



Volume Three, Number One

Refuse become subject: The educational ethic of Saint Paul

A. J. Bartlett

Monash University, Australia

Abstract:

This essay is a first sketch of an effort to mark out an ethic of care, of welfare or pastoralism, as an ethic of truths: as one strand in the knot of a fully developed concept of education. It attempts to provide a demonstration of this ethic as operating in the epistolary discourse of Saint Paul. I trace out Paul's discourse and the framework of this concept by working through several key concepts of Alain Badiou, relative to his truth/knowledge distinction.

‘As for knowledge, it will come to an end’ (Cor.1.13 8).

0

Education is constituted by four key components: the epistemological, the pastoral, the political, and the psychological. Or: a theory or theories of knowledge, an ethic of care, a politics and a psychology of the subject. Thus: the question of knowledge (what constitutes knowledge, its value and use, and the forms of its transmission); the question of ‘care’ or what are called today ‘duties of care’ (care of the self and of others); the question of organisation, of funding, of the collective provision of education; the question of the relation between educators and educated, of learning, and of assumptions concerning the capacity of individuals to learn. At the level of their conception and their address, their interpretation and their use these component parts betray an ambiguity or better a disjunction – that between truth and knowledge. Following Badiou

[w]hat this amounts to, in fact, is thinking 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. The key to the problem is the mode in which the procedure of fidelity traverses existent knowledge, starting at the supernumerary point which is the name of the event’ (Badiou 2005:327).

The essay presents the force and structure of Paul’s discourse as exemplary of ‘an education by truths’ (Badiou 2005b: 13) *and*, critically, as a demonstration in turn of the means of holding to it. In terms of the component parts of education – education understood as ‘by truths’ – this essay treats Paul’s epistles as setting out an exemplary pastoralist ethic. This analysis, plainly, is thoroughly permeated by Badiou’s key

philosophical categories of event, truth and subjectivity. Simply, these concepts and categories (Cf. Badiou 2005: 4) make this demonstration possible. They open up Paul's discourse to *what is there* and in this case with regard to what is education. Being by *truths* the education of Paul will not appear as what it is *known* to be. We do not explain these concepts and categories in any detail here.¹ We work through these concepts and categories, working through Paul who is, after all, 'our contemporary' (Badiou 2003: 4 & Maggi 2009): all the more so given that his ethic has nothing in common with the pastoralism of the contemporary state.²

1.

Paul's ethic – let's call it that in its strictest sense, as a practice and effect constitutive of some body – does not take a representative form.³ Rather, the form it takes is one forged in an ever-mobile effort to keep the state at a prescribed or declared distance. As he says at the beginning of the epistles to the *Romans*, he is 'set apart' from Law on the one hand and from the power of Rome on the other, and this singularity manifests itself in several ways. He preaches only where the gospel has never been preached; he traces new paths, *diagonals* as Gunter Bornkamm says, across Asia Minor, establishing new points and forging, out of nothing, new relations (Bornkamm 1971: 50); his doctrine, he says, is given 'neither by human commission nor from human authorities' (Gal.1.1. 11-12)⁴ and the 'historic' apostles as with the lords of Rome, what they are, is 'nothing to him'; his authority, such as it is – the cause of daily anxiety and much suffering (Cor. 2.11. 23-29) – he says, is for 'building up and not tearing down' (Cor. 2.10.8); he addresses anyone at

¹ The reader very unfamiliar with Badiou's work can refer to A. J. Bartlett & Justin Clemens (ed.) *Badiou: Key Concepts*, London, Acumen, 2010.

² Passolini, wrote a script, never filmed, transplanting Paul to 'the end of times' of late capitalism.

³ Readers may think of the work of Michel Foucault in this context. There is no room to go into the divergences: this is not a 'to and fro essay' – a he said/she said. This essay follows the philosophical trajectory set out in the work of Alain Badiou. Pastoralism, ethics, care: all these are thought with regard to Badiou's concept of truth. Even in his late return to the subject, Foucault requires no such concept.

⁴ References to Paul's Epistles are taken from either the King James Bible, the NRSV or from the authors cited (Badiou, Boyarin, Breton).

all – gentile, Jew, man, woman, slave and free; he has become, he says, with a radical commitment to a radical universalism, ‘all things to all people’ (Cor. 1.9. 22); upon this ‘foundation’ he says ‘each builder must choose with care how to build on it’ (Cor.1.3.10).

