The Event: Philosophical Approaches

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TUMULTUOUS UNIVOCITY: BADIOU'S MISREADING OF BEING AND THE EVENT IN DELEUZE*

Abstract: Badiou argues that Deleuze fails to liberate the concept of difference by re-inscribing the multiple into the totality of the One. This suppression of difference is supposedly carried out at the expense of the radical uniqueness of the event, which, according to Badiou, has no immediate connection to being. I investigate how Badiou reaches this conclusion and then establish his interpretation of being and the event. For Badiou, being is a *void*; therefore, the event is a radical beginning or *rupture* entirely disconnected from being. Deleuze, on the contrary, maintains a deep connection between being and the event. Furthermore, he claims that being is *univocal* — said with one singular voice — even though it is always spoken with an endless number of diverse tones and timbres. Hence, for Deleuze, the event is a *repetition* of being, a clamorous oscillation between the repetition of the same and of difference.

Next, I demonstrate how Badiou's interpretation of Deleuze goes awry. While Badiou rightly describes Deleuze's account of being as univocal, he misconceives Deleuze's concepts of being and the event that are *at once* singular and multiple. Because the event simultaneously expresses singularity and multiplicity, the difference separating them is never sterilized or suppressed. Instead, it is through this very difference that they are produced and merge into one ontological plane. Deleuze's concept of the Body without Organs allows for these different forces to occupy the same surface without silencing the clamour of being. The Body without Organs is irreparably cracked, though still one substance. Its two sides or attributes are held together through an irresolvable tension. Nonetheless, the different layers of being share the same lens. Therefore, Deleuze's concept of being is not a repetition of the same that levels down difference but a repetition of the event that continually produces it anew.

Keywords: *being, Body without Organs, difference, event, univocity*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In *Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*, Alain Badiou argues that Gilles Deleuze does not liberate the concept of difference from the repetition of the same, as is commonly understood in the literature, but rather re-inscribes the multiple into an oppressive totality of the One. This suppression of difference, he alleges, is carried out at the expense of the event's radical uniqueness which, according to Badiou, has *no relation* to identical being. In this article I will first investigate how Badiou reaches such a controversial conclusion on Deleuze, then establish what his interpretation of being and the event are in relation to Deleuze. We find that Badiou, contrary to Deleuze, conceives of being as a *void*. Thus, the event can only take place as a radical beginning or *rupture* completely disconnected from any continuity of being.

Deleuze, on the other hand, maintains a deep connection between being and the event, since for him being is univocal — that is, said in one and the same voice, even though it is spoken with an unlimited number of diverse tones and timbres. Hence, for Deleuze, the event is a repetition of being — a repetition of the same and of difference.

Next, I will demonstrate how Badiou's interpretation of Deleuze is a misreading. In one sense Badiou is correct, for he accurately describes Deleuze's account of being as *univocal*. Being, according to Deleuze, is in fact said with one and the same voice. However, Badiou's conclusion as to what this univocal being means is imprecise. He misconceives Deleuze's concepts of being and the event that are both singular and multiple — a *multiplicity* — at once a repetition and a unique instantiation. Since the event involves the expression of both forces simultaneously, the difference separating them is never subsumed under identical being, for Deleuze. Instead, it is in and through this difference that they come together as one occupying the same plane of being. The connection of being, and between beings, thus emerges out of separation and difference in Deleuze's work, not despite it. I will employ Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the Body without Organs to demonstrate how these radically different forces occupy the same single plane without silencing the differential clamour of the many. Being, though one substance for Deleuze, has a fractured or, as Abraham Greenstine puts it, kaleidoscopic lens.[1] The Body without Organs — namely, substance — is cracked at its foundations since it has two sides or attributes that are engaged in an irresolvable tension, the plane of consistency and strata. The former attribute is submersed in the infinite possibilities of the virtual, while the latter is encased in the actuality of form. Nonetheless, these different parts of being share in the same lens, thus do not partition the commonness of being even though they are

[1] Abraham Jacob Greenstine, "Diverging Ways: On the Trajectories of Ontology in Parmenides, Aristotle, and Deleuze," in *Contemporary Encounters with Ancient Metaphysics*, ed. Ryan J. Johnson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 202–223.

formally shattered. Therefore, Deleuze's conception of being is not a repetition of the same that levels down difference, as Badiou maintains, but a repetition of the event continually producing it anew.

2. BEING AND EVENT IN BADIOU AND DELEUZE

Badiou makes a highly controversial claim in *The Clamor of Being* that goes against the current of Deleuze's usual reception: according to him, Deleuze is not a liberator pushing the limits of desire, freeing up what a body can do, nor is he the embodiment of the rebellious spirit of 68', but rather an enemy to such cause, a purveyor of sterile repetitions bereft of difference. "This 'purified automaton'", Badiou insists, "is certainly much closer to the Deleuzian norm than were the bearded militants of 1968, bearing the standard of their gross desire".[2]

Instead, Badiou maintains that "Deleuze's fundamental problem is most certainly not to liberate the multiple, but to submit thinking to a renewed concept of the One".[3] However, this concept, univocal being, that Deleuze employs is not this static image but a dynamic one; it is tumultuous and rife with problems and dramas. This fact can be seen in the final passage of Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* from which Badiou takes the title of his book. Here Deleuze sings of being: "A single and same voice for the whole thousand-voiced multiple, a single and same Ocean for all the drops, a single *clamor* of Being for all beings."[4] Badiou in his criticism of this passage, however, focuses on the oneness of being, its entire vast ocean, which in turn makes him lose sight of the radically unique event occurring among singular beings — the production of difference in the thousand-voiced drops of water. If he bothered to acknowledge the shadowy double lurking around every corner of Deleuze's work — the counter-actual — Badiou would then realize that there is in fact a clamor to be found at the heart of Deleuze's concept of being — that is, a constant, real, and dynamic tension between being and the event. This tension is not superficial or in spite of the event's uniqueness, as Badiou alleges, but precisely because they are enveloped in a single, yet multiplicious, substance.[5]

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2 Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 11.

