke.

Worldly logic does not concern the same scope as universal laws since it is an augmentation of the latter's local supposition. In short, a world's logic acts as complex ordering principle according to which a world can be apprehended as consistent.

To assume the possibility of a multiplicity of worlds within the universe – and not only one single world – is a consequence of thinking a world as local augmentation of the universe. Rather than a container in which worlds can be accommodated, the universe is the material basis on which worlds can proliferate. Contrary to the universe, a world is capable of changing radically whilst leaving the material existence of the universe untouched – since the radical change of a world concerns its logical organisation, that which gives it form as world, within the material universe. Which is to say that a world can radically change without implying the destruction of the universe that provides the material foundation of any world (and with it the conditions of possibility of life and experience).

11 According to our earlier discussion of and issues with Badiou's model, it is necessary to dispose of his conceptual linkages between worlds and situations in being, that is to say to strip this conception of worlds from any connection to being that so problematically prescribe them whilst retaining their logical dimension and transcendental organisation.

Objects

What is ordered or situated by such logic are the objects of a world – which is precisely what Badiou argues in *Logics of Worlds*. In difference to Badiou though, we will understand an *object* to be ‘onto-logical’ (in a similar way to a world) in that it presents the conjunction of an objective entity of the universe and its logical localisation in a world. This conception of an object is very broad and generic, it simply consists of the conceptual pair of *objective referent* (universal) and its *logical localisation* (local, of a specific world). An object is therefore a worldly situated objective entity. An object can by extension also be thought to designate a composite of multiple objects that are internally related or localised (exposing an object-logic).

Relations

We asserted, with Badiou, that an object is localised or situated by the logic of its world. To be more precise though, the logic of a world should be understood as the complex, manifold network of the localisations of its world’s objects. A logic not only situates but also expresses and presents itself as principle of consistency ‘behind’ its world’s localisations. What then situates objects in a world in the first place? What puts a world’s objects into place and thereby creates the logic of that world? To localise something is to *put it into relation* to other distinct entities – different or identical in this or that sense and degree – and can therefore be thought as a ‘differentiating operation’. In difference to Badiou though, this difference is not understood to be founded in the objects themselves (their specific intensity of appearing that is simply evaluated) but actively produced by an *operation of localisation*. In that sense, relations can be said to be constitutive of a world’s logic, in that they make up a differential network with and across the objects they relate. Nevertheless, relations not only constitute a world’s logic, they are in turn also framed in their localising possibilities by what we can call their world’s *logical principle*, as well as by the universe itself. Since worlds are located within the universe, it is the material existence and the ‘inherited’ (locally supposed) laws of the latter that frame the localising operations and thereby make up the foundation of any world’s logic in form of universal laws. A world’s logic could be understood to *evolve* from the continuous interplay between the universally given – though

locally supposed and augmented – logical disposition and the incessant differentiations of objects effectuated through operations of localisation, of relating.

Types of localising operations: from modification to radical change

If we understand the operation of localisation (of relating objects) as on-going and inherent aspect of what makes a world, how are we to conceptually distinguish such vital differentiations – that affirm and uphold the world in which they operate¹² – from radical change, which transfigures or destroys a world by transforming its logical principle? This question implies that we understand the operation that localises objects in and as a world as being comparable to, if not the same operation that gives form to or creates a new world – by relating objects under a newly evolving logic. Since a new world – *qua* world – requires a logic, a relational network of localisation (indeed a topology) we can nominate localisation as the effective operation of creation and radical change. But if the act of relating is the basis for both, upholding the logical principle of a world and its destruction and transfiguration, where do we draw the line or define a tipping point between these two poles or intensities of localisation (between mere modification and radical novelty)?

Badiou himself addressed this question in the book ‘The Four Forms of Change’ in *Logics of Worlds*, where he basically proposes a range of intensities of change having minimal to maximal consequences for a world. We recall that a *modification* designates a change of minimal intensity, which is to say a local reconfiguration without effects for its world’s global logic. *Facts* and *weak singularities* have stronger effects in their occurrences but still affirm, by and large, their world’s logic. In Badiou’s vocabulary, only a *strong singularity* amounts to the disruptive force of an event. Adapted to our model, modifications (and every other form of change weaker than an event) alter the relational network of their world in accordance with the latter’s logical principle, which is to say that modifications operate within the framework of possibility dictated by their world’s logic. On the other side, radical change or genuine creation alters the logical principle of a world itself, that

12 This upholding of a world is to be understood in the sense derived from Foucault, as has been developed in Chapter 3. We will shortly clarify how it is subjects that incessantly perform this operation of localisation and thereby reproduce a world’s logic.

is to say they change the very way a world is made to appear or be understood as coherent, making sense, etc. This form of change renders the world it arose from as incoherent, untenable, but only in the process of creating a new relational network of this world's entities, building a new understanding and sense of what is there as new world. Creation therefore concerns operations that effect a world's logic on a global scope – or indeed exceeding what the latter demarcates as its global scope – in contrast to the local scope of modifications. This is to say that the new, coming logical principle resides outside the thinkable as it is delimited by the logic of the pre-evental world. To speak in Badiou's terms, radical change transforms the criteria of transcendental evaluation, it creates a new set of criteria that re-evaluate its former world into a genuinely new and different world.¹³

The event and the nonexistent

Radical change, as we saw above, not only modifies local relations but changes the way and *principle* according to which a whole world is configured or related, that is, how it makes sense or appears as coherent world. Since it transgresses the possibilities of a world delimited by the latter's logic, the creative power of (that which starts a procedure of) radical change cannot derive from the logic of the world it disrupts but only from its outside, from what *inexists* within its world. This notion of the *event* which exposes the nonexistent of a worldly situation is clearly Badiou's, only that now, after our issues with his model, we are to obtain the foundation of the nonexistent from the conception of worlds themselves, rather than from the foundational void of prescriptive being. We recall that Badiou gives two not entirely compatible definitions of this 'source' of evental novelty. First, in *Being and Event*, it was the *indiscernible*, an uncountable part of a situation, that erupts from this situation's evental site, from its specific void. The notion of the indiscernible gives an ontological account of that which only the extra-ontological intervention of an event can bring into being. Then, in *Logics of Worlds*, the *nonexistent* is understood as the minimally existing part of an object-multiple (again constituting an evental site), which is to say that part of the object's multiple-being

13 However, since the operation of transcendental evaluation is again ultimately based on the assumption that ontological multiples appear (ontological prescription), this reference to Badiou's notions might be of restricted use here.

that does not appear in the world, since its degree of appearing is minimal. The inexistent in Badiou is therefore an onto-logical concept, in that it is based on and prescribed by the ontological multiple-composition of the worldly objects it concerns. In short, both, Badiou's indiscernible and inexistent, rest on the problematised assumption that there be a primary ontological situation that only then appears as a world. With our departure from any 'being-of' of what exists, both Badiou's linkages to the outside (of either situation or world) have been rendered dysfunctional, which forces us to establish the inexistent through our own conception of worlds.

We asserted that a universe possibly hosts a multiplicity of worlds that could be understood as local augmentations of the universe. The immediate, although incomplete, consequence of this conception is that if a world is a local augmentation of the universe, then there might always be something of the universe still outside such a world – or something that inexists within that world. This statement though ignores the more interesting case of the outside or inexistent not merely being some entities of the universe hitherto undiscovered – and henceforth to be included in a new, possibly simply expanded world – but of the inexistent, in the sense of logically incompatible objects, 'existing' amongst the objects of this world. The idea here is to say that the inexistent concerns an objective referent¹⁴ of an object that is part of the world under consideration but inexists in it because it cannot be localised *according to that world's logic*, it demands another logic for it to have a proper place in a (new, different) world. It is the incompatibility of different logics, the already operating one, and the one to come, that makes an inexistent object not find a place in the world it nonetheless shares its objective referent with – through an existing but discordantly localised object.¹⁵ The intuition behind this idea of the inexistent being somehow partly included in a world, or rather think-

14 We discussed the objective referent of an object briefly above. It designates an entity of the universe without or subtracted from any worldly localisation, in a sense it can be understood as the raw matter of an object, the matter an object localises in its world.

15 In a way, this approach to the inexistent is inspired by both of Badiou's notions just discussed, in that it borrows from the indiscernible the idea that it irrupts as the specific void of a situation's site (otherworldly logic), and from the inexistent that there is something 'in' an already existing object itself that can come to appear as disruptive force to its world (as of yet incomprehensible, otherworldly localisation of a known objective referent).

able within it, comes from the idea of a universal entity being shared or referred to by more than one world – entangled objects, as it were.¹⁶

Simply put, for every object in a world it is possible that its *objective referent*, its raw, universal matter, could be localised as a different object in another world, according to another logic. This ‘other-worldly’ localisation of the objective referent of any object can be thought in two variants. Either two or more worlds that exist concurrently in the universe share some of their objects’ objective referents. Or these worlds can be thought to exist in succession to each other, in which case the sharing of an objective referent is exercised *over* time rather than *in* time. For a physical object, this would mean that the same material entity could be the objective referent for many objects because every world that includes that entity locates it differently in the relational network that makes each world’s logic. This is to say that every world makes sense of that entity in its own and genuinely different way, since each world is governed by (and generative of) its specific logic.

Our foundation of the nonexistent is then made possible by two steps: First, with the notion of the object as the conceptual pair of objective referent and logical localisation – where logical localisation attests to the contingency of any object’s localising logical principle and world. Second, with the foundation of the material universe (via Meillassoux) that is referenced, or localised, in the form of objects in possibly multiple worlds. On this basis, we can think the nonexistent as possible linkage to the outside of a world.

16 This idea of some worlds sharing one objective referent could be termed *entanglement*, which must be thought as a plausible property of worlds – a property that is not necessary but speculative. The crucial point of entanglement lies in its extension to the *entangled site*, an evental site of one world that is (at least partially) entangled with parts of at least one other world – either in or over time. It is important to note that the entanglement of two or more worlds through a site still *upholds the strong meaning of the nonexistent* as concerning the radical outside of the logic of its concerned world. That some objects of one’s world share their objective referents with different objects in different (present or future) worlds still means that the latter, ‘other-worldly’ objects are inaccessible, indiscernible and therefore properly nonexistent from within our world of reference. In that sense, the thought of entanglement is both speculative (since it is founded on the speculative assumption of many worlds within one universe) and abstract or generic, which means that even though we can think entanglement, we can only ever make sense of that part which is part of our own world, according to its immanent logic. With this conception of an inter-worldly shared objective referent, derived from the idea of entanglement, it becomes possible to think radical novelty and creation erupting out of nothing, that is from the nonexistent.

The evental site

When an event happens, the inexistent of a world is exposed to this world at a specific location, the evental site. In *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou has presented the inexistent as a non-appearing part of an object's multiple composition, which is, as such, 'hidden' in the world by that object – constituting the evental site. In what ways do the localisations of the inexistent's irruption – Badiou's (logical) evental site, our notion of entangled objects – condition the inexistent? Strictly speaking, they cannot impose anything on the inexistent itself, since the inexistent is by definition thought to be properly outside the frame of reference or sense, outside of the logic that makes the world it inexists in intelligible. Instead, what the thought of the evental site localises and defines is simply the worldly place and context of the *evental exposition* of the inexistent. Therefore, the inexistent attains some specificity only *retroactively* by having been exposed by an event at a certain place in the world, by having erupted from what only afterwards can be nominated as its evental site. What then is this specificity that the absolute nondescript generates when being exposed by an event, *at a site*? In Badiou's terms it is the truth of its situation, importantly though the exposition of this truth does not take the form of a direct and conclusive presentation but rather the form of subjective incorporation into its infinite generic procedure, or truth procedure. That an event erupts from a site more generally means that the object that the site presents (within the relational topology of its world) in some way conditions or orients the following radical transformation of its world. The post-evental site, in this sense, contributes to an *orientation* in the procedure of creation that follows its evental inception.