These affirmations or ‘boasts’, given ‘free of charge’ but as ‘slave to all’ (Cor.1.9.19) are radically disinterested.⁵ They are constrained by the event of the resurrection to which Paul is subject, the Spirit of which he is the servant and slave. These are not boasts of a master, boasts of the flesh, of, in the final instance, boasts in accord with the interests of the state: ‘For it is not those who commend themselves that are approved, but those whom the Lord commends’ (Cor. 2.10.18).⁶ Each move of Paul’s — be it meeting, travel, letters and so on, each, let’s note, bearing on actual events in the life of the ‘becoming subject’ — is a double movement, which is to say, a reversal in that same sense Badiou gives this in *Logics of Worlds* (2009:135-140). In affirming the Christ event – and in *practicing* this affirmation – Paul avoids the state – making it *as* nothing, step by step or, if you like, producing the nothing ‘that it is’. Of course, Paul *knows* the state. As we know, he was himself formerly a man of the state, of knowledge, of the Law; a persecutor *par excellence* and a Pharisee by training. The story of the conversion by grace is well known and it is this very life as a man of the state, an instructor, a pedagogue, that Paul, in his words, ‘dies to’. It is under the constraint of the Christ event for which no knowledge exists and of which his own encounter is the sign, that Paul makes this death available to all. In other words: to die to the Law and *thus to represent nothing*, (a logical impossibility!) is the work of love. This univocal and singular trajectory is key to the education of Paul: from the pedagogy of Law to the education of love. Love being, if we can interpolate this

⁵ It is curious that being unwaged is a critical sign of distance and separation for both Paul and Plato. Marx also put himself into that position in order to do his work. In the words of The Clash, ‘Marx was skint but he had sense/Engels lent him the necessary pence’ (‘The Magnificent Seven,’ *Sandinista*, CBS, 1983).

⁶ Plato poses a similar contention as a question in the *Euthyphro*: ‘is what is holy so because the gods approve it or the gods approve it because it is holy (1997: 10a)?’

here and extend it beyond its ‘conditional’ remit, that which supplements the lack of constitutive relation between the state and the subject: a constitution without which the state is nothing. What is at stake here is an other *orientation* to the situation as such.

Page | 197

2.

This is not, obviously, the trajectory offered up to today’s student in the marketing literature of educational institutions of all stripes, as the happy path through the pedagogical apparatus to career success – or more soberly, ‘job readiness’ – attests. Of course, the welfare of the student is a key aspect of contemporary policy and is written into the prospectus and codes of practice of every school and university, but this ethic, orienting as it does its subject (to use its words) to that ‘which contributes to our democracy’, has ‘respect for the rights of property’, ‘actively support[s] economic development (and the conservation of the environment)’, and as such gives ‘cohesion, identity and purpose’, enabling subjects to gain their ‘entitlements’ and carry out their duties *within* the prevailing political and legal framework’, is akin to the force of Law as Paul approached it.⁷ Certainly, transmitted as policy, it has the status of imperative in the discourse. As such, we must not fail to recall that the pedagogy of the state precisely does remake the student in its image, making it die in a certain respect. What the state ‘makes die’ is the capacity any one has to be something other than that which is determined by the state. This capacity is not an essence. It is a structural disposition ontologically conceivable, historically demonstrable (see Badiou 2005). For Paul this capacity – to *not* be subject to the Law, equally that of all — is manifest in the real (so to speak), as fidelity,

⁷ These citations are excerpted as a summary paraphrase from:

<http://education.qld.gov.au/corporate/qse2010&http://education.qld.gov.au/corporate/newbasics/index.html> & Education New South Wales (NSW), ‘Excellence and Innovation: A consultation with the community of NSW on public education and training,’ 2004, & https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/detresources/excellence_innovation_OhrifhgnV.pdf

We could multiply these examples ad nauseam. Suffice to say these are ‘representative’. What we see in local documents, Australian or any western country in fact, is that there is a global knowledge of education of which states and nations are local instances.

the work or practice of love. For the state, equality is given through Law, through the representative operation of inclusion. Before the Law, the Law assumes, there is nothing and so the Law as pedagogy conforms the student to the world of Law as it is; thus guaranteeing its existence as any other under the rule. It secures and makes safe and as such reproduces the very conditions of its own insistence: that there is nothing but this world, the world such as it is known.

The price to pay, the one Paul will not pay, is the lack of truth and the corresponding incapacity to think oneself in the world other than as subject of Law. Under the Law all knowledge passes through Law, all existence is guaranteed by Law, one cannot think that which the Law is not, for such a thought necessarily appears as nothing before the Law. Such circumscription guarantees the certainty, and even the rights of the state 'subject'. It is a powerful and manifest 'reality'. However, for Paul, none of this, as powerful, determining and constant as the Law is, is true. To be instructed in that which is not true calls into question not only the instruction itself, but also the orientation of its rule. So Paul asks: 'what good an untrue education?'