3 Ibid., 10.

4 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 304 (emphasis mine – J.R.).

5 Badiou's accusations and tone against Deleuze admittedly soften over time. This can be seen in "The Event According to Deleuze" section in *Logic of Worlds* where he posits a more conciliatory relationship between their diverging philosophies. Badiou admits here that Deleuze is in fact the "bard of divergent becomings and disjunctive syntheses". However, he "nonetheless conclude[s] that by restricting the thinking of change to the vital simplicity of the One, even if this involves the (classical) precaution of thinking the One as a power of differentiation […] Deleuze cannot really manage to

Badiou's disdain for univocal and positive being, and preference for discontinuity, the negative, and void, leads him to this skewed conclusion. However, Deleuze's being is not any less accommodating of difference or problematic just because it is said with a single — *not same* — voice. This misconception stems from Badiou's own understanding of the "relationship" between being and event, namely, one where there can be *no possible relationship*. As Bartlett et al. explain, "for Badiou, event and being are irreducible to each other and *irreconcilable*. They have no immediate relation; which is to say, their relation is void."[6] Since the event in Badiou begins (and ends) with complete fracture, a site of rupture with no connection to previous or future events, it is no wonder that he holds animosity towards Deleuze for attempting to traverse this gap. The site of the event in Badiou is so singular that "none of its elements are re-presented. They are, such that they belong to the site but not the situation, void."[7]

For Deleuze, the event is rather a repetition, of the same and difference. Yet this generation of the event out of repetition does not make it any less singular. An example of this can be found in the festival. Here we see the two types of repetition collide. There is a mechanical repetition of planning and custom — *the repetition of the same*. For the festival happens on this day and time every year like clockwork. In this regard, it is predictable, uniform, and a mere cycle marked on a calendar. However, there is another deeper and stronger underlying force at play, one that is neither boring, stable, nor predictable — *the repetition of difference*. This involves a spectacular letting go, a living in the present moment, taking part in something unique, a singular event that, while there will be other festivals in its name, could never be replicated. Hence the "apparent paradox of festivals, they repeat an 'unrepeatable'. They do not add a second and a third time to the first, but carry the first time to the 'nth' power."[8] If the original event occurs with enough force, Deleuze argues, it sends forth reverberating shockwaves, creating other unique and singular waves in its wake. This second impulse animates the first, causing the event to reoccur. Although this repetition is always with a difference because one can never recover that original moment once past. Hence, we would not repeat the festival if it were *the same* each time, year after year. Even if it contained the same tradition, agenda, and people, there would always be different

account for the *transcendental* change of worlds. It remains impossible to subsume such a change under the sign of Life, whether it is renamed as Power, Élan or Immanence. It is necessary to think discontinuity *as such*, a discontinuity that cannot be reduced to any creative univocity." Alain Badiou, *Logic of Worlds: Being and Event II* (London: Continuum, 2009), 362.

6 A. J. Bartlett, Justin Clemens, and Jon Roffe, *Lacan, Deleuze, Badiou* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 146.

7 Ibid., 147.

8 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 1.

variations involved. For Deleuze, the holiday does not just represent or remember the original event, but rather the original event commemorates the holiday each time. Thus, "it is not Federation Day which commemorates or represents the fall of the Bastille, but the fall of the Bastille which celebrates and repeats in advance all the Federation days".[9]

Live concerts are another example of this phenomenon: the music performed at these events could never be the same each time; for it is wildly different from the studio recording which remains entombed, eternally the same. Each note will never happen exactly the same, for a slightly different timing or force is applied. Deleuze makes this point clear, contrary to Badiou's assertion: for "no two grains of dust are absolutely identical, no two hands have the same distinctive points, no two typewriters have the same strike, no two revolvers score their bullets in the same manner".[10] Therefore, according to Deleuze, no two events can ever be identical. Events are not sterile automatons, but radically singular occurrences, never to be duplicated.