The evental trace: foundational indetermination

What founds and upholds a generic procedure, in Badiou's system, is its connection to the *evental trace*, the trace an event leaves in the world after having vanished. How can we think the evental trace on the basis of the concept of entanglement developed above? We have seen that when the inexistent breaks into existence via an event, it does so at a site in the world. Since the inexistent concerns an otherworldly localisation of an objective referent of its site-object – that is, a radically different localisation in regard to the logic of the existing world – and since the site-object and its world are yet to be transfigured, the only thing we can state

in general about the effect of the appearance of the inexistent on its site-object is that the latter becomes topologically undermined, unhinged from its secured localisation in the existing world, as it were. The exposition of the inexistent at its eventual site demonstrates, to the subjects capable of recognising it as such, the non-necessity (or contingency) of the worldly logic that cannot accommodate the now exposed inexistent in its topology. We can therefore understand the eventual trace as the *topological indetermination* or opening, which an event inflicts on the localisation of its site-object. This topological indetermination of the site is apparent only for a subject that has registered the event, either directly or through its trace. Whereas the world, would it become aware of the unhinged site, would merely need to reinforce its logic onto the site in order to secure the status quo, the task of the subject is more demanding. In stark opposition to the reactive reincorporation of the site into the existing world's logic, the subject sets out to create a new world – that is, a new logical organisation – from the now indeterminate ground of the site, a world whose logic allows a proper place for the inexistent.¹⁷ In Badiou's terms, the eventual trace cannot itself ignite such a truth procedure, the latter only commences with a subject's recognition of the event and its fidelity to the eventual trace. In order for the event to bear consequences for its world, a *subject* has to enact what – under the condition of the subject's fidelity – the uncertainty about the site-object's placing, and consequently its world's logic, imposes upon the subject through the eventual trace. The subject recognises an inconsistency, that something of the world became unhinged, and acts accordingly.

Enactment of a procedure of creation: redefinition of the subject

When it comes to the enactment of – or incorporation into – a procedure of change, Badiou's stance is that the procedure advances by the treatment of what he calls points in the world. We recall that a point presents “the crystallization of the infinite in the figure … of the ‘either/or’, what can also be called a choice or a

17 Badiou remarks on the necessity of a new worldly logic (or transcendental regime) in the aftermath of an inexistent's exposition: “If *an* element finds itself absolutely modified in its transcendental degree of existence, then slowly but surely the transcendental regime in its entirety will no longer be able to maintain its rules. Everything will change: the comparisons of intensity in appearance, the existences involved, the possibilities of relations, etc. There will be a rearrangement of the transcendental regime, and therefore, strictly speaking, a change of world.” (Badiou, 2003b: 131)

decision” (LW: 400). Although such binary decisions certainly present, as it were, the most recognisable milestones of a procedure of genuine change, they arguably do so mostly retroactively. Which is to say that the fact that a point has been treated, that a grand decision has been taken, might in many cases be a construal driven by the desire for historical indexes and might not very well reflect the more complex and local struggles that, only after a while, seem to constitute such a singular decision. How then are we to think such local and perhaps more complex struggles within a procedure of change?

The principal idea here is that the procedure of genuine change – which we will term *procedure of creation* – relies on the same operations that establish and uphold the logic of a world, which we touched upon above and in our discussion of Foucault’s notion of power relations in Chapter 3. What establishes or makes a world? To recapitulate: that a world exists is the effect of a part of the universe’s augmentation with a specific logical organisation. A world’s logic is generated by acts of localising objects in relation to each other, by the act of relating. The manifold and complex network of relations that evolves from those constitutive acts of relating is what we called the logic of a world, whereas we named logical principle of the world what guides or delimits the operations of relating. To relate is immanent and vital to a world, it presents the active and infinite process that ensures its existence – put bluntly, if this process stops, the world it affirms will lose coherence and come to an end too. In this sense, crucially, a world can only exist if there are agents that uphold it by continually reproducing the world’s logic, by keeping it alive, as it were. Against Badiou,¹⁸ who reserves the term subject exclusively for those agents in a world that are born out of an event (faithful, reactive, obscure), *this leads us to redefine the notion of the subject as the agent that incessantly relates, localises, that puts things into place so to make the world logically coherent.* We could call this basic kind of subject an *indifferent subject*. The indifferent subject is a subject insofar as it relentlessly reproduces (with only slight modification, if at all) the world through repetition of its existing logic, according to the world’s established logical principle. It is indifferent precisely because of this consenting stance in the reproduction

18 We recall his insistence on the exclusive post-evental existence of the subject in *Being and Event*: “The ‘there is’ of the subject is the coming-to-being of the event via the ideal occurrence of a truth, in its finite modalities. By consequence, what must always be grasped is that there is no subject, that there are no longer some subjects. What Lacan still owed to Descartes, a debt whose account must be closed, was the idea that there were always some subjects” (BE: 434).

of relations, since the indifferent subject generates or modifies relations not in difference to but in accordance with the world's logical principle. A *faithful subject* is then (in loose and partial analogy to Badiou) a subject that generates relations in radical difference to the logic of its pre-evental world, by creating relations hitherto thought impossible. It thereby engages in the infinite procedure (in the sense of never being fully completed) of creating a new logic and with it a new world. The creation of a new world is indeed an infinite procedure, the faithful subject incorporates itself, as Badiou terms it, into a new present by partaking in such an infinite procedure.

Let us repeat the necessary steps in the operation of the faithful subject. A *faithful subject* is born out of the affirmation of an *event* and upheld by the faithful connection to the evental trace. In the world, the *evental site* gives an event its topo-logical context and in that way delineates what the event concerns – or simply ‘is about’ – by what a site shares with the *inexistent*: its objective referent. Through the site an event is endowed with some specificity, since it exposes the nonexistent’s objective referent it concerns, whilst at the same time inducing uncertainty about the site’s world, since this world cannot any longer give the site-object a secured, unequivocal place. We linked this topological indetermination – the thorn in the side of any given world - with the notion of the *evental trace*. A subject can be recognised as faithful only if it embodies this evental trace, wherefore the point of origin of a *procedure of creation* is precisely this emergence of a faithful subject from the evental site, induced by the event and upheld by the evental trace. In other words, a faithful subject can be considered to partake in a process of creation only as long as it affirms the mark of the evental trace (the having become indeterminate of the world’s logic from the standpoint of the nonexistent and its evental site). In being faithful to an event, a faithful subject affirms first of all the non-necessity of the world the event erupted from to be structured and organised the way it currently is, which is to say the non-necessity of its logical principle. The very principle of the world trembles. The faithful subject continues to enact the operation that makes it a subject in the first place, which is to relate, to generate logic. Just that now, being marked by an evental trace, these acts of relating or localising are not anymore performed in accordance with the logical principle of the pre-evental world but in genuine difference to it (introduced by the evental trace), which consequently creates a new logical principle and world.

How though are we to think this genuine difference to the existing logical principle that informs the creation of a new world? It is clear that this difference cannot be deduced from either the old world's principle (since there is no difference then) or the new logical principle, since the latter is precisely not yet in place – but is evolving with the infinite procedure of creation. Instead, we can understand the *orientation* that is inscribed in the procedure by the evental trace as that which produces in every act of relating the difference to an existing world's logic. The affirmation of an event and the marking of the faithful subject by the evental trace establish this orientation by spanning a vector away from the site-object – by negating the necessity of the latter's localisation and the logical principle that places it this way – and endowing it with a direction that results from the suspension of the site's secured location in the world by the indetermination the inexistent enforced on it.¹⁹

Although this conception is sound, it does little to clarify how exactly genuine difference expresses itself in the operation of relating, how this difference comes to be apprehended by the faithful subject who performs a re-relation according to it. To think this orientation as being established in a procedure of creation by the evental trace is therefore not enough, since it only tells us what we already assumed, namely that the inexistent instructs a procedure of creation to proceed 'anywhere but here,' according to some logic that is as of yet unthinkable. This leading 'not anywhere' should not be understood as an impasse (for thought as for practice), rather is it precisely how we can think this orientation, since it necessarily points to the proper outside of our world, an uncharted territory for which a different mode of navigation is required. Creative localisation happens for no necessary reason (to paraphrase Meillassoux) but still with the intention to create a new coherent world. We can infer from this that the enactment of a procedure of creation that is guided by 'anywhere but here' can only be *experimental*, since it lacks, as of yet, a (complete) system of reference as well as a logical principle for its localisations – this principle, in a way, materialises in the process from its own future. It can only decide on the ground, within its momentary situation and for every act of relating, how to proceed. Creative localisation proceeds through the affirmative power of specific negation: not like this and not according to the logic

19 This as of yet vague notion of orientation will be given more discussion in the following chapter.

that only allows this and nothing genuinely different. As part of a procedure of creation, the forging of a new relation is the expression of an experimentation of what – if ‘not this’ – this relation can be, and by consequence, step by step, how a logical principle concerning these relations would need to function.

But perhaps we are thinking the procedure of creation too rigid. We require the world that such a procedure creates to be genuinely new, to express a genuinely different logical principle from its pre-evental world, and that this transfiguration be connected to the evental trace (to what the event concerns, what orients the procedure of creation). Let us consider some restrictions we can apply regarding the different levels of novelty of a new world. An event concerns the transfiguration of the set of relations that its site holds with the world, how the site-object makes sense, is topologically embedded in the world. The disruption of and uncertainty about this set of relations drives from the event and informs the procedure of creation. A new world that arises from a procedure of creation is necessarily new because it requires a genuinely different *global logic*, since it concerns the relations a *world* entertains with the now indeterminate site-object. This does not entail the destruction of every local logic that constitute the pre-evental world’s composite objects or regions. Creation, in this sense, does not demand the complete destruction of a world’s local relations, but the transfiguration of its global logic that takes its origin *from outside* its logical principle, from its post-evental future, as it were. We can then restrict, and therefore specify, the procedure of creation by maintaining that it establishes a genuinely new world and logical principle, and that because the procedure is concerned with a global re-relation that there exists no necessity for the destruction or transfiguration of every local relation that does not concern the site-object’s global relation (either directly or indirectly). This restriction effectively retains local relations unconcerned with the site-object, or at most demands only their modification according to the evolving new logical principle.²⁰ Radical transformation is indeed total (global), but this does not mean that it impacts on every local relation – or, at least, not in the same way.

20 Regarding the set of relations that do concern the site-object, we also can – following Badiou’s conception of the generic procedure in *Being and Event* – posit a restriction in form of the requirement that at least one global relation (concerning the site-object) generated by the procedure of creation must not fall under the logical principle of the pre-evental world (see Chapter 2 and BE: 337). To qualify as genuinely new and different logical principle, it therefore suffices that the site-object is related in at least in one respect in absolute difference to its pre-evental logical principle.

This restriction in a way limits the amount of relations that a procedure of creation requires to transfigure. But how are we to decide from within a procedure of creation which of all relations that concern a site-object – and which relations are, in the first place, concerned with the site-object, directly and indirectly – are to be genuinely changed, which of those relations are to express the foundation of the new logical principle? To again appropriate a notion from *Being and Event*, we can derive the principle for this decision from the operator of faithful connection which “designates *another mode of discernment*: one which, outside knowledge but within the effect of an interventional nomination, explores connections to the supernumerary name of the event” (BE: 329). For every act of relating, of localising an object within the new world, it is necessary to discern if this object’s existing localisation is in accordance with what the procedure is faithful to: the evental trace and the orientation the latter imprints in the procedure. If the given relation affirms or is compatible with the evental trace it can be retained or modified but does not need to be truly transfigured. If the relation under consideration is incompatible with the evental trace then it needs to be re-established on the uncertain ground the evental trace inscribes in the procedure. For those relations that require transfiguration, the most of a generic guidance we can venture to derive from our preliminary model would be the need to answer positive to the question: “Can the principle that this new relation materialises measure up to its exceptional cause – to the event and its trace to which I am faithful?”

We are encountering a limit here of the aptness of generic thought. That is to say the limit of what can generically be said about a situated procedure of creation, in particular the operations of the latter that are so specific to its worldly setting, its specific struggle – how precisely the exposition of an nonexistent orients the procedure, how such an orientation suggests decisions regarding the re-evaluation of relations, and so on. In the following, last chapter, we will try to give a more situated account of the generic thought of the procedure of creation developed above, and to revisit and clarify some of its underdeveloped conceptual terms.

Recapitulation

The aim of this chapter was to develop a rudimentary model of the foundations and operation of the procedure of creation – based on and departing from Badiou’s system, and with the additional support of Meillassoux’s conceptual innovations and Foucault’s work on the subject and power relations.

Materialist abstraction

How did the notion of materialist abstraction inform our model of the procedure of creation? Through abstraction from what materially exists, we came to understand that what exists has no necessity to exist the way it does. This abstraction can be illustrated by the distinction between inhabiting and thinking a world. Inhabiting a world is the rather unproblematic experience and reproduction of the delimitation of that world – it falls together with what we ascribed to the indifferent subject. Thinking a world, on the contrary, is the movement that exposes and investigates these delimitations of its world, and, crucially, the acts that reproduce this consistency. Thinking a world therefore requires a stepping back, an abstraction from what exists, in order to think the generic conditions of any world’s existence. So, for example, if we experience in the world a true problem or dilemma, one that cannot be resolved by local reconfiguration or modification, we came to understand that it can only be resolved by transfiguring the logical principle of the world which causes this dilemma to persist in the first place. This knowledge is what forces us to decide to engage in a procedure of change, or to engage in producing or to resurrect an event that then serves as that procedure’s genesis.²¹

Foundation of the nonexistent

How did we found the nonexistent in line with the idea of materialist abstraction? We showed that the nonexistent can be thought, via the notion of entanglement, based on the speculative assumption of the possible existence of multiple worlds within the one universe. The universe these worlds are thought to be part of (and

21 Whilst we developed some foundations to think the possible invocation of an event, this possibility will only be explored in the next chapter.

its minimalist ontological foundation) has been conceptually appropriated from Meillassoux's *After Finitude*, namely through his demonstration that what exists is absolutely contingent but that this absolute necessity of contingency requires that something does indeed exist in itself.