That the statist pastoral ethic is maintained in the school today is due of course to the schools coming to occupy, under the secular conditions and determinations of the modern state, the institutional and ideological place formerly held by the Church. The very Church, Günter Bornkamm says, that confers on Paul the 'innocuous dignity of sainthood' and yet 'nevertheless draws its life from sources other than Paul' (Bornkamm 1971: xxvi). For Bornkamm among others (cf. Taubes 2003) the Church is solidly built on the petrified rock and not on the mobile epistles. Bornkamm notes 'a coating of dust lies on the letters like a pall' (1971: xxv). The authority Paul has in the Church, Bornkamm says, came at the price of his domestication and it is only at times of ferment

or crisis in the church that Paul's voice has been heard in its properly revolutionary form (Bornkamm 1971: xxvii). What Paul is not, then, is the work of the Church and, despite the sublation of Christian pastoralism into what Badiou calls 'democratic materialism' (Badiou 2009: 1), and so too into its educational apparatus, the occlusion of Paul or rather of the subject and so of truth, is maintained and even strengthened in the latter. This means, as we have said, that the care of the pedagogue introduces into its subject a lack, an *incapacity* for which – and this is crucial to its legitimacy and function – it is also the cure. For Paul, this totalising knowledge of the pedagogue is broken in two by the Christ-event and the subject will be that which maintains the division between lack and cure as the very stuff of the welfare or love (*caritas*) of all.

3.

In his *Saint Paul and the Foundation of Universalism*, Badiou, taking up the revolutionary theme, strips Paul's own conversion and the event of which it is Paul's own sign, of all its mystical and supernatural paraphernalia, leaving only the formal structure of an 'unwaged' subjective militancy as he conceives it (Badiou 2003: 77).⁸ For Badiou, the resurrection is 'a fable' (Badiou 2003: 4).⁹ But that is not the point. The point is the structuring force of this event in terms of Paul's orientation to his situation, the situation in which he finds himself and in which he operates – essentially the cities and larger towns of the Eastern Roman Empire in the first century AD.

⁸ Badiou is playing on the famous 'Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness (Rom. 4. 4-5). And in a 'back to front' way, 'The wages of sin is death' (Rom. 6. 23).

⁹ Note, (Badiou 2003: 58). Paul is distinguished from contemporary anti-philosophers because the resurrection qua event *is a fable*. The latter, he says, tie up the real event within realms of affective truths. He names Nietzsche, Wittgenstein and Lacan. We must keep in mind that the discourse of anti-philosophy, not unlike that of the hysteric in the analytic situation, *educates* philosophy.

Thus the structure and practice of a procedure that changes the world and, in effect, gives it an entirely new foundation, a new orientation, a new ethic and a new knowledge, is worth analysing even if it refers everything back to an empirical, if not quite a literal, and if not a virtual, impossibility. The point about events in the Badiouean sense (for whom they *happen*), is that for the knowledge of the situation in which they occur they literally are *impossible* (and the procedures they convoke are thus *illegal*). Hence Badiou's real concern with Paul is his exemplary commitment, his practice in support of this commitment, his ethic of not giving way on this commitment, his, in short, subjectivity: a subjectivity conditioned precisely by this real impossibility. Paul's conviction is that, under constraint of what happens for all, anyone at all can enter into the production of the new. Moreover, if the event exposes the 'hole' in the Law, this work is necessary. Otherwise one merely continues to live by and under the condition of the Law's constitutive conceit – that it knows all! With regard to the event of resurrection – a taking-place that no Law, rule, or state can know or define – everyone is equally situated. The task, then, is 'making universalising egalitarianism pass through the reversibility of an inegalitarian rule' (Badiou 2003: 104). Paul's subject, subtracted from the Law at the point of its lack, is she, he, or they who fare-well.

4.

In *Galatians* Paul writes: 'Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the Law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the Law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian' (Gal. 3.23.5). In line with the Greek text,¹⁰ Stanislas Breton¹¹, in his *A Radical Philosophy of Saint Paul* (2011), translates what is here translated

¹⁰ I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out to me.