Yet, this does not mean, as Badiou concludes, that events are entirely ruptured and disconnected from their past and future — that is, rooted in a pure present; rather, as Bartlett et al. maintain, "all events are co-implicated for Deleuze, and that as a result the actualization of any one event expresses them all".[11] Such actualization, though, would not be able to express all events at once without what Deleuze calls a *counter-actualization*. This is a shadowy, virtual link between all the previous events that have come to pass and those to come on the plane of consistency. There is indeed a rupture or wound involved in events, as Deleuze maintains, "the eternal truth of the event is grasped only if the event is also inscribed in the flesh. But each time we must double this painful actualization by a counter-actualization which limits, moves, and transfigures it."[12] Counter-actualization, then, is the suture of the evental rupture; however, it is not a restricting bandage. It does not smother difference and future possibilities, as Badiou claims, since it gives "to the crack the chance of flying over its own *incorporeal* surface area, without stopping at the bursting within each body; it is, finally, to give us the chance to *go farther than we would have believed possible*. To the extent that the pure event is each time imprisoned in its actualization, *counter-actualization liberates it, always for other times*."[13] Counter-actualization, therefore, "is why there are no private or collective events", rather, "everything is

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., 26.
11 Bartlett, Clemens, and Roffe, *Lacan, Deleuze, Badiou*, 142.
12 Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 182.
13 Ibid., 182 (emphasis mine – J.R.).

singular, and thus both collective and private, particular and general".[14] New events cannot simply spring up out of the void, as Badiou would have it; rather, the novel surfaces from out of an impersonal fog.

This fog, though impersonal, is not, as Badiou would have it, an "empty place", a "purified automaton", monotonous — that is, lacking novelty.[15] On Badiou's account, Deleuze allegedly engages not in the repetition of difference but in the very act of representation, *the repetition of the same*, he claims to denounce in this counter-actualized web of virtual connections. It is supposedly a method of aristocratic thinking where "every presented element is immediately represented in terms of its parts".[16] To avoid domination by the totalizing state, Badiou argues, the event must occur *without any precursor*. It must arise from "absolute beginnings".[17] Badiou ignores here, however, the importance or authenticity of the tension between act and counter-act, being and event, matter and form in Deleuze. He asserts that whenever Deleuze employs these sets of pairs, this is only a "superficial tension" made to establish the One at the expense of the many.[18] "For it is by the experimentation with as many nominal doublets as is necessary that the verification, under constraint, of the absolute unity of sense is wrought."[19] However, this assertion is unfaithful to the textual evidence that is littered with the employment of meaningful and *real* doubles — including Deleuze's coupling with Fèlix Guattari. Deleuze's successful collaboration with Guattari is proof he took difference and multiplicity seriously, "that each of us is already several".[20] For this wildly successful pairing could not have worked if Deleuze was in fact the totalizing, single-minded thinker Badiou alleges. Thus, their coupling was not superficial but embedded in the very core of Deleuze's thought. And it is through this collaboration that the concept of the Body without Organs emerges.

3. Deleuze and Guattari's Body without Organs

For Deleuze and Guattari, "the Body without Organs is not a dead body", as Badiou maintains, "but a living body all the more alive and teeming once it has blown apart the organism and its organization".[21] Hence the Body without Organs resists the organism's totalizing pressures for all its parts to work solely towards the functioning

14 Ibid., 173.
15 Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*, 11, 14.
16 Bartlett, Clemens, and Roffe, *Lacan, Deleuze, Badiou*, 147.
17 Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, 91.
18 Ibid., 38.
19 Ibid., 28.
20 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia II* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 1.
21 Ibid., 30.

of the whole. Being, for Deleuze, does not inflict these pressures, contra Badiou, but rather alleviates them. Indeed, "the Body without Organs is in fact produced as a whole, but a whole *alongside the parts* — a whole that does not unify or totalize them".[22] So, in one sense Badiou is correct, for Deleuze's substance *is* univocal. It moves towards the virtual, the immanent plane of consistency where all substances coagulate and flow together as one. However, his assumption that the simplicity of Being sacrifices the manifold differences between beings and their events is misplaced. For Deleuze's explanation of substance is both singular and teeming with differences, what he calls a *multiplicity*, which is something outside the usual dyad of the one and the many. It is one generated through the many. As Deleuze and Guattari describe, substance is "not a problem of the One and the Multiple but of a fusional *multiplicity* that effectively goes beyond the one and the multiple. A *formal* multiplicity of substantial attributes that, as such, constitutes ontological unity of substance."[23] Jon Roffe supports this assertion, since, for Deleuze, "multiplicity overthrows the entirety of the one-many dyad", which is "a point that *The Clamor of Being* never registers".[24]

The Body without Organs is one substance with multiple opposing attributes: the plane of consistency and stratification, corresponding to being and the event. The plane of consistency is virtual potentiality and desire. In this attribute, the totality of all separate substances collide. Here, "the Body without Organs is permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions, by free intensities or nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles".[25] Stratification, on the contrary, prevents such flowing together, encasing this fluidity. Strata thus are the source of individual beings. Since one attribute of substance is submersed in the virtual, while the other is entangled with the actual, being is inherently unravelling, pulled in opposite directions, fractured and split asunder. So, Deleuze's substance is just as problematic, ruptured, and multiplicious as Badiou's event. However, just because being is in tension does not mean it is thereby void, lacking all connection between events; rather, substance is a simple unity between complex parts, and this tension is precisely what weaves its parts together into a whole. Hence Deleuze's concept of the Body without Organs shows how the lens of being is kaleidoscopic, fractured by its different events, while still enveloped in one common, intact lens.

In contrast to Aristotle, for whom desire moves towards the actual, the movement of desire for Deleuze travels instead towards the virtual, the immanent plane of

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22 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 326 (emphasis mine – J.R.).

23 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 154.