Redefinition of the subject

In the course of the argument, we also came to redefine the notion of the subject. For us and in opposition to Badiou, there are always and necessarily some subjects, since a subject, qua subject, localises or relates objects and thereby establishes and upholds a world through the reproduction of its logic. Without this operation of relating carried out incessantly, a world would cease to exist. The distinction from the kind of subject that upholds its world by reproducing its logic – what we termed the indifferent subject – to the faithful subject that radically transforms it is still necessary to map out. The difference between an indifferent and a faithful subject is though more subtle than Badiou would have it between a mere individual and his notion of a subject. This difference lies in what the basic operation of the subject – the operation of relating – is carried out under, i.e. the logical principle that informs the formation of worldly relations. Whereas for the indifferent subject it is the existing logical principle that is reproduced (or modified), the faithful subject forms relations according to the radically new logical principle inaugurated by the event. As we will discuss in the following chapter, this new logical principle is itself to evolve concurrently with the world under creation. It is in process – the experimental product, ultimately, of the acts and decisions of faithful subjects. However, the evental exposition of the nonexistent does provide an initial orientation, or prototypical relation, as we will term it.

Invocation of an event

What in our conception of the procedure of creation will allow us to outline the possibility for invoking an event? In some ways similar to Badiou's notion of the evental site, the entangled site retroactively locates the irruption of the nonexistent. The idea of entanglement states that the nonexistent shares an objective referent with the site-object and in that sense concerns the radically different localisation

of this objective referent of the site-object. This localisation is radically different in that it demands not merely a different localisation in the world but a genuinely new logical principle of the world in order to be localisable at all. For our general aim to think the possibility of an invocation of an event and a procedure of creation, this means that some (probably highly contested) composite object in the world can be seen as a ‘crystallisation point’ for an event, or be understood, precisely, as a future site. Shifting away a little from a strongly generic thinking, it makes sense to understand a site as having materialised from a region of struggle or a dilemma within its world. Such a struggle is perhaps most intensely perceived on an affective level, where it is felt and experienced as constriction, impasse or hindrance – for a subjective, communal or social life – that proves unsolvable within its world, within the logic of that world. Strictly speaking, every object could potentially be a future site. The difference allowing us to narrow down this ‘everything’ hinges on some sort of (rational or sensible) precognition of the possibility of what only retroactively can be understood to have been the inexistent of an object, caused by an event, constituting a site. This still cryptic proposition prepares the intuition that we will explore in the following chapter. Namely that it is in being affected by a genuine impasse (one that cannot be resolved within the existing world’s logic) that the sensibility for a pre-evental site and its potential inexistent becomes maximal, that an event becomes possible to be either evoked or resurrected.

5

Subjects of Creation

In the previous chapter, a rudimentary model has been developed for thinking the procedure of creation based on the generic conception of worlds that is founded on the objectively existing universe and the material practices within it – an attempt we carried out under the name of materialist abstraction. The aim of this undertaking was to provide a generic yet materially effective concept of the procedure of creation. Whilst the generic concept has been sketched out, its material, worldly effectiveness still needs to be demonstrated. That a concept is materially effective means, in the first instance, that it can be carried out, be enacted or ‘materialised’ in a world. In the following, we will revisit the relevant components of the proposed model and link them with situated, immanent subjective capacities that aim to ensure this material effectiveness in a world.

Subjective capacity, social abstraction

To begin with, a subjective capacity is understood to designate the ability of a situated subject to act in its world, to effect something within it. In order to get a clearer notion of this capacity, let us consider what it concerns, what it entails and how it emerges. The subjective capacity for creation is to be specified (*vis-à-vis* the wide field of capacities a subject might have at its hands) according to our definition of creation, since this situated capacity is to actualise in a world what the concept of creation outlines in generic terms. The generic terms we established as being central to the procedure of creation are the occurrence of an event and the

procedure of creation itself that is carried out by a faithful subject in the wake of such an event. In our aim to think the event as not an absolutely aleatory matter but to be possibly evoked (under the name of evental production), this possibility to bring about an event as well as the procedure of creation it initiates define what the subjective capacity for creation is a capacity for. We therefore need to outline the operations that enable the subjective capacity for creation to cause or produce an event and to unfold or enact its consequences.

In requiring the subjective capacity for creation to involve an event – and its possible causation – it is clear that such capacity cannot be thought to be somehow readily available in a world, since the only capacity that is generally at hand for a subject in a world is its ability to relate and modify its world (in accordance with the latter's logic) in order to uphold it. What we called the indifferent subject enacts this basic capacity by reproducing its world's logic and thereby ensures the latter's continuous, coherent existence. How can we then think the emergence of a subjective capacity that breaks with this reproduction of its world's logic? Again the problem here is how to break with what is constitutive of the immanent realm of possibility, logical consistency and sense – the realm that renders such an idea of the outside impossible, inconsistent and nonsensical. Since there exists no possibility for radical difference within a world's logic, the question is how – from within a world – a capacity can emerge that is capable of creating such radical difference, that is capable of grasping the impossibility of stepping outside as a sudden real possibility, as it were.

The intuition behind the following argument is that we can perform such a stepping back and establish a prehension of radical difference as real possibility. It is the gesture of abstraction that, once enacted by a situated subject, opens the outside as possibility and allows the subjective capacity for creation to emerge. Since we are looking for what enables a worldly situated subjective capacity for creation and not its generic thought in the form of a concept, the mode of abstraction that allows for this capacity to emerge will not be conceptual, or more precisely not theoretical, at least not in the way we employed for developing the concept of creation in the previous chapter. Although both attempts seek to derive their respective principal matter – concept and situated subjective capacity – from material practices and the objective universe by abstracting from it, the mode of materialist abstraction employed towards a situated subjective capacity for crea-

tion is to be thought as primarily non-theoretical, social.¹ Abstraction thus perceived is the movement away from an immersed position, the inhabitation of which one is not aware of since there is no perspective possible onto this position as long as there is no partition between oneself and that position. A social mode of abstraction could be thought to operate as dissociation from and critical reflection of one's 'identity' – as particularly related, located position – in a world and to open a sensible awareness that neither this position one occupies nor the world that assigns positions like that have any essence or necessity to be (and stay) the way they are.² Non-theoretical, social abstraction would not merely make sensible or felt the results of conceptual abstraction (presenting something that theoretical reasoning evokes in situated experience) but would also arrive at those sensible understandings without the necessary invocation of theoretical reason.

Social abstraction is thought to enable the subjective capacity for creation to evolve from the situated experience and understanding that the given space of possibility (an existing world and its logical principle) cannot, and must not, be all there is. *Subjective capacity is born upon the not exclusively theoretical realisation that the delimitation of the possible is an immanent but nonetheless absolutely contingent quality of every world vis-à-vis the universe. Such a realisation prepares an expansion of the realm of the possible in that it unsettles the totality of a world, it finds something of a proleptic awareness of the real possibility for a radically different basis of what will be possible.* The *proleptic* awareness of radical difference as real possibility functions as a preliminary and as of yet unfounded supplementation to the existing totality of the world – which allows this totality to found radical difference, once the expansion is actualised.³ This is how social abstraction can provide an immanent and functional anchor in the world that can be informed by concepts but is not exclusively prescribed by the latter. Social abstraction can be understood as a foundational operation

- 1 This distinction of two modes of materialist abstraction (conceptual versus social) is polarised for now in order to allow for more clarity in the line of reasoning. When employing abstraction, these modes are arguably unlikely to operate in mutually exclusive ways but rather to blend into and inform each other.
- 2 We can compare this critical, distancing reflection in relation to one's world to what we discussed under the care of the self in Chapter 3 as not only self-awareness but indeed as one condition for exercising freedom.
- 3 Such awareness is proleptic in that it anticipates the disruptive force of the event, which is, as Badiou puts it: the “opening of an epoch, [the] transformation of the relations between the possible and the impossible” (Badiou, 2003a: 45).

of the future faithful subject before an event has taken place, by giving rise to a subjective capacity by way of a situated awareness that genuine change and creation will be possible – a possibility glimpsed but yet still logically unfounded in its pre-evental world.

For this awareness to allow a subjective capacity for creation to operate, it is not necessary to have a concept of its possibility – for example in form of a theory or model, as has been proposed in the last chapter. Nonetheless, the same general movement of abstraction that the concept of creation is obtained by is also instrumental, within an actual world, for generating the situated subjective capacities that will allow for radically changing that world – capacities that can actualise what has been formulated conceptually, without this concept being a precondition for such actualisations. The notion of materialist abstraction can therefore be understood as a two-fold intuition that generates on one side the conceptual thought of creation, its procedure and the subjective capacity for creation, and on the other, non-theoretical, social side such a capacity immanent to the world itself. The actual subjective capacity for creation in a world can enact and link up with the generic operations from the concept of creation but does not depend on the availability or existence of such a concept.

That the actual subjective capacity for creation is not dependent on the availability of its conceptual capture means that we have to modify the statement made earlier, that our model of the procedure of creation be not only a generic conception but that this conception be also materially effective. It is not any sort of direct implementation of the concept that ensures the operations it delineates to be effective in an actual worldly situation. *The concept of creation is neither prescriptive in regard of its specific actualisation nor at all necessary for the enactment of the generic operations it outlines.* What links concept and enactment within the present undertaking is the movement from which we are capable to derive both of them: the two-fold gesture of materialist abstraction that founds concept and immanent capacity ultimately on the same material practices that re/produce a world. In the setting of this thesis, the subjective capacity for creation and its enactment are still thought to be informed by the conceptual insights that have been developed in the previous chapters, even though the concepts have no necessary prescriptive power over what they eventually find as counterparts in the world. The aim here is to demonstrate that effectiveness in a world is not a matter of pure imposition of a

concept onto the world and a subject by way of a merely posited capacity, but that such a capacity can actually arise and exist independently of its conceptualisation. Securing our concept's possibility to be effective in a world is then a matter of establishing working connections between concept and situated capacity – the task begun above.

Exposition of the nonexistent

The crucial measure for the worldly effectiveness of the conceptual model of creation lies in showing the possibility and mechanisms of invoking or working towards an event within an actual world. In order to lay out this demonstration, we have to turn once again to the notion of the event itself, reconsidering first of all what necessarily constitutes it. Regarding the model of creation put forward in the previous chapter, the focus had been predominantly on the foundation of the nonexistent, whereas the event – the momentary breaking into existence of the nonexistent – has not been discussed much so far. It has been asserted that the event is the unique operation that exposes the nonexistent of its world, thereby following the general conceptual idea Badiou formulated in *Being and Event* and modified in *Logics of Worlds*. The problem with adopting Badiou's notion of the event is, however, that it is based on his ontological edifice that we have already problematised.⁴ It is thus required to transpose the event onto the same foundation as our overall concept of creation. More precisely though, since Badiou's event ultimately relies exclusively on the set-theoretical illegality of self-belonging, the task is to propose a new concept of the event based on our foundation.

The idea of the event denotes the coming into existence of the nonexistent erupting from a site. That an event, according to Badiou, constitutes an aleatory and momentary irruption is because it violates a fundamental axiom of set theory, the axiom of foundation. Since it is only in violation of the foundation of being that an event can be thought, the event is not and cannot be. The only way then for an event to be conceivable is to think it as instantly vanishing chance occurrence

4 We recall that the evental multiple (in *Being and Event*, see BE: 190) or the site (in *Logics of Worlds*, see LW: 368) are self-reflexive multiples, they belong to themselves, which is in violation of the axiom of foundation and therefore constitutes an illegal operation within set theory ontology: the event.

– it cannot be, it cannot subsist, it can have no reason or cause. Since we deprived ourselves from Badiou’s purely set-theoretical foundation of the event, the necessity of the latter’s instantaneous nature and of its absolute chance character has also become inessential.

That the event is no longer necessarily aleatory, illegal and vanishing the instant it takes place allows us to think it in more nuanced terms in regard to its cause and duration. The event still remains a logical impossibility (or non-sense) within the world it occurs, since the nonexistent it exposes is per definition exactly this: illogical non-sense, impossible to be situated within the world’s logical edifice. The basic idea, in our conception of the nonexistent is to understand the latter as a paradoxical object – a pairing of an objective referent and its localisation within a world’s logic – whose localisation is not of this world, whose localisation is not compatible with the given world’s logic. So what exists of the nonexistent in the given world is its objective referent, although as part of a conventional object, which is to say that this objective referent is simply the objective referent of an existing object localised within the logic of that world. That an object inexists in a world is then the result of this object being localised by a radically different, outer-worldly logical principle – simply put, its incompatibility is the effect from not being of the world it inexists in. This otherworldly existence has been thought to take place in a different, entangled world in or over time, a world that either exists concurrently with or successively to the considered world. Since, to repeat, in an object, a localisation is paired with an objective, universal referent – the part of an object which, in a world, is subject to localisation but which exists in the universe in-itself, independently of any such worldly localisation – we can infer that every existing object, qua object, harbours the potential to inexist, precisely because it could possibly be localised according to a radically different logical principle. What characterises the nonexistent in any given world is that although it certainly exists in abundance on one level (as objective referent), it has no localised existence in that given world (it is not localisable with the given logic).

When an event exposes an nonexistent, what does it expose to the given world? On one side we have the circumscription of the nonexistent by the evental site, which, ultimately, points to the worldly object that shares its universal referent with the nonexistent. On the other side, there is the otherworldly localisation of the nonexistent object that now came to be exposed. This exposition does not in some

magical way make the logic of the nonexistent's world accessible to the evental world, since they are strictly incompatible. We can state, for now, that the evental exposition of the nonexistent unhinges its entangled object within the given world, as it were. We will discuss this point of evental exposition of the nonexistent further in the following section.

The importance of this conception of the nonexistent is that it maintains the *absolute logical difference and inaccessibility* of the nonexistent without imposing an *ontological, universal impossibility* for its ‘existence’, for its conditions of possibility. From this we can infer that the event, as the occurrence which exposes the nonexistent of a site-object, is not absolutely, universally impossible to occur and persist but only impossible to be accommodated and made sense of in the world it takes place in.

Evental production

We can infer two points from the abstract possibility of the nonexistent's other-worldly existence. First, now that an event is no longer thought to shatter the foundation of being and is consequently able to subsist – however unrecognised, ‘undercover’ – in a world’s site, it allows us to think the exposition of the nonexistent as a situated, possibly durational operation. Contrary to Badiou’s notion of the event, which exposes the nonexistent in an illegal, instantaneous outburst from the void, the exposition of the nonexistent can now be modelled as something that takes time and requires effort, which is to say that it becomes something a pre-evental subject might be able to work on or, even, to produce. Second, the ‘legal’ but abstract possibility of the nonexistent and the event become both thinkable and non-theoretically apprehensible through materialist abstraction, which is to say they have been transposed onto a foundation that is independent from Badiou’s ontological conception. The two-fold apprehension of the possibility of an event (conceptually and non-theoretically) does not yet establish the possibility of radical difference itself as real possibility, since a real possibility is founded on a totality that allows for it (a field of possibilities) – in this case a totality that has yet to include the nonexistent as possible to exist.

Both points, the exposition of the nonexistent as situated operation and the apprehension of the abstract but immanent possibility of this operation, can be under-

stood to find expression in a world respectively as *sites of struggle* and the *subjective capacity for creation*. A site of struggle is to denote a pre-evental site, a region of a world that will potentially have served as an evental site.⁵ The subjective capacity for creation has been outlined above as the awareness of the non-necessity of what is given as world, paired with a proleptic sense of radical difference as real possibility. The idea is to situate the subjective capacity within a site of struggle, so that the subject unfold its capacity at a site of struggle. This operation constitutes what we will call an *evental production* that has the potential to expose the inexistent of its site.⁶ We can speak of a production because the incessant relating of objects that every subject carries out is productive of a world. That this operation of relating is carried out within a site of struggle is to say that it is framed by this struggle. What does this taking place within a struggle entail for the operation of relating? It implies that the operation of relating is informed on one side by the conceptual/non-theoretical awareness of the non-necessity of the present situation and on the other side by the local necessity of a different (global) logical principle than the existing one – where necessity and difference arise from the specific setting of their struggle. With this orientation leading away from but still situated within its world's logic, the criteria for producing relations are no longer naturally drawn from the logical principle of the existing world, but become *experimental* in testing other forms of relating and, indeed, trying to abandon this principle.⁷

The procedure of evental production can be said to have exposed the inexistent of its site if at least one of the experimental relations it produces gives rise to an apprehension or idea on what a hitherto impossible, genuinely different logical

5 This circular definition of a site of struggle is still preliminary, we will discuss it more closely in the following sections.

6 Even for Badiou, in absence of any event to be faithful to, there is work to be done, locally, where there is struggle: “The other way is to seek a new activation in a way that is extraordinarily local, in extremely precise circumstances, hoping that this filter, that this localisation will allow us to work much more acutely within the perspective of novelty. ... I truly believe that when we are short of events, when we are short of what the events provide us with – during intermediary situations such as we are experiencing nowadays – it is necessary to focus our thoughts and efforts on local experiences, because really, at a global level, we have only lifeless, obsolete ideas; we have ideas that are not sufficiently activated.” (Badiou, 2006: 182)

7 In his lecture “The Subject of Art” Badiou gives us a vague sense of such sort of experimentation in the world of art, in terms of an “experimentation of chaotic sensibility” or the “emergence of a new possibility of formalization, ... an acceptance like form of something which was inform” that might come to “change the formula of the world”, and so on. (Badiou, 2005)

principle can be founded on. This we can call an event: the recognition that a certain experimental relation (or a set of such relations) can come to serve as the foundation for creating a radically different worldly principle – a genuinely different logical principle that guides but also evolves with the process of its new world being created.⁸ That an experimental relation succeeded in ‘winning over’ the nonexistent of its site of struggle results from the orientated detachment from the existing world’s logic having, in a sense, leaped ‘far enough’, and in ‘the right direction’. What can be generically stated about the criteria for what makes an experimental relation come to expose the nonexistent is merely that it only functions retroactively, which is to leave the operation itself – on the ground as it were – without criteria. Being ‘without criteria’ is what makes eventual production, unsurprisingly, an experimental exploration in the first place. This experimentation can be generically circumscribed⁹ to always proceed from a context (site of struggle) to somewhere unknown (potentially the nonexistent, mostly nowhere) by *first constructing* a still nonsensical relation (or localisation) involving the site of struggle, from negation of the given logical principle, and then *retroactively probing* this experimental relation for any potential to produce (new) sense after all, according to a possibly discovered, hitherto nonexistent logic still hard to grasp.¹⁰ The recognised nonexistent – or indeed the wager on this relation constituting an nonexistent – thereby takes the form of a prototypical relation of the new worldly logic that can be said to exhibit the *idea* of the new logical principle. In this way, a genuinely different logical principle for a new world has been established as real possibility, since what founds the range of possibilities in the existing world has been supplemented with the nonexistent of the site of struggle.

8 To speak here about recognition of radical difference becoming a real possibility is reminiscent and derived from Badiou’s idea of the nomination of an event in *Being and Event*.

9 A more concrete discussion of the experimental practices that are referred to here only briefly and generically can be found in the second half of Chapter 3. There, in the larger context of the care of the self and the exercise of freedom, experimental ethical practices entail the distancing from and reflection of the world, which aim at self-determination rather than being determined or ruled by doxa and habit. Self-determination then takes the form of generating one’s own rules for one’s conduct, practicing, living them as well as regularly reflect on them in order to perform revisions both in thought and practice.

10 Experimentation has to proceed by incessantly taking leaps (wager first, then analyse), since, as Badiou remarks, “the intelligibility of the event is neither prospective nor calculative; it is rather retroactive … it is only intelligible afterwards, its conditions of intelligibility can never be anticipated.” (Badiou, 2006: 181)

Procedure of creation

With the acquisition of this new real possibility, the procedure of evental production transitions into the procedure of creation, the new present in which a faithful subject creates a new world by re-relating everything that is connected to the site, or that becomes necessary to be newly connected to the latter. The basic operation of all the discussed subjective procedures – the indifferent subject, the faithful subject's evental production and creation – is the act of relating, of localising objects in a world, which is constitutive of a world's logic. The difference between these subjective procedures is the logical principle that informs the act of relating. To recall, we have defined the logic of a world to be what a world *expresses*, the framework of sense that is immanent to it. The logical principle informs the acts of relating, thereby operating on the *production* itself of a world's logic. The logical principle evolves with its world, which means that the definitional distinction is not at all binary – expressive logic versus productive logical principle. The present polarisation is intended to help us think the precise points where struggle and event intervene in the all-pervasive operation of relating. The indifferent subject reproduces relations according to the world's existing logical principle, whereas an evental production is guided by an experimentation (affirmative negation) that in turn originates from the attempted negation of the existing principle. In order to transition to the procedure of creation, the experimentation in an evental production is supplanted with an idea (a prototypical relation), and the operation of relating is based on a new, preliminary and evolving logical principle – whose real possibility and idea the event induced. The post-evental procedure of creation outlined here is very close to Badiou's post-evental enquiries, the “finite forms of a procedure of fidelity” (BE: 327). In distinction to Badiou though, the procedure of creation is a rather mundane operation, it is the same that the indifferent subject performs day in day out, the operation of relating. The only but crucial shift in this operation lies in what guides it, and this is the change from reproducing the world's logic (indifferently) to creating a new world and thereby new logic (radical difference) from the idea of a new organising principle that derives from the experimental, now prototypical relation which exposes the nonexistent of the former world.

Although mundane in one sense this new type of relating is destined to come up against the logic and logical principle of the existing world – either in a soft

sense (is met with incomprehension, possibly disapproval) or in a harder sense (is seen as illegal and sanctioned as such). In any case we might note in passing that the faithful subject in my schema has something in common with the production of the self narrated by Foucault and as laid out in my excursus in so far as both involve a turn away from habitual and dominant subjectivating powers – and towards the production of something else, warranted by self-determined rules of conduct (exercise of freedom). The difference is that in Foucault’s schema this remains on the level of the subject, whereas in mine the subject, very precisely, embarks upon a process of worldly transformation.

At the beginning of this chapter, it has been outlined how the procedure of creation – based on the newly proposed foundational concepts and generic operations – can be thought to be materially effective in a world. It has been shown that the non-theoretical mode of materialist abstraction gives rise in a world to a subjective capacity for creation and that both, non-theoretical, social abstraction and subjective capacity, do operate and exist independent of their conceptualisation by thought. Thereby we gained a capacity that is not only worldly situated and compatible with the developed model of creation but is also the result of the same movement – materialist abstraction – that allowed for the conceptual model, in its respective modes of social abstraction (lived world) and conceptual abstraction (generic thought). In order for the subjective capacity for creation to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure of creation in a world, the exposition of the nonexistent is thought to result from an immanent eventual production, which links the conceptual thought of entanglement (providing for the nonexistent’s otherworldly existence) with the worldly unfolding of the subjective capacity from a site of struggle. An eventual production is then the experimental procedure of re-relating objects of a site of struggle with the world in creative negation of the existing world’s logical principle that would normally guide the operation of relating. That an eventual production actually comes to expose the nonexistent of its site of struggle is still only an abstract possibility, there is no guarantee for it to cause an event. It does though propose a generic yet worldly anchored, immanent procedure that is arguably considerably more enabling for thinking the quest for radical novelty in actual existing worlds than Badiou’s absolutely aleatory and subtractive conception of the event – an event that is not only out of any world but is out of being *tout court*. In discussing the consequences of a successful eventual

production, we also came to recapitulate the post-evental worldly operations that anchor the effectiveness of our model of the procedure of creation.

Sites of struggle

We need to return to the discussion of one issue cut short above, the localisation of a site of struggle. The pre-evental localisation of a site of struggle poses a conceptual problem since its definite designation as evental site is possible only retroactively, after the occurrence of an event, since from within a world's logic and before the occurrence of an event the site is a region of the world as any other. With a generic approach it is again the difficulty to get hold of the conceptual criteria that would allow us, before the event, to localise such a worldly site. Situated within a world but again abstracting from it, the question that this problem poses is how one can know that one is operating or engaging in a struggle at a potential evental site. This shift in perspective from the generic to the situated (still abstract) also moves the focus from retroactive evental site to present struggle, as it were, a move that enables us to infer a potential evental site from the location of a worldly struggle. This inference is possible since an evental production is productive only because of the existence of a struggle, whereas the site is 'merely' the worldly region the latter will have taken place at. What then defines a struggle in a world? A struggle is the engagement in overcoming a specific constraint in a world. Such constraint can be understood to be an impasse experienced in a world, an impasse that expresses ultimately the irreconcilable inadequacy of a world's (global) logic in regard to the struggle's specificity. In opposition to challenging problems whose solution is conceivable within a world's logic or that are a matter of mere modification (reformism), a struggle is based on the negative knowledge of an inherent and essential shortcoming of the world's global logical layout – presenting any solution as genuinely impossible within a world, according to the latter's logic – which might start and inform an affirmative, productive negation of this impasse. This process of affirmative negation of an existing impasse in a world is what we called an evental production. If what defines a struggle as site-specific engagement in the world already implies the process of evental production, we are still required to give an account of how a struggle comes about, or how a subject comes to grasp and subject itself to the impasse, thus causing or contributing to

a struggle – so that we can follow the subject to the worldly site of an evental production.