24 Jon Roffe, *Badiou's Deleuze* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 11.

25 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 40.

consistency where all substances flow together into one conglomerate substance. While Aristotle advocates for the concrete actuality of form as an end, Deleuze champions the raw productive power, malleability, and potency of matter. Where Aristotle seeks to pin down being by diving into its stable and identical essences and causes (what Barnes calls "the fundamental furniture of the world") — especially efficient and final causes — Deleuze instead takes Heraclitus' lead by tracing flows and fluctuations of becoming, lines of flight escaping any finality.[26] This is not to say that actuality is cast aside by Deleuze, on the contrary, the effort of becoming active is for him the only ethical task. However, contra Aristotle, actuality, for Deleuze, never surpasses its full potential, and there is no final cause or unmoved mover to speak of, let alone the efficient causality of a single particular mover (the identical, ready-made subject). For Deleuze, there are only "aberrant movements", to use David Lapoujade's term, desire without end, "the Body Without Organs".[27] While such substance involves absolute activity, intensity, and connection, it also serves as a counter-actual *limit*: for, as Deleuze says, "you never reach the Body Without Organs, you can't reach it, you are forever attaining it".[28]

Deleuze presents this concept of "*becoming* active", as opposed to *being* active, in his first work, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, and develops it further in another early book on Spinoza, *Expressionism in Philosophy*. Deleuze explains in these texts that becoming active does not mark an end to the initial passivity of matter because too much activity, excessive amounts of form, can also "stifle becomings".[29] Deleuze's emphasis on action is focused on the *movement* of becoming, the between or *intermezzo* of nothingness and being, passivity and activity, beginning and completion — not the final cause or goal of the action.[30] The process of becoming therefore keeps on churning since there is an indivisible remainder of passivity that can never be entirely activated. The cracks of passivity cannot be fully mended by the means of activity because further action would then be impossible without this opening of potentiality, and there must be a certain level of passivity in order to still be *receptive* to the sensations and feelings that compel action. Any final act is doomed

[26] Jonathan Barnes, "Metaphysics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 98.

[27] David Lapoujade, *Aberrant Movements: The Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze* (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2017), 9.

[28] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 150.

[29] Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*: *1972–1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 138.

[30] Becoming active, merging with the energy of being, the Body without Organs, thus mitigates Badiou's charges of totalization, because the pursuit is left radically open, as Derrida puts it, something "possible, to what *remains to come* and has as yet neither day nor figure." Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 4 (emphasis mine – J.R.).

from the start since, as Deleuze puts it, "the mind cannot be activated by the principles of nature without remaining passive".[31] This unavoidable residue of passivity, an indivisible remainder, causes the machine of substance (and especially its finite modes) to always malfunction before ever hitting full stride.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari return to the issue of becoming active and the necessary retention of passivity. It is no coincidence that their concept of substance, "The Body without Organs" — the most active and joyous state imaginable — takes the form of an egg:

> The BwO is the egg. But the egg is not regressive; on the contrary, it is perfectly contemporary, you always carry it with you as your own milieu of experimentation, your associated milieu. The egg is a milieu of pure intensity, spatium not extension, Zero intensity as principle of production. [….] [T]he egg always designates this intensive reality, which is not undifferentiated, but is where things and organs are distinguished solely by gradients, migrations, zones of proximity. The egg is the BwO. The BwO is not "before" the organism; it is adjacent to it and is continually in the process of constituting itself.[32]

Substance, for Deleuze, is thus never fully formed or decided in advance, which therein lies its power and possibility. Its organs are never fixed in place, which makes a smoother surface for an even greater passage of flows and continuity. Deleuze first mentions the concept of the Body without Organs directly in *The Logic of Sense.* Here he describes substance as a "liquid principle capable of binding all of the morsels together, and of surrounding such a breaking apart in the full depth of a body (finally) without organs".[33] The concept takes up a more central role in his first collaboration with Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*. Again, an emphasis is placed here on fluidity and flux. The Body without Organs, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is "a pure fluid in a free state, flowing without interruption, streaming over the full surface of the body".[34] One side of the assemblage constructs the Body without Organs, coagulating the heterogeneous parts, the other releases them to homogeneously glide across it in every direction, joining virtually through an abstract machine with all the other distinct Body without Organs on one infinitely uncoiling and recoiling plane of consistency. From the perspective of this attribute, the totality of all separate substances collide, "they are

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31 Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 26.

32 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 164.

33 Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 216.

34 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 8.

sewn up, cooled down, and tied together [by a] great abstract machine".[35] Stratification, on the contrary, prevents such flowing together; like Aristotle's form, it coagulates and encases the fluidity of matter. Although, for Deleuze, strata are the source of individuality and subjectivity — not matter. As Deleuze and Guattari describe, "strata are Layers, Belts. They consist of giving form to matters, of imprisoning intensities or locking singularities."[36] Consequently, too much stratification blocks the continuous and free flow of matter. Contra Aristotle, actuality can hinder potential, matter need not always desire form. Form can prevent linking up with all the other substances on the plane of consistency, which, for Deleuze, is desire's true aim. Thus, the virtual is not some derivative mode of existence; rather, for Deleuze, it "must be defined as strictly a part of the real object as though the object had one part of itself in the virtual into which it plunged as though into an objective dimension".[37]

The Body without Organs, for Deleuze and Guattari, *is* desire, the endless desire to lose oneself in the totality of substance. This desubjectification or "deterritorialization" is a method of becoming active. However, Deleuze and Guattari warn that to accelerate too quickly, fully reaching the limit of activity, only leads instead to collapses, cancerous mutations, and death.[38] They warn that:

> you have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn. […] You don't reach the BwO, and the plane of consistency by wildly destratifying. […] This is because the BwO is always swinging between the surfaces that stratify it and the plane that sets it free. If you free it with too violent of an action, if you blow apart the strata without taking precautions, then instead of drawing the plane, you will be killed, plunged into a blackhole, or even dragged toward catastrophe. Staying stratified — organized, signified, subjected — is not the worst that can happen; the worst that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse, which brings them back down on us heavier than ever.[39]

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35 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 158.

36 Ibid., 40.

37 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 209.

38 Lapoujade shares a similar concern, questioning: "Isn't there a real danger inherent in aberrant movements? If at each step we are obliged to push to the limits of what we are capable of, don't we risk being carried beyond those limits? How do aberrant movements not become part of a process of self-destruction?" Lapoujade, *Aberrant Movements*, 34. The solution offered by Deleuze is caution, calm, patience. Never go full force; always hold something back in virtuality; that is, "*gently* tip the assemblage, making it pass over to the side of the plane of consistency. It is only there that the BwO reveals itself for what it is: connection of desires, conjunction of flows, continuum of intensities." Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 161 (emphasis mine – J.R.).

39 Ibid., 160–161.

Deleuze knows this all too well from personal experience: he suffered an 8-year-long collapse after publishing his first book, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*. Deleuze characterized this sterile, silent period as "a hole in my life".[40] However, it is not the case that nothing was happening inside this blackhole, Deleuze assures, for passivity itself involves a peculiar kind of activity. He speculates that "maybe it's in these holes that movement takes place. Because the real question is how to make a move [to become active], how to get through the wall, so you don't keep banging your head against it."[41] So, Deleuze and Guattari instead advise to use a "very fine file" rather than a sledgehammer when becoming active since too much activity done too quickly without caution could lead to further breakdowns and collapses.[42] They caution the art of partial dosages, spurts of activity, packets of form, rather than exorbitant overdoses. Through this method, Deleuze eventually broke through his breakdown with a flurry of activity, doing so sustainably, at a measured pace, knowing just how easy it would be to fall back into the hole.

In *Difference and Repetition* — one of the first few publications after Deleuze pulled himself out of the self-described blackhole — he explains that the self is "larval," cracked, composed of thousands of passive syntheses of habits that both cover over and crawl with differences. "Selves are larval subjects", Deleuze declares, and "the world of passive syntheses constitutes the system of the self, under conditions *yet to be determined*, but it is the system of a *dissolved self* ".[43] Subjectivity is larval because it is always caught somewhere in *between* (at least) two states: the self is found at the threshold of passivity and activity — in fact, it is this very threshold. This passive aspect of the Deleuzian self does not render it impotent, effete, incapable of enacting events (loving, creating art, and engaging in science and politics) as in Badiou's reading.[44] For Deleuze, this virtuality is the very source of its power because there are certain torsions and movements that only an embryo can withstand. A so-called "fully developed" subject would be obliterated under such high levels of intensity and pressure since it would not be pliable enough and could not come undone, unformed as needed. The larval subject's body, the "fractured I", can thus exercise a capacity to be affected in an infinite number of ways, despite, or

40 Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 138.

41 Ibid.

42 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 160.

43 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 78 (emphasis mine – J.R.).

44 Deleuze would in fact concur with Badiou's characterization of the subject: for Badiou, "A subject *is manifested locally*. It is solely supported by a generic procedure. Therefore, *stricto sensu*, there is no subject save the artistic, amorous, scientific or political." Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (London: Continuum, 2012), 17. This theory mirrors Deleuze's statement that "there is no theoretical subject […] there is only a practical subject". Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 104.

rather because of, its remaining passivity.[45] The key to treating the shattered self is thus to *becom*e active, not to *be* active, shifting the focus from the end of action to action itself as an end. The subject, Deleuze explains, is *processual*, it "becomes more and more active and less and less passive. It was passive in the beginning, it is active in the end. This confirms the idea that subjectivity is in fact a *process.*"[46] Importantly, Deleuze does not say in this passage "no longer passive", but "*less* passive". There are still residuals left behind from the initial passive state no matter how active we become, no matter how plugged in we are to the universal substance.

So, Badiou's criticisms miss their mark: there is always an opening in Deleuze's univocal being, an Outside, a crack on its surface for the unique event to pass through, occur and reoccur. It is on this surface of the Body without Organs that we "sleep, live our waking lives, fight — fight and are fought — seek our place, experience untold happiness and fabulous defeats: on it we penetrate and are penetrated; on it we love."[47] From this depiction, it is abundantly clear that Deleuze's understanding of being is not sterile or robotic, but engenders variation and difference — the evental ruptures of love, the dramas and struggles of political beings — no less than Badiou's interpretation. His assumption that the simplicity of Being in Deleuze sacrifices the manifold differences between beings in a totalizing, suppressing manner is misplaced. The univocal substance of the Body without Organs is not a catatonic, difference suppressing blob, as Badiou would have it; nor is it the repetition of the same, but is rather teeming with life, producing variation and difference through repetition. Nonetheless, the Body without Organs is still *one* substance, voice, and assemblage, despite its multitudinous echoes and pitches travelling in opposite directions. Badiou wrongly thinks that because the interplay between the one and the many sprawls across a single surface, the Body without Organs, the opposition between these forces is resolved along with their differences. However, Deleuze is not advocating for a reconciliation of opposites; on the contrary, for an expansion and intensification of them. If anything, this re-conception of substance is more tolerant of difference precisely due to its fluidity and mobility. Therefore, univocity of being does not mean, as Badiou misunderstood, that the tension and difference at the heart of substance is resolved; instead, the disjointure of its different attributes not only persists but is precisely what makes them one substance in the first place.