What we are looking for, in a way, is a sensibility for an impasse in a world. Within the argument of the present chapter, this sensibility would provide the orientation for what we called non-theoretical, social abstraction (which in turn gives rise to the subjective capacity for creation). That an impasse becomes sensible for a subject is, on the most basic level, the consequence of this subject's care for what makes its world, an attention towards what forces or operations place it where within the world – in short what conditions the field of possibility of the subject's existence (we might note here, of course, the importance of Foucault once more). If a subject does not care for, or problematises its world and itself within that world, it cannot but live as indifferent subject. Therefore, the care for one's world needs to be understood as subjective effort, it requires work and engagement to attain a sense of the world and oneself, one's position in it.¹¹ Only by the effort of caring for and problematising one's surrounding and the world at large can one gain an awareness and understanding of what in the world makes for the joys of life, what suppresses them, in short what it is that ultimately matters to live and struggle for. The sensibility for an impasse in one's world stems then from the awareness of a specific constraint the world enforces in regard to what matters in a life – a constraint that negatively defines what to struggle for.

Subject of creation

This brief outline of how and why a subject comes to place itself within a site of struggle lets us grasp the pre-evental localisation of and engagement with such a site, which is to say the location of a potential evental site. What also became clear from the last sections is that subjective commitment to potential radical change starts far ahead of the occurrence of an event (something that Badiou's faithful subject cannot really account for), namely the process of evental production that

11 This care for one's world can be understood to be an active engagement in the world in the sense that has been discussed in Chapter 3 with Foucault's notion of the problematisation of the present. We found that a problematisation can open an indirect access to the understanding of the construction of one's world by exploring the practices that try to intervene in and modify the ways this world has been and is being re-produced, thus exposing these constitutive operations and the power they exert on us.

might lead to the occurrence of an event. Subjective commitment – if it is to succeed in producing an event and creating genuine difference in the form of a new world – begins with a very indistinct orientation but relentless care for, problematisation of and attention towards its world, which allows a subject to make sense of the world and make sensible the impasses within it. Such problematisation can arguably be authorised and supported by the demonstration of the abstract possibility of radical novelty and change, via conceptual abstraction. The sensibility for impasses in the world and the awareness of their non-necessity that result from social abstraction enable the subject's engagement in an evental production. If an event has been evoked, the subject unfolds its subjective capacity in the procedure of creation. We will name *subject of creation* the subject that, starting with explorative attention, care for and problematisation of its world, comes to *experimentally* labour for and invoke an event, and unfold the evental consequences in the form of the creation of a new world.¹² In this way, the subject of creation can be understood to supplement Badiou's faithful subject with a pre-evental engagement that comes to possibly generate an event. It is this kind of work on the other, preparatory side of the event, which Badiou ignores and that our model foregrounds with the subject of creation.

When we ascribe to the subject of creation the operations and orientations of its different stages as we have above, its conception seems rather inelegant, maybe even too deliberately constructed with its suspiciously distinct phases or steps. If we shift the perspective though from these stages of the subject to what it does or enacts, to what those ascribed stages in its evolvement mean in regard of the subject's engagements, the process appears to unfold in a more seamless form. The basic, fundamental capacity that any subject enacts, *qua* subject, is the operation of relating. We already discussed the difference in the enactment of this operation between the indifferent and the post-evental, faithful subject. Since we have just established a subjective development from indifferent to faithful, let us now consider a subject's path on this continuum. The emergence of a subject of creation begins rather evidently once an indifferent subject no longer simply and negligently reproduces the logic of its world. This emergence can happen

12 To give a name to the subject that commits to radical change from its vague outset and all the way through, Badiou's notion of the faithful subject has become too narrow for us in what it concerns: the merely post-evental enactment of evental consequences.

suddenly or in a gradual shift away from the life as indifferent subject, away from the reaffirming enactment of the latter's world's logical principle.¹³ We attributed the cause of such drifting away from affirming one's worldly logic to two causes. First the understanding of the abstract possibility that the world can radically change since we can think its radical outside, by way of conceptual abstraction. And second, via social abstraction, a problematisation of and care for what makes the world and what makes this world position its subjects in the way it does. How can problematisation and care be understood to influence the operation of relating? Arguably, problematisation and care bring to bear an orientation, a focus on some regions of the world and those regions' specific relational configurations. Problematisation and care can orient a subject in that they *progressively contract*¹⁴ what of the world this subject will predominantly engage in, and therefore what its operation of relating is primarily concerned with and enacted on. This subjective contraction of a world is also what makes the sensibility for an impasse within this world more concrete, guiding a subject to a site of struggle within its world. At a site of struggle, we argued that the operation of relating is on one side framed by this struggle and on the other, that it proceeds experimentally, in what we called eventual production. In an eventual production, the operation of relating constructs relations involving the site-object of struggle in ways that do not conform to the logical principle of the world. Since what does not conform to a world's logical principle concerns that world's outside, we established that this operation of relating can only be experimental, be without criteria, resulting

13 Such shifting away from the affirmation of the given world's logic can be understood as breaking with the subordination to the state of the world. Badiou sees in this distancing from the state an acting "with sufficient independence from the state and what it deems to be important or not, who it decides should or should not be addressed. This distance protects political practices from being oriented, structured, and polarized by the state." (Badiou, 2008b: 650)

14 This contraction of the world (by way of its problematisation) into focuses of attention or interest could be, in a way, compared to Badiou's notion of points, and more precisely the topological space the latter are thought to compose. We remarked in our discussion of *Logics of Worlds* in Chapter 2 that the topological space composed by the points of a world (LW: 414-5) could be understood to localise the conflicting 'beneath' or not conclusively resolved struggles and impasses of the transcendental organisation of this world. That is to say that this topological space delineates within a world the points or regions at which the radical transfiguration of that world are decided. In *Logics* though, these concern binary decisions and are necessitated by the post-evental truth. So again we cannot readily incorporate this notion from Badiou, since it is an exclusively post-evental concept, which makes it inapplicable for us in both senses, that points can be discerned and decided only after an event (whereas we are still in a pre-evental discussion) and that they require an event in Badiou's ontological conception – which we turned away from.

in non-sense in respect of the world's existing logic. (Both conceptual and social abstraction – the demonstration of the existence of a radical outside and prolepsis of radical change – can lend support to this experimental process.) This nonsensical relation is then probed for its potential of having exposed an inexistent of the site of struggle, which would constitute an event and inaugurate that relation as preliminary, prototypical expression of the new world's logic to be created – the *idea of a radically new organising principle*. This marks then the transition to the post-evental procedure of creation, in which the operation of relating is guided by the still vague idea established by the event. That such an idea is thought to be vague or preliminary just after its evental instantiation and yet to replace, as guiding principle, the ruptured world's logical principle means that this idea evolves with the world it guides to create.

The subject of creation moves, we might say, on a continuum from indifferent to faithful subject, and this movement is reflected in the gradual changes of what informs the subject's operation of relating. To summarise, this change of what informs the operation of relating can be understood to take the form of *contraction* – first towards a site of struggle, then in the evental production – followed by an *expansion* that testifies to the creation of a new world, arising from the singularity of an event. The movement of contraction concerns regions or objects of a given world, it makes the subject specify its location in the world by focusing on what of this world matters according to the subject's explorative interest or sensibility of an impasse. This contraction can be thought to go all the way from the world at large, via a site of struggle, to the singular relation whose experimental instantiation will have constituted an event. From this singularity – and the now real possibility of radical novelty it establishes as idea or prototypical relation of a new logical principle – the operation of relating comes to concern an ever growing scope, composed by the objects that are newly related (predominantly with the site object) in the procedure of creating a new world according to the new, now foundational idea or prototypical relation. Contraction begets expansion.

Enactment of an idea

In returning one last time to Badiou's system, we will consider how his notion of the idea can help us to understand what guides the movement of the subject of creation from indifferent to faithful subject. As with the notion of the subject itself, the problem in trying to appropriate Badiou's notion of the idea lies in the latter's definition as exclusively post-evental matter.¹⁵ By extending the notion of the idea into the pre-evental realm, we would gain one single pivotal term around which the complete journey of creating radical novelty unfolds and is guided by. Although this conception of an idea would present some sort of singular meta-notion of the subject of creation, it also constitutes its most generic, highest abstraction – meaning that the idea, in its generic conception, is at the same time what is most central yet has the least specificity in the conceptual model. For a worldly situated subject of creation though, such an idea might be the most pivotal anchor point to exist and evolve over its complete creative life – even if it will always be the most difficult aspect of creation to specify or explain.

Before extending the notion of the idea into the pre-evental part of the life of a subject of creation, let us consider what it designates, according to Badiou, for the post-evental procedure of fidelity. He states that the experience of an idea is what authorises the creation of the present of this experience, which is to say that an idea authorises and guides the procedure of fidelity that creates the present of its own experience. What in our model authorises and guides the pre-evental procedure that is to culminate in an event? We stated above that this guiding authorisation derives from both of materialist abstraction's modes, conceptual and social abstraction. On the conceptual side, we demonstrated that the abstract possibility of a radical outside and the generic conception of procedure of creation (that instantiates radical novelty on the basis of this outside) can serve as authorisation for subjects to start problematising their present in the first place – that the powerful thought of the outside alone can lend faith to a subject for and rational belief in its quest for creation. On the side of non-theoretical, social abstraction, it

15 We recall his statement from the closing pages of *Logics of Worlds*: "If we agree to call 'Idea' what both manifests itself in the world—what sets forth the being-there of a body—and is an exception to its transcendental logic, we will say, in line with Platonism, that to experience in the present the eternity that authorizes the creation of this present is to experience an Idea. We must therefore accept that for the materialist dialectic, 'to live' and 'to live for an Idea' are one and the same thing." (LW: 510)

is the problematisation of the present which can produce an orientation or guidance, through attention, care for and problematisation of what makes a subject's world and the resulting awareness of this world's contingent (non-necessary) logical organisation – specifically when experienced from the impasse exposed by a (site of) struggle. Of this awareness of contingency we stated that it constitutes an *abstract possibility* (derived from conceptual abstraction), or a *prolepsis of the real possibility* (derived from social abstraction) for radical change of the world's logical organisation. That this possibility is merely abstract and not yet real has to do with the logic of the world not allowing for such possibility – the abstract possibility concerns the outside in regard to the world's logic, presenting radical difference. This possibility can become real only once the totality of a world allows for such a possibility, once it is supplemented with the result of a successful evental production (hence its field of possibility has been expanded). The pre-evental phase of an idea can then be thought to designate the labour of making the abstract possibility for genuine novelty real, a development that culminates in this possibility tipping over to become a real possibility in the given world, through the production of an event. What a pre-evental idea guides – and arguably evolves alongside with – is the contraction of the world towards a site of struggle and further to the experimental, prototypical relation that constitutes an event. This guidance can be understood to be one of a *specification of negation* – or of contraction, as discussed above –, it specifies and brings to the (tipping) point what in the world constitutes a real impasse and therefore the reason and seed for abandoning and radically transforming the organising principle of that world. Once an event has been effectuated, the idea is secured as real possibility for radical novelty and its guidance takes now the form of a *specification of affirmation* – or expansion –, the affirmation and development of the prototypical relation that fosters the coming organising principle of the new world under creation.

Within our conceptual model, an idea must be understood to be completely anonymous, its generic conception has no power to lend it any specificity other than a general form of guidance for the subject of creation. The specifics of an idea are exclusively attained in the world the idea is employed and developed in, but even so, those specifics might never be easily expressible (in language, thought, concepts). That an idea can guide a subject of creation on its journey towards the production of an event and in the following creation of a new world

requires this idea to develop alongside its subject's enactment in the world – since it cannot be given on the basis of an existing logic or knowledge. An idea can be thought to evolve in interplay with the subject of creation, with its operation of relating that is, in a circular way, the precarious *enactment of this idea* – since the idea is what guides the operation of relating. In this way, the subject of creation and the idea that guides its operation – from its first steps of contractive negation to the expansive affirmation of creation – are locked in mutual, evolving dependence and determination.

We can now return to Badiou's statement that “‘to live’ and ‘to live for an Idea’ are one and the same thing” (LW: 510). In Badiou's materialist dialectic, the capacity to live is exclusively exercised in the wake of a rare, aleatory event. Subjectivity and living are attained by the recognition of and fidelity to an event but the event itself lies beyond the grasp of a subject to come, the latter has no power at all to cause an event – and has therefore no command over the constitution of its own subjectivity and living. With the notion of the subject of creation put forward in this thesis, we attempted to provide an alternative conception of the subject, one that not only allows but indeed requires subjectivity to emerge a long way before an event – an event, as has been argued, which the subject of creation is capable to produce. That Badiou considers the living of a subject to be for an *Idea* reflects that an Idea designates the truth which a faithful subject comes to unfold in an infinite procedure of fidelity; a truth that is by definition never reached, can never be known. This evolving nature of the idea is shared with our own conception of it. However, the crucial difference from Badiou revolves around the way an idea relates to the subject. He states that to live is to live *for* an Idea, which is a concise way of saying that the subject is operative in the procedure of bringing about the truth this idea will come to denote – in a future infinitely far away, ever beyond reach. In that sense, the subject is instrumental for the idea, in that it constitutes the operational entity that gives form to the latter. In a similar but reversed sense, we can see that in our conception of the subject of creation it is rather the idea that is instrumental for the subject. The idea is born together with the subject of creation – in the first act of not relating to its world indifferently anymore – as initially vague but evolving guide for the operations of relating the subject performs. However indistinct in the beginning, the idea is what a subject turns to for support in its formation of relations, it constitutes the pivotal vessel

that orients the subject's actions in the world. In short, for a subject of creation to live is then to live according to an idea, an idea that is not given – not now and not 'never' (in a future infinitely far away) – but that is born and evolves in mutual dependence and determination with the subject in its quest for creation.

Conclusion

The previous chapters have provided a close reading and discussion of Badiou's onto-logical work and, following the issues encountered, an attempt to engage some of his central conceptual vocabulary in an alternative, rudimentary sketch for the framework and procedure of creation. The following conclusion will revisit the key questions and arguments and will try to address one major rift that has been examined with unsatisfactory results so far. This is the split between creation's ultimate foundation in the nothing or outside of a world – which can only be *thought generically*, not validated by experience – and any *actual process* of radical transformation of a concrete situation, which requires precisely this opening to the outside of its experienced immanence. Turning to contemporary proponents of communisation theory might prove helpful at that point, since there exists on one side a set of shared theoretical assumptions and conceptions with the present thesis and on the other side a strong explicit emphasis on the immanence of the theory within the struggles it theorises.

The thesis opened with the hypothesis that radical novelty can come to exist, that its occurrence can be caused and given form, and that this designates the procedure of creation. By instantiating radical difference vis-à-vis the world and the immediate experiences we can have of it, genuine novelty poses a challenge for thought since it asserts a hitherto unimaginable, impossible form – indeed a new world. It has been argued that such radical difference is possible to unfold only once a world became supplemented with something outside of it, with something that inexists or can only be considered as non-sense within it. Creation is therefore

to be understood in its strongest sense as creation *ex nihilo*. Creation begets form out of nothing, since nothingness – as that which is exclusively thinkable of the proper outside of what exists and makes sense – is the foundation of everything genuinely new. Nothing, strictly speaking, is the condition of possibility of radical difference.

The pivotal role of the void in Badiou's ontology and his conception of the evental supplementation and subsequent transformation of its situation provided the rationale for the close reading and discussion of *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds* in the first two chapters. However, Badiou's rigorous but complicated attempt in *Logics* to establish the compatibility between – and prescription of – ontic worlds by their 'underlying' ontological situations had ultimately to be considered insufficiently founded. This problem became apparent by exposing the paradoxical nature of the concept of retroaction of appearing on being, which Badiou posits to ensure that radical changes effectuated by a subject in the world will alter the ontological multiple composition that appears as and underlies this world. Retroaction came to reveal the fundamental omission of Badiou's system, namely that he nowhere adequately accounts for the process of formation of the ontological situations that come to appear as worlds – whilst denying appearance any role in the formation of what exists, apart from it serving as mere waypoint (via retroaction) in an otherwise fundamentally ontological conception of change. Following his idea of retroaction through undoes in the end the work of his ontology from the point of its foundational assumption. Badiou holds fast to his Platonic commitment – which has been summarised under the notion of ontological prescription – that being is primary, yet does not present a conception that would answer how being itself comes to be presented in a situation in the first place. In turn, Badiou's insistence on formulating a coherent ontological-logical system on this basis, evidenced in *Briefings on Existence* and *Logics of Worlds*, is what allows us to notice and uncover the problematic gravity of his ontological prescription.

The third and fourth chapter attempted to construct a sketch or working hypothesis of a rudimentary model of creation that is based on central concepts of Badiou's system (event, faithful subject, logical organisation of worlds, inexistent) whilst transposing their foundation onto a more minimalist notion of being, drawn from Meillassoux's work in *After Finitude*. The latter, it has been argued, can supply a theoretical framework in which being as such can be thought to

provide the minimal condition for existence – namely that there has to exist something, some facticity, precisely because contingency is the only absolute necessity – without further conditioning or prescribing the composition of what exists. In my approach of materialist abstraction, the generic conception of worlds has been proposed as the relational topology that results from the material operations of subjects relating objects of their worldly situation into a coherent logic – taking cues from both Foucault's conception of power relations and power structures, as well as Badiou's transcendental organisation and logics of worlds. Worlds are therefore founded 'from below', where being provides existence in the form of a contingent, objective universe, and 'from above', as the result of the material operations that establish and incessantly reproduce the logic of a world on the basis of this objectively existing universe. That a world is a logical augmentation of the universe implies, has been argued, that the specific form of a world's logic – and therefore any world as such – is non-necessary or contingent. The contingency of worlds and their organisation ultimately allows for founding the nonexistent of a world on a materialist basis. The basis for the nonexistent rests on the proposal of an object being the pairing of an objective or universal referent and the localisation of this referent within the relational network of a world's logic. Since the nonexistent is a paradoxical object (but an object nonetheless), it can be termed a materialist notion in the double sense that it has an objectively existing referent and is the product of the material process of logical localisation. If a world is understood as the logical organisation of objects that are localised through a relational network in the former, and objects to have an objective referent in the material universe, then the nonexistent of a world can be thought as an as of yet inconceivable, outer-worldly localisation of an objective referent of an object in the existing world.¹

The span from minimalist conception of being to generic conception of worlds and objects constitutes, within the rudimentary model of the procedure of creation, the conceptual framework of material reality from which and into which the procedure of creation intervenes. The nonexistent can be thought to present the link between this framework and the formalism of the subject, since the nonexistent

1 This idea hinges on the conceptual pairing that makes up an object: an *objective referent* of the material universe (a thing in itself, material or mathematical) and the *localisation* that places it within a world. The nonexistent concerns the referent of an existing object in the world, whilst the localisation of this referent is not (yet) of this same world, not in accordance with and unthinkable within this world's logical organisation.

is an object (part of the conceptual framework) but requires a subjective intervention (part of the subjective formalism) to become actually apprehensible as such. The derivation of the subject can be summarised as follows.

That worlds appear consistent and ‘natural’ is due to their immanent logical organisation, which can be asserted with Badiou’s idea of the transcendental in *Logics*. In contrast to his conception of worldly logic though, it has been shown that what makes the logic of a world is the operation of localising, of relating objects, which establishes the topology of the world. Localisation works by putting objects in relation to other objects, which establishes a complex, manifold relational network between objects, which, in itself, expresses the logic of a world. In redefining the subject, it has been stated that the subject is, qua subject, the agent that carries out these operations of relating and thereby upholds or keeps alive its world.² Whereas the operation of relating performed by an indifferent subject is affirming and upholding the world’s logical principle, the faithful, post-evental subject produces relations in radical difference to the established logical principle and thereby creates a genuinely new world.

After having established the theoretical framework of material reality and the subjective formalism, with the inexistent allowing their conceptual linkage, we proceeded to address the question of material efficacy of this hypothesis of the procedure of creation. That is to say the problem how thought (in form of the outlined model) can gain traction on the actual practices in specific worlds and struggles it set out to theorise. It has been argued that it is not the concept’s successful prescription of an act or procedure in the world that would need to be demonstrated, but that we had to bind the concept of creation to a worldly subjective capacity that exists and operates independently of any conceptualisation of it, whilst still being able to be informed by such conceptual understanding of the concrete procedures. This subjective capacity for creation has been hypothesised to arise from the social mode of materialist abstraction, or indeed a form of problematisation, in Foucault’s terms, through which a subject acquires a sense of con-

2 The redefinition of the subject was necessary since, contrary to Badiou’s definition, our subject not only exists before an event but is the very guarantor of worlds in the first place, since it is the indifferent subject that relentlessly relates according to the world’s existing logic and thereby ensures the world’s existence and subsistence.

tingency and potential plasticity regarding the specific configuration of its world.³ Such problematisation of one's present is to be conceived as critical engagement with and effort towards the world, and more specifically the site of struggle that frames and necessitates this specific problematisation in the first place.⁴ With the capacity for creation, a subject attains the sense and urgency that the operation of relating can and must be carried out in radical difference to the prevailing logical principle, even though this difference is not yet accessible before an event. In absence of an actual opening for radical difference, the insight from conceptual abstraction – the existence of a radical outside from which such difference can emerge, even be produced – can function as support for the capacity for creation immanent to a worldly situation.

The event itself, in opposition to Badiou's conception, no longer constitutes an illegal and momentary rupture of being, but designates the process of exposition of the nonexistent within a world. Crucially, this exposition of the nonexistent, as has been argued, might well be caused in a subjective effort we termed evental production, which takes place at a site of struggle. In an evental production, the operation of relating carried out by a subject takes on an experimental form, which is to say that it not any longer adheres to the logical principle of the given world but produces nonsensical (according to the given world's logic) or other-worldly relations that involve the site of struggle, with the ultimate goal to create

3 The social mode of materialist abstraction basically establishes an arguably affective perspective for the subject on its own localisation in the world, on what positions it in this world, ultimately resulting in the sensible awareness of the non-necessity of this localisation or positioning. The point in calling this mode of abstraction social and non-theoretical is to demonstrate its independence from abstract conceptual thought (whilst not ignoring that we make sense of the world, even on the most immediate level, through concepts). Performed in a world, abstraction is thought to be employed in a multitude of degrees and modes between its conceptual and social poles.

4 In a recent talk, Badiou somewhat reconciled with critical theory – of course and unsurprisingly only in the sense of prescribing what it ought to be, as critical activity – by remarking that: “the field of critical activity is always to work at the limit of the possible and the impossible with the idea that this limit is not a stable limit, it is a limit which in some sense can be modified, can be transformed. The work of critical thinking is precisely the work *on* this limit. ... we can open up a new access to the transformation of the limit itself. So, it is not only the activity of the defining of the limit but the activity of the change of the limit itself” (Badiou, 2014). This conception of critical activity comes very close to what Foucault termed critical practice or limit-attitude in, for example, “What is Enlightenment?” (Foucault, 1997), see also our discussion in Chapter 3.

the seed for a new logical principle and world.⁵ Such an experimental relation is then probed for its potential to serve as the prototypical relation for a new logical principle, a logical principle radically different to the existing one. If this probing results in the affirmative, an inexistent of the site of struggle has been exposed and as consequence, the world has now been supplemented with what constitutes a real possibility for this world's radical transformation.⁶ Hereafter, the post-evental, faithful subject performs the operation of relating according to the idea of a new logical principle – an idea originating from the prototypical, experimental relation – thereby engaging in the creation of a new world. The creation of a new world and the development of this world's logical principle are thought to evolve in mutual dependence and reciprocal determination.

In order to give a name to the subject that undertakes the outlined development from indifferent subject to faithful subject, we proposed the term subject of creation. The latter is born by parting from the indifferent subject through the rising awareness of the non-necessity of its world's specific organisation attained from the problematisation of its present – possibly supported or triggered by conceptual abstraction's demonstration of the outside. Contracting its world via a site of struggle, the subject of creation engages in an evental production. If an event occurs out of this evental production, the subject proceeds in the mode of the faithful subject in the creation of a new world. The journey of a subject of creation can be understood as intertwined evolution with an idea, an idea that gradually acquires form and comes to orient the subject. The enactment of such an evolving idea is then what drives and guides a subject of creation.