4. Scotus' Formal Distinction and Deleuze's Univocal Substance

Deleuze and Guattari use the analogy of a lobster to describe substance, which has one body immanently connecting two very distinct claws: the strata capturing flows

45 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 259.
46 Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 112.
47 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 150.

of matter and the freedom of the plane of consistency allowing them to pass into each other.[48] The two opposing claws do not make the lobster more than one entity, nor does it exclude the difference between the left and the right claw. There is a unity in and because of their difference. Deleuze and Guattari explain this inseparable pair, the double bind of attributes, as Spinoza's lobster God of substance: this *one* creature, the Body without Organs, has *two* distinct claws. The right pincer of strata organizes the molecular into molar compounds of form, while the left, the plane of consistency, de-stratifies and fluctuates as molecular matter. However, though wildly differentiated, the two articulations of being occur in one and the same fluid motion: "the Body without Organs is itself the plane of consistency, which becomes compact or thickens at the level of strata", so, "there is a communication between these two lines and planes; that each take nourishment from the other, borrow from the other".[49]

Deleuze's lobster God of the Body without Organs is modelled on Spinoza's monstrous single substance. Substance, according to Spinoza, is one, with at least two attributes (that we know of, thought and extension) and an infinity of finite modes — a tumultuous and difference affirming univocity.[50] As Nathan Widder attests, the modes "are not subsumed by substance but instead are univocal in form with substance while being distinct in essence by virtue of their power".[51] However, this formal distinction does not mean it is 'as if' they are one; the distinction between attributes (and the modes that express them) is *real* even though it is formal. There is thus a real "univocity between substance, its attributes, and its modes".[52] In this coexistence of substance and its attributes, "*all* attributes express the essence of substance; *each* attribute expresses an essence of substance".[53] The "all" and the "each" are formally distinct but express the same substance through infinitely variating attributes. The attributes, Deleuze explains, "are infinite forms of being, unlimited, ultimate, irreducible formal reasons; these forms are common to God whose essence they constitute, and to the modes which in their own essence imply

48 Ibid., 40.

49 Ibid., 40, 423.

50 Deleuze, of course, like with all of his "monstrous creations", takes liberties with his use of Spinoza's substance. The most noticeable of which is his re-prioritization of finite modes over identical substance. As he confesses in his comprehensive book on Spinoza, "What interested me most in Spinoza wasn't his Substance, but the composition of finite modes. I consider this one of the most original aspects of my book. That is: the hope of making substance turn on finite modes, or at least of seeing in substance a *plane of immanence* in which finite modes operate." Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 11.

51 Nathan Widder, "The Univocity of Substance and the Formal Distinction of Attributes: the Role of Duns Scotus in Deleuze's Reading of Spinoza," *Parrhesia* 33 (2020): 152.

52 Widder, "The Univocity of Substance," 152.

53 Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 50.

them".[54] The attributes of substance express God, but in turn, God expresses them; therefore, there is one simple voice to these two distinct modes of being, God as *natura naturans* expressing all of the attributes, and each attribute of nature, *natura naturata*, a re-expression of the original. Therefore, Badiou was incorrect to assume that univocity of being suppresses difference in beings, as there are infinite ways to express the same substance. As Deleuze asserts, "There is no superiority, no eminence of substance over the attributes, nor of one attribute over another. Each attribute 'expresses' a certain essence."[55] Immanence of being is established because "all the essences, distinct in the attributes, are as one in substance, to which they are related by the attributes".[56] Consequently, substance is simultaneously univocal and expressed in many ways. As Greenstine puts it, "the self-sameness of being is not despite the differences between beings but is, rather, on account of them".[57] Hence Deleuze's Body without Organs shows how the lens of being can be kaleidoscopic, fractured by different events (attributes) and subjects (finite modes), while still being part of one common, intact lens (substance).

Badiou misses this fact because he attempts to view univocal substance through the castrated lens of Lacanian dualism, fixating on the single-bodied lobster while ignoring its doubly articulated pincers, the difference produced through the unity of one substance. Badiou significantly ignores the ample evidence of Deleuze's generation of difference through repetition and obsession with the double.