5 The notion of experimental practice is mainly derived from the discussion of Foucault's account of ethical practices and the exercise of freedom in Chapter 3. It should be recalled that these practices are framed by their specific problematisation of the present (in a way like a site of struggle) in respect to what they belabour in their exercises. At the same time they are exercising freedom in how they establish relations to and form conduct in regard of their specific framing, which is a form of indifference to existing laws or rules of conduct (something Badiou would term subtraction, see Badiou, 2007a) or indeed self-determination – the latter is one of the main goals of the activities subsumed under the care of the self.

6 Badiou puts the consequences of this supplementation forcefully: "Let us not underestimate the fact that there is something that appears as such and that in a way was not there before, so that there is a supplementation, or a creation, a positive dimension, and that remains the point around which everything hangs together. But, at the same time, we would not understand what is at issue, if we did not see that this supernumerary element has a completely deregulating function in the regime of appearance of the situation itself and, thus, in a certain sense, it does destroy something after all, namely, it destroys a regime of existence, if I can say so, which was previously given." (Bosteels and Badiou, 2005)

Let us at this point briefly return to two overarching notions from the subheading of this thesis, materialist abstraction and enactment of ideas. Materialist abstraction has been introduced in order to address the question how conceptualisations of processes in the world can be founded in, or be constructed in compatibility with the world and processes that both constitute and change this world.⁷ The attempt to secure this connection between world and conceptualisation of it proceeded by two modes of materialist abstraction, conceptual and social, non-theoretical.

First, conceptual abstraction produces the generic framework and procedure of creation, starting with the conception of worlds via a double determination, from ‘below’ and ‘above’, as it were. On one side (‘below’) being is asserted to merely provide for the material universe to exist in-itself, and on the other side (‘above’) the logical augmentation of this universe that constitutes a world is the result of the material processes (enacted by subjects) of re/producing such a logical organisation. On the basis of this conception of worlds, the nonexistent is established as the paradoxical object that has an objective (universal) referent in the present world but is localised according to a different (global) logical principle, and therefore in a different, as of yet inaccessible or non-existing world. The nonexistent presents the pivotal concept for the generic procedure of creation in that – once exposed by the subject through an evental production, and in form of a prototypical relation of a genuinely new logical principle – it instructs the immanent operation of relating towards the radical transformation of a world.

Second, social abstraction is what gives rise to the subjective capacity for creation from within a given world, it is an immanent process non-reliant on theoretical construction – although, as has been argued, the conceptual understanding of the existence of the outside and abstract possibility of radical novelty can support or even trigger the formation of the subjective capacity for creation. The subjective capacity for creation is what enables the subject to differ, as it were, from the indifferent subject and to engage in the problematisation of the present and an evental production, within a (site of) struggle. Social abstraction is therefore the

7 Brassier puts the problematic behind this question concisely: “The challenge for materialism is to acknowledge the reality of abstraction without conceding to idealism that reality possesses *irreducible* conceptual form. Thus materialism must be able to explain what constitutes the reality of conceptually formed abstraction without hypostatising that form.” (Brassier, 2014)

immanent process that allows the generic concept of the procedure of creation to be bound to any given worldly situation.

An idea has been proposed as the most compressed account of what gives orientation and subsistence to the concrete and situated procedure of creation. The authorisation and orientation of the procedure of creation has been argued to derive from both of materialist abstraction's modes, conceptual and social abstraction. Completely anonymous and generic in its conception, an idea is thought to come to contain the guiding orientation for any actual procedure of creation from the situated, real processes of contracting the world to a site of struggle down to the eventual production (exposition of the nonexistent) and from there expanding the prototypical logical principle through the creation of a new world. The enactment of an idea is therefore synonymous with the procedure of creation carried out by a subject of creation.

In this sense, materialist abstraction and enactment of ideas present the two major, entwined notions (or brackets) for the procedure of creation in that they denote, on one side, the abstract but materially anchored condition of possibility of creation and, on the other side, the compressed functional figure of the concrete, subjective procedure of creation – which is in turn authorised and oriented by the two modes of materialist abstraction.

Contribution of this thesis to contemporary discourse

The main proposition of this thesis regards the general viability of situated acts of creation, namely that creation in the strong sense of bringing radical novelty into existence is indeed thinkable and possible. This abstract and generic possibility has been posited as the initial hypothesis and has been corroborated by the rudimentary conceptual framework developed in the previous chapters. With the validation of the abstract possibility of radical novelty, the proposed model of creation confirms the act of creation – in its radical sense, *creation ex nihilo* – as an intelligible undertaking. As such, it can act as authorisation and can offer a rational basis for a kind of faith to engage in the creation of a genuinely different world – against common sense and immanent experience but based on rational belief – since the

possibility in thought revives the reasonable hope for real, radical difference vis-à-vis the apparently firm and natural coherence of any given world.

Further, the scope of transformation that the process of creation entails has been somewhat delimited in that we came to understand that the creation of a new world does not entail the complete destruction of the world it originates from – down to the infinity of local branches of a world's logical organisation. What really changes are not so much all the small things we hold on to, and neither does a new world mean the eradication of everything we know, value and live and struggle for. Radical change operates on the global logic of a world and revolves around the singular, site-specific term the event exposes – which precisely presents a framing of the subsequent transformation by what has been lived and struggled for so far by the subjects engaged in this transformation. Genuine transformation of a world's logic most radically affects what is related, or has to be related, under the new logical principle, to the evental site – the site of struggle supplemented by its inexistent. Most relations or regions of the pre-evental world might merely require modifications in order to be accommodated under a new logic, a logic that is nonetheless radically different on the global level and the logical principle that informs its construction.

In regard of the compatibility of the model of creation with actual, situated operations of creation, it has been argued that it cannot be a matter of prescribing a specific act by its generic conceptualisation but rather that a worldly capacity that exists independently from the theorisation of it can link up with and employ generic conceptions in the specific ways an actual procedure requires. Arising from the subjective capacity for creation, actual engagements in the procedure of creation can derive crucial conceptual anchor points from the generic concept that can assist in developing orientation and modes of navigation, as well as to interrogate and revise the operations of the procedure, once stepping back in order to abstract from and reflect on our doings. It is due to the model's generic nature that this model can be of use for actual operations of creation that are often not quite consistent, unfold in the flurry of happenings, and are too immersed and entangled. It can do so by helping to formulate relevant 'global' questions in regard to specific 'local' circumstances, movements and orientations, if this or that problem is really connected to the struggle at hand, or if a certain engagement does in fact

constitute a quest for genuine transformation and not mere modification, desire for inclusion, and so forth.

Then again, is it really enough to posit the compatibility and applicability of the generic conception of creation to actual processes of transformation on the claim to theorise the world generically from a materialist perspective, suggesting traction on reality, no matter for which specific situation, process or struggle? In other words, does the notion of materialist abstraction suffice to ensure the concept of creation having any real purchase on the worldly procedures it tries to grasp and support? In order to explore this problematic, some positions within the current of communisation will be briefly examined, for it might be informative to understand how the latter's refusal to specify any positive content for the process of realising communism – rather foregrounding generic conceptions for revolutionary change, required by the wholesale negation of the capitalist class relation constitutive of the totality of our present experience – still yields a constructive force that is claimed to have efficacy in specific circumstances and struggles (under conditions arising from the latter).

Having emerged “from currents of the French ultra-left in the late 1960s and early 1970s,” Benjamin Noys writes, communisation “has gained resonance as a way of posing the problem of struggle today” (Noys, 2012: 8). This problem is more precisely class struggle in its present historical specificity, where class, far from having become an obsolete concept, still remains one of the central notions for understanding capitalist social relations. Although class-belonging has lost any positive capacity for identification or empowerment, it can be understood as a constitutive “element that is foreign to everyone’s life: *the hostile embodiment of the dominating power of capital*” (de Mattis, 2014; my emphasis). It is the apparent immanence of the capitalist class relation⁸ that makes it impossible today to seriously consider any of the traditional notions of political emancipation like alternative, autonomy or secession from this defining relation. Our subjection by the class relation produces us as existing and acting as (potential) value within capitalist social relations, which is actualised and extracted through the exploitation of

8 That the capitalist class relation has become entirely immanent to our present has become apparent as such only after the erosion of the worker’s movement and arguably more so with the global triumph of neoliberal capitalism in the 1990s (see: de Mattis, 2014; Thoburn, 2013: 9).

labour. Any struggle that either seeks to employ this capitalist subject (the worker) for positive identification or to cast a zone of autonomy, resistance or alternative in which such a capitalist subject, and the social relations it reproduces with it, would somehow magically become unbound from this very subjection, is bound to fail. This is because it is ignoring either that the affirmation of the capitalist subject, of class-belonging, cannot but reproduce the capitalist class relation, or that the latter is constitutive of the totality of our present,⁹ that there is no outside of the class relation (within a world), no alternative, no autonomy. To break from this relation can therefore only take the form of annulling what is reproducing it, that is ourselves. As the group Endnotes writes:

... in any actual supersession of the capitalist class relation we ourselves must be overcome; ‘we’ have no ‘position’ apart from the capitalist class relation. What we are is, at the deepest level, constituted by this relation, and it is a rupture with the reproduction of what we are that will necessarily form the horizon of our struggles. (Endnotes, 2012: 31)

In other words, we have to become active agents of our own self-abolition, by divesting what constitutes us (capitalist class relation) of the substrate that the capitalist class relation needs to have itself reproduced (us ourselves, capitalist subjects). The supersession of the capitalist class relation concerns the world as a whole, since the latter is what we incessantly reproduce according to the former relation that constitutes us. Communisation, therefore, “is a movement at the level of the totality, through which that totality is abolished” (Endnotes, 2012: 28). With no possible positive content or form to instruct struggles within that totality, the movement “turns instead on the *limits* to struggle, where the limit is less a boundary that solicits transgression than the immanent horizon of self-overcoming” (Thoburn, 2013: 11). The limit, as horizon that appears through an impasse of its time, is generative of, is the very condition of possibility for that

9 It might be instructive at this point to recall our discussion – for its parallels to the present issue – of determination by and reproduction of a given power structure and discursive framework in the work of Foucault, in Chapter 3.

time's struggles¹⁰ – it is where communisation occurs: “in the rift that opens as this struggle meets its limit and is pushed beyond it” (Endnotes, 2012: 28).

What do these analyses then entail for the practices and struggles they theorise? When there is no positive content or form that can be derived from within a present, and when communisation, understood as the immediate enactment of communism, can only take place once a struggle is pushed beyond its limit – a push that cannot be prefigured or prescribed, since such revolutionary opening results from a qualitative shift in the dynamics of a concrete struggle itself – in what way can these negative definitions and empty forms be understood to instruct a concrete struggle? Arguably they do instruct struggles on precisely the generic and abstract level at which they are proposed and in that way present rigorous criteria for and allow general purchase on any given concrete struggle. If communisation “does not have any positive existence prior to a revolutionary situation” (*ibid.*), what is required in any contemporary struggle is, rather simply, that it expose and is pushed beyond its own, specific limit so to open to a revolutionary situation in which communisation can unfold. This is nothing other than the supplementation of a struggle with a real, yet fragile possibility for the radical transformation of its situation.¹¹ Or as de Mattis puts it:

Before the tipping-point, communist measures are by their essence ephemeral: they exist only within the space of the struggle, and are snuffed out if they do not generalise themselves. They are simply moments when overcoming is possible but not yet secured. (de Mattis, 2014)

To bring about this tipping-point, to expose and push beyond the limits of a given struggle, is the task of every struggle, which is defined, again, primarily negatively

10 See also Research & Destroy’s “Limit Analysis and its Limits”: “Each historical moment, in this sense, has a form of transcendence specific to the limits it presents for proletarian struggles–communisation, then, is that form of overcoming which opens from the particulars of today’s struggles.” (Research & Destroy, 2014)

11 The exposure and going beyond the limit of a struggle is somewhat reminiscent of Badiou’s notion of an evental rupture (exposition of the void/inexistent opening for the revolutionary transformation of the situation via a truth procedure). It also seems to work analogous to the model developed in the previous chapters, where the world is supplemented by the nonexistent (something truly beyond the situation and site of struggle), which transforms the abstract possibility of radical novelty into a real possibility, opening for the creation of a new world.

in that nothing “implicated in the reproduction of the capitalist class relation [will be] instruments of the revolution, since they are part of that which is to be abolished” (Endnotes, 2012: 28).¹²

Whilst there exists, as has been noted, close to no positive content or form that could guide a struggle, de Mattis develops the notion of a communist measure, which denotes “an elementary form of the production of communism … whose objective is precisely to make of the enactment of communism a means of struggle” (de Mattis, 2014). Starkly compressed, a communist measure can be understood as function specific to a struggle, a deed that is conditioned by the specifics of a struggle and collectively implies those that carry it out. A communist measure “generalises itself” once “in a given situation it corresponds to whatever the situation demands, and it is thus one of the forms (perhaps not the only possible one) which respond to the necessities imposed by the situation (intense struggle against capital)” (*ibid.*). Communist measures present in this sense a positive vision of the production of communism, de Mattis argues. The particular conception of communist measures though is not entirely clear, we are given an account of what they do, where they arise from and by what they are conditioned but when it comes to what a communist measure could be, we are provided with rather disappointing set of common place notions.¹³ When stripping these from the conception of com-

12 The production of limit-exposure or revolutionary openings in a struggle can be compared with what has been termed evental production within a site of struggle in the previous chapters.

13 Most of the examples given by de Mattis describe common sense ideas of emancipatory movements (precisely not specific but general notions), if not merely a set of tactics, where it is not quite clear how communist measures thus understood could actually rupture or even specifically contribute to opening a struggle towards a revolutionary present: “Getting off on the sound of your own voice proclaiming the abolition of value, of social class or of capitalism is not a communist measure. Sharing out resources seized from the enemy, or producing in common whatever the struggle against capital needs—that could be. … Likely to be communist, then, are measures taken, here or there, in order to seize means which can be used to satisfy the immediate needs of a struggle. Likely to be communist also are measures which participate in the insurrection without reproducing the forms, the schemas of the enemy. Likely to be communist are measures which aim to avoid the reproduction within the struggle of the divisions within the proletariat which result from its current atomisation. Likely to be communist are measures which try to eliminate the dominations of gender and of race. Likely to be communist are measures which aim to co-ordinate without hierarchy. Likely to be communist are measures which tend to strip from themselves, one way or another, all ideology which could lead to the re-establishment of classes. Likely to be communist are measures which eradicate all tendencies towards the recreation of communities which treat each other like strangers or enemies.” (de Mattis, 2014)

munist measures, the latter would become an anonymous container that simply describes generically that which, under the respectively specific circumstances of a given struggle, produces, holds, revises and discards orientations, rules of conduct or visions that come to be enacted in that struggle.¹⁴ Such an anonymous – or generic – conception of communist measures seems not only more apt to de Mattis' general argument but also prevents it from being reduced, from the outset, to dogmatic or pragmatic common sense without much revolutionary capacity.

The generic formulation of communisation then means, seemingly paradoxical, that on one side it theorises its operations in general terms whilst allowing for maximal adaptation to the specifics of a given struggle.¹⁵ On the other side it is able to uphold the strong criteria of communisation against the immersed turmoil of struggles, which is to say preventing the very project of communisation from being relativised and diminished by the specific difficulties (limits) met within the process of a struggle. More specifically, with the emphasis on the destruction of the capitalist class relation (the abolition of the proletariat by the proletariat itself),

the theory of communisation links an element of the current class struggles (the end of the affirmation of the proletariat and the decline of workers' identity) to a conception of the revolution (the destruction of the class relation by the proletariat.) (de Mattis, 2014)

Whilst the latter point makes a case for theoretical abstraction (in the form of generic conceptions) having any instructive value for practices and struggles in the field of social abstraction, what is still not clear is how communisation theory can be thought to be linked with and gain traction on capitalist reality. Endnotes address this in a dense and impressive section, which is worth quoting at length in the following:

14 This adjustment of the concept of communist measure is based on the notion of idea and its enactment, as it has been developed in Chapter 5 and summarised above.

15 A quality that Thoburn characterizes, for the theory of the limit, as follows: “the absence of tactical or subjective content from the theory of the limit has decided benefits, for it compels an immanent appreciation of the specific and mutating nature and quality of limits in particular situations of struggle” (Thoburn, 2013: 11).

Communist theory sets out not from the false position of some voluntarist subject, but from the posited supersession of the totality of forms which are implicated in the reproduction of this subject. As merely posited, this supersession is necessarily abstract, but it is only through this basic abstraction that theory takes as its content the determinate forms which are to be superseded; forms which stand out in their determinacy precisely because their dissolution has been posited. (Endnotes, 2012: 34)

The posited supersession is the consequence of the analysis of what reproduces capitalist social relations (the capitalist subject, the worker) and the necessary conclusion that the destruction of the constitutive capitalist class relation can only coincide with the abolition of the subjects that reproduce it. This self-abolition is abstract in the sense that it is not apparent to immanent experience and that it leaves nothing to affirm, no (as of yet) perceivable option or path open to choice for it to be accomplished, but it is nevertheless based on a conclusion in thought of a materialist analysis of the concrete present situation:

This positing is not only a matter of methodology, or some kind of necessary postulate of reason, for the supersession of the capitalist class relation is not a mere theoretical construct. Rather, it runs ahead of thought, being posited incessantly by this relation itself; it is its very horizon as an antagonism, the real negative presence which it bears. Communist theory is produced by – and necessarily thinks within – this antagonistic relation; it is thought of the class relation, and it grasps itself as such. It attempts to conceptually reconstruct the totality which is its ground, in the light of the already-posed supersession of this totality, and to draw out the supersession as it presents itself here. (ibid.)

By understanding to be produced by the relation it theorises, communist theory can indeed say to not merely meditate some phenomena from an outside position but to think this relation from within, from a position immanent of the problem it seeks to overcome. The passage continues:

Since it is a relation which has no ideal ‘homeostatic’ state, but one which is always beyond itself, with capital facing the problem of labor at every turn – even in its victories – the adequate thought of this relation is not of some equilibrium state, or some smoothly self-positioning totality; it is of a fundamentally impossible relation, something that is only insofar as it is ceasing to be; an internally unstable, antagonistic relation. Communist theory thus has no need of an external, Archimedean point from which to take the measure of its object, and communization has no need of a transcendent standpoint of ‘withdrawal’ or ‘secession’ from which to launch its ‘attack’. (ibid.)

By thinking communist theory as necessarily operating from within the antagonistic, impossible class relation renders it immanent to revolutionary practice (the destruction of this relation), which, Brassier notes, “is supposed to bind theoretical abstraction to the reality of social abstraction independently of the representational recourse to an objective correspondence relation (which would require an ‘external, Archimedean point from which to take measure of its object’)” (Brassier, 2014). The traction of communist theory on capitalist reality is therefore achieved by the posited supersession of the totality constituted by the impossible class relation, since the abstraction of the supersession allows the adequate and immanent theoretical construction of the determinate forms of the totality to be overcome.

One major open problem that this rigorous and consistent approach faces though lies in its refutation of thinking the process of *actual* supersession at all. As Thoburn concludes,

identifying communization so directly with the limit or rift risks leaving it with a somewhat anemic existence. ... without theoretical purchase on the complex and overdetermined formations of life and struggle beyond affirmation of the encounter with limits, the risk is that the rift lifts off into a concept with transcendent explanatory value (Thoburn, 2013: 11-2)

What conditions and produces this anemic state in regard to questions of the complexities of actual struggle and praxis, concretely the problem of construction of both a revolutionary rupture within a struggle and its subsequent transformation to communism, is the wholesale refutation of any positive content and

form within the totality constituted by the capitalist class relation that could be employed to this end. More precisely, the slightly reductive conception of subjective agency as inescapably determined by its situation¹⁶ is what disallows for an account of any pre-evental engagement in the production of such a revolutionary opening or limit-exposure.¹⁷ What has been developed in this thesis under the name of the subject and procedure of creation is quite possibly a contribution to the discussion of this impasse, especially concerning the production of rifts within struggles (evental production in a site of struggle) – although completely generic and somewhat rudimentary in its outline.

This concluding, and very brief engagement with communisation theory has been undertaken in order to clarify how theory and its generic conceptions can be understood to secure traction on the reality it theorises. Based on the exposure of the capitalist class relation as immanent in and constitutive of the totality of capitalist social relations – derived from the impasses and encountered limits in the history of class struggles – communisation sets out from the posited supersession of the totality this relation constitutes: the self-abolition of the reproductive agents of the capitalist class relation is the defining feature of the revolution. This posited supersession allows in turn the identification of the determined forms that are to be overcome, which is to say the matter of the struggles in which an inherent limit might become exposed, pushing the struggle beyond it and thereby opening for the immediate creation of a communist present. “By taking the ‘posited supersession’ of the capitalist totality as its starting point,” writes Brassier, “communist theorising secures its traction upon the antagonism constitutive of social reality” (Brassier, 2014).

In a somewhat parallel fashion, although with a more general scope, the present thesis started out with the posited possibility of the creation of radical novelty, which is equally a supersession of the give world in its totality. This argument is based on the conception of worlds as logical augmentation of the universe that are

16 See Endnotes’ critique of voluntarism (Endnotes, 2012: 32-3) and Brassier’s brief discussion of Endnote’s attempt (in Endnotes, 2013) to introduce spontaneous human activity as rescue against the paradox in the activity of self-abolition, which, in turn, risks “resuscitating a transcendental voluntarism” (Brassier, 2014).

17 Not unlike Badiou’s notion of the subject, since both can be understood to be born from an evental occurrence, both subjects are in this way post-evental subjects.

incessantly re-produced by material practices, by operations of relating that are constitutive of a world's logic carried out of the subjects of such a world – which resonates with communisation's idea of reproduction of capitalist class relations. The intelligibility of the creation of radical novelty hinges on the recognition of the contingency of a given world's logical organisation, which consequently results in creation requiring the abolition of the totality of the world that is constituted by its immanent logical principle – again in a similar way to communisation theory. That the model of the procedure of creation can claim a purchase on material reality is then for two reasons, combined under the notion of materialist abstraction:

First in that the theoretical understanding of both how worlds are reproduced as well as created derives, in the end, from the analyses of the situated, subjective practices that produce the totality of social abstractions we come to experience as the world.¹⁸ The tipping point between the reproduction of a world and the creation of a new world can be understood, in the vocabulary of communisation, when a struggle meets its limit and enables the self-abolition of the subjects that reproduce the given world. Self-abolition is the consequence of a successful evental production – a production that, in difference to communisation theory, has been argued to be generally possible and outlined both in its generic operation and in regard of its immanent subjective capacity.

And second in that the condition of possibility of radical novelty, the nonexistent, is conceptually enabled by the posited possibility of radical novelty (supersession of the given world) whilst being founded, as a paradoxical case (paradoxical object) on the conception of a world as contingent logical augmentation of the objectively existing universe. This conceptual abstraction asserts the radical outside and ratifies thereby the condition of possibility for the creation of radical novelty, the possibility for a given world's genuine transformation.

18 These analyses have been, in the present case, limited to the discussion of Foucault's archeological and genealogical project through his late work in Chapter 3.

* * * * *

... today, as Fredric Jameson perspicaciously remarked, nobody seriously considers possible alternatives to capitalism any longer, whereas popular imagination is persecuted by the visions of the forthcoming 'breakdown of nature', of the stoppage of all life on earth – it seems easier to imagine the 'end of the world' than a far more modest change in the mode of production, as if liberal capitalism is the 'real' that will somehow survive even under conditions of a global ecological catastrophe. (Žižek, 1994; 1)

Let us return to the apparent contemporary inability to imagine and even consider possible any real alternative to the present condition of capitalism, as already attested by Slavoj Žižek twenty years ago. With the model of creation and the concept of the subject of creation, this thesis too does not present any specific imagination of radical difference, of a real alternative to our contemporary condition (like communisation I offer no specific content). What it does contribute to this problem is, that it makes a consistent argument for the abstract possibility of radical novelty – through creation – and entwines this abstract possibility with a worldly situated, immanent capacity that enables creation to materialise in, or more precisely as world. This thesis attempted to formulate a framework for thinking the possibility of reaching beyond what we know as our world today, and to consequently go beyond what grounds this thinking in the first place.

The proposed model of creation satisfies within reason the possibility of what is today neglected by every hegemonic, oppressive and reactive discourse: the possibility of radical novelty, thereby opposing the myth of modification and reformation as being the only way for 'change' to work. It authorises fundamental, productive negation and seeks to provide the speculative framework for the operation that gives form to what replaces (displaces) that which it became necessary to abandon: our world today. In this sense the thesis tries to contribute to the urgent questions and dilemmas of our days that have been outlined in the Introduction – and, on the level of subjective experience, range from the personal (psychological, social) disasters of exhaustion, precarious wage labour under neo-

liberal imperatives, to the deadlocked downward spiral of global parliamentary capitalism – to frame it in a more populist way for once. It answers affirmative to the question if we can reasonably hope for all this being overthrown by our own collective efforts and replaced by a radically different global organising principle, and tries to sketch out abstract but generic operating principles for thinking and enacting this affirmation.

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