In Deleuze, being is said only once while still holding dynamism and affirming difference because its attributes are *formally* distinct. Deleuze employs Scotus' formal distinction to support this claim. Being and the event are held in common while still maintaining different formal senses. According to Nathan Widder "this commonness is not an identity, it does not reduce the diversity of differences it encompasses".[58] Instead, Scotus understands individual difference as something *positive* through the formal distinction between the commonality of being and the *haecceity* or "thisness" of the individual. What is common in being "*is predicated in the same sense* as everything that is", but "it is not in the same modality", which is what individuates, and this modification of attributes does not alter the commonality of being.[59] Being as common includes everything as things, while the *haecceity* denotes it as *this* specific thing. Together "they compose the individual without really

54 Ibid., 49.
55 Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 51.
56 Deleuze, *Spinoza*, 51.
57 Greenstine, "Diverging Ways," 203.
58 Widder, "The Univocity of Substance," 158.
59 Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 63.

being distinct, since they form a single reality".[60] The distinction between them is *formal* — that is, virtual — without being any less real. For "their distinction is not merely conceptual", fictitious simulacrums as Badiou portrays, "since they are not products of the mind but the real foundation of the mind's abstractions".[61] Because "formal distinction is a difference internal to the thing that does not render the thing composite. The infinity of each attribute entails that none can be considered a potential that is actualized by another."[62] Being is thus one because it is formally many — a multiplicity. As Deleuze puts it, in Scotus, there are "two orders, that of formal reason and that of being, with the plurality in one perfectly according to the simplicity of the other".[63] Hence through an application of Scotus' formal distinction, we can see how the lens of being in Deleuze can be fractured by events while still being part of one common, intact plane. Badiou was therefore incorrect: the unity of being in Deleuze does not supress its diversity, and the uniqueness of the event does not mean being is and can only be void and unrelated to the event. As Widder attests, the modes "are not subsumed by substance but instead are univocal in form with substance while being distinct in essence by virtue of their power".[64] The voice of being is one, but its tone is not flat or tired. There are fluctuations in being, it is tumultuous, but this does not mean it is partitioned or segregated. Consequently, Deleuze's substance is univocal and expressed in a multitude of different ways.

Being, for Aristotle, due to its abundance of different senses, is said in many ways.[65] However, in Deleuze being is said only once while still being dynamic and difference affirming because of the formally distinct attributes. Greenstine explains it thusly, "being", for Deleuze, "is said in a single voice: being is universal, univocal. Of course there are still differences among beings, but these differences never divvy up being itself."[66] He contrasts this with Aristotle's claim that "being cannot be a genus", concluding that their ontologies ultimately take divergent paths.[67] I contend, however, that their ways intersect despite the many differences between them, and that Aristotle, like Deleuze, is a univocal thinker. As Roffe observes, "for Scotus, it is Aristotle who is the first thinker of univocity".[68] He claims that Scotus masterfully

60 Widder, "The Univocity of Substance," 162.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 64.
64 Widder, "The Univocity of Substance," 152.
65 Aristotle, "Metaphysics," in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 2001), 1026b3, 779.
66 Greenstine, "Diverging Ways," 213.
67 Ibid., 216.
68 Roffe, *Badiou's Deleuze*, 12.

maneuvers around Aristotle's being cannot be a genus issue because "the various genres or primary senses in which being is said (substance, modality, time, etc.) are said *equally*".[69] They are held in *common* while still maintaining different formal senses.[70] This is "not because of any equivocation, but because it [being] has a greater commonness and univocation than the commonness of genus".[71] This explains how substance is not just a composite for Aristotle, even though it involves the constant conjunction of form and matter. Therefore, the fact that being is said in many ways in Aristotle does not disprove its univocity. Scotus makes this point clear when he says:

> All genera, species, individuals, and the essential parts of genera, and the Uncreated Being all include "being" quidditatively. All the ultimate differences are included essentially in some of these. All the attributes of "being" are virtually included in "being" and in those which come under "being".[72]

Thus, being is one precisely because it is formally — that is, virtually — many. Hence through the lens of Scotus' formal distinction, the ontologies of Aristotle and Deleuze project one and the same voice with many different reverberations.

5. CONTRA BADIOU AND ŽIŽEK

Slavoj Žižek asserts in *Organs without Bodies* that Deleuze, in his collaboration with Félix Guattari, collapses the surface-depths distinction from his early work, thus resolves the tension of opposing forces into a single immanent plane of the Body without Organs.[73] Both his and Badiou's objections stem from their alliance with Lacanian psychoanalysis, where such an alleged fusion is considered impossible due to the indivisible remainder of the Real running amuck in the depths, constantly thwarting every attempt to construct stable surfaces. Thus, the animosity each thinker holds towards Guattari is unsurprising given his detraction from the teachings of Lacan put in practice at the *La Borde* clinic. Hence why Badiou fails to mention Deleuze's collaboration with Guattari in *The Clamor of Being*, and Žižek discredits its significance, considering it a cheap way out of the surface-depths problem.

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69 Ibid.

70 There is no priority or hierarchy between the many senses of being, as Scotus asserts, "it is not easy to discern any order among the attributes of 'being'" and that there is a "primacy of commonness and virtuality". John Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings: A Selection* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 4, 8.

71 John Duns Scotus, "Lectura 1, d," in *The Basic Quidditative Metaphysics of Duns Scotus as Seen in His Primo Principio*, ed. R. P. Prentice (Rome: Antonianum, 1970), 54.

72 Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, 4.

73 Slavoj Žižek, *Organs without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 20.

However, the issue with this dismissal of Guattari is that his contribution was essential to Deleuze's overall project, not accidental or supplemental. Deleuze himself readily admits this in his revised preface to *Difference and Repetition*: "All that I have done since is connected to this book, including what I wrote with Guattari."[74] Therefore, Badiou's silence on Guattari and Žižek's claim that Deleuze should have remained within the scope of his earlier work explains why both entirely misunderstand Deleuze's project. For each ignores the importance of the double; they see that being is said univocally and cry foul, without listening for its second articulation, Guattari.

If Badiou had bothered to acknowledge the second articulation of Guattari, he would then have realized that the molar and molecular are still in constant tension despite belonging to a single substance, as "one is supple, more molecular, and merely ordered; the other is more rigid, molar and organized".[75] As Deleuze himself confirms, "the thinker of the surfaces is married or thinks about the problem of the couple".[76] Therefore, their coupling was not something superficial but embedded in the very core of Deleuze's thought from the outset, as he himself admitted. So, Badiou's assessment of Deleuze as despotic is incorrect. He could not have maintained this position if he factored in the open collaboration with Guattari; his silence on this development was not logistical, as he claimed, but tactical.

Žižek likewise employs willful ignorance in his critique of Deleuze for joining forces with Guattari, which he claims resulted in a retreat from the surface-depth problem of Deleuze's early work. Žižek assumes that a blockage in the effort to resolve this tension caused Deleuze's cowardly turn to Guattari; but, as we have demonstrated, the work with Guattari flowed naturally from what came before. Nonetheless, Žižek asserts that "*Anti-Oedipus*, arguably Deleuze's worst book, is the result of escaping the full confrontation of a deadlock via a simplified 'flat solution'".[77] The literature surrounding this debate suggests otherwise, however. Świątkowski claims that Žižek's treatment of this issue is superficial, "the differentiations between the schizophrenia of the depths and the phantasm of the surface are actually also present in the later work".[78] Moreover, Smith claims that difference remains intact in the molar-molecular distinction, which can be directly

74 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 2.
75 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 44.
76 Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 251.
77 Žižek, *Organs without Bodies*, 20.
78 Piotrek Świątkowski, *Deleuze and Desire: Analysis of the Logic of Sense* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015), 232.

mapped onto the surface and depths.[79] Both cases against Žižek are accurate. His characterization of an inexplicable break between the early and later collaborative works is certainly an embellishment if not, outright falsification. Since tracing the development of these concepts demonstrated the clear and logical progression from the surface-depths distinction to the Body without Organs. Furthermore, the molar-molecular distinction unfolding on the Body without Organs is teeming with drama, movement, difference and tension, despite being spoken by a single voice. Although we must be cautious for it is not an exact replication of the surface and depths, as this would fall back into Lacanian dualism. For:

> There is no question of establishing a dualist opposition between the two types of multiplicities, molecular machines and molar machines; that would be no better than the dualism between the One and the multiple. There are only multiplicities of multiplicities forming a single assemblage, operating in the same assemblage: packs in masses and masses in packs.[80]

The inadequacy of Badiou's and Žižek's interpretation of Deleuze was demonstrated by appealing to their inability to think outside of Lacan's dualistic framework and recognize Guattari's contribution as anything more than a regression. The attempt to apply the concepts of the Body without Organs and the molar-molecular distinction to the sets of the one and the many, in the case of Badiou, and the surface and the depths by Žižek, consequently missed Deleuze's and Guattari's entire project, which takes place outside of this rigid dichotomy, resituating it on one and the same plane. However, this does not result in the cessation of the tension between opposites — as proven by the unending oscillation between the molar and the molecular — or that the difference of the many are violently swallowed by the One, which was the contrary effect of the Body without Organs resisting all totalization of the whole. Rather, that the one is doubly articulated; it generates different attributes in and through its unity. In order to establish this double-bind, Guattari was not a scapegoat for Deleuze, as Žižek wrongfully claimed, but essential and anticipated throughout his entire project. The seeds were virtually sown even before the historical coupling took place.

In *Difference and Repetition*, the surface and depths, though distinct, are said with one single and same voice. However, in *The Logic of Sense*, this distinction becomes more about the surface and its effects. In the collaborate work, starting with *Anti-Oedipus*, this redeployment of the depths into the surface continues and intensifies: the problem shifts to the Body without Organs and its populations of molar and

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79 Daniel W. Smith, "From the Surface to the Depths," in A *Deleuzian Century?*, ed. Ian Buchanan (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 92.

80 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 35.

molecular machines. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari further expanded upon these concepts. Here there is no longer a fixed or positional distinction: the molecular plane of consistency and the molar strata sprawl across the same substance, the Body without Organs. However, this univocity of the Body without Organs does not entail, as Badiou and Žižek misunderstood, abandoning the tension between the molar and molecular. Instead, the difference between these two attributes not only survives but is precisely what makes them one fluid substance.

6. CONCLUSION

We investigated Badiou's charges against Deleuze that his concept of univocal being annuls the unique singularity of the event. We found Badiou's argument lacking, acquitting Deleuze. According to Badiou, the rift between being and the event is evidence that being is a void, discontinuous, fractured, and thus events are unconnected, singular, ruptures. While he was right to categorize Deleuze as a univocal thinker, he was wrong to conclude that being, for Deleuze, was any less fractured or problematic. Deleuze's description of the event involves the repetition of the same and of difference, actualization and counter-actualization. As seen in his concept of the Body Without Organs where substance is both singular and problematic, with two sides pulling in opposite directions. However, it is precisely this rift between formally distinct attributes that connects being and event and produces difference. Deleuze's response to Badiou gives us hope that in a world splintered by recent events, connection and relationships can always be re-established.

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