¹¹ Breton's book is one of the two authors – the other being Bornkamm already cited –whom Badiou recommends in his *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*.

as ‘disciplinarian’ as ‘pedagogue’. The pedagogy of the Law, and Paul is speaking of Torah, Mosaic law, the law of the flesh, ‘the ministry of death’ (Cor. 2.3.7), is what must be put aside (a-voided) in order that, as Paul goes on to elaborate, an entirely new and universal subject will come to be. For Paul, this subject appears by faith alone and not merely as the effect of instruction, thus it is free of the Law insofar as it is subject to the *evental* coming of the Christ. For the coming of the latter there is no Law and this is the critical point that sustains all of Paul’s discourse. If something happened for which the Law cannot account then there are two consequences: first, the Law does not ‘know all’ (Paul is careful to never attribute the Law to God, and this is certainly part of the reason why) and cannot be our teacher; second, to account for this happening, this event, we cannot have recourse to the Law. The pedagogy of the state, such is what the Law is, the pedagogy which imprisons us in the knowledge of the state, cannot instruct us concerning this event. The state, a mere operation in Badiou’s conception, or, in other words, entirely constituted by knowledge or Law as the means of representation, cannot think. It cannot account for the event’s *happening* because such a happening – the interruption of knowledge/Law *per se* has no basis whatsoever in the knowledge of the state. Moreover, such a happening puts the state at a distance, insisting on the gap between two regimes of being, and the state cannot be ‘outside itself’ and as such divided against itself. It is precisely to this lack of knowledge, this division that Paul holds fast. And he does so as a thought – a thought being, precisely, ‘nothing other than the desire to finish with the exorbitant excess of the state’ (Badiou 2005: 282): that is to say, Paul must invent the thought of this event. Without recourse to the Law he must think – inscribe – a lawless (though *not laissez aller*) non-state form. The Law will of course seek to account for what happened, such that it *happened* and so at the level of its appearance or at the level of its disturbance.

It's clear that the state, in the dual guise of Law and power, sought to account for the disturbance the Christ-event precipitates, and Paul as Saul¹² rendered this account himself. And of course Saul-become-Paul suffered the efforts of the state to account for what had and continued to pass its knowledge by (Cor. 2. 11.16-33). We can say that this state operation of determining what it cannot know as nothing is simply nothing other than the operation of the state *tout court*. That is, the state considered as a pedagogue or as a pedagogical function, must include whatever presents itself, but can only do so in accord with its rule.

5.

It is clear that in Paul's epistles both Mosaic Law and Roman power are being subverted, though not necessarily to the same ends. This is not to equate Jewish law and Roman power. For Paul they were distinct entities, even to the point that Paul will allow that the new subject of Christ subtracted from the force of Law be submitted in its daily existence to Roman authority. The crux is that this authority has no power over the subjectivity of these 'subjects' – its power is merely over life and death.

The real question of the Law for Paul is that of its fulfilling. Paradoxically, this can only be done from the 'other side' of the break with Law itself: from the effective procedure of fidelity to the Christ-event. From this other side the Law is seen *as* Law; as a structuring effect *and* in terms of what the Law is not. Seen as structure, order, rule, which being on the other side allows, the Law is unveiled so to speak, actually illuminated as what it is and being seen as what it is, given this new point of orientation, exposes that which it is not. Again, Paul's doubling is visible here: for what this vision of the Law supports is the famous claim that Law when it comes 'increases the trespass' and

¹² Whether Paul was originally Saul or simply always Paul is contended in the scholarship. I use this here as illustrative only.

makes visible sin and that Law nevertheless holds within itself elements that only the Christ-event can open to a new subjectivity; which is central to an education by truths.

For Daniel Boyarin, whose work complements Badiou's reading of Paul, if it does not agree with it, this is the key to thinking Paul as a 'radical Jew'. The Christ-event puts Paul the Jew offside to the Jewish Law whose descendent he is thus making visible to one so situated, 'in the Spirit', that what the Law is, *is* what exposes what it is not. What the Law is not is precisely the promise between Abraham and God, a promise kept, constituted and effective in the world by faith and not by Law. Law effectively marks the failure of the 'flesh' to keep to the rigours of the promise and so Law, when it comes in, marks an ethical failure (Boyarin 1994: 77-8).¹³ The Law is not the promise. The promise is manifest in the world by faith, not by Law. Paradoxically, the Law qua representation marks the 'becoming inexistent' of the promise while the Christ-event for Paul will affirm precisely this inexistence, this 'grace that abounds' *where* 'sin increased' (Rom. 5. 20), as the very point of orientation for the renewal or inscription in the world anew of faith. Faith is the subjectivisation of what is declared 'here and now'.

Boyarin's Paul fulfils the Law by avoiding the Law precisely because the Law as active negation (an excess) is at once the mark of a reversibility that subjective fidelity makes known. Further, and in Pauline terms, this active negation issues in the demand for works as the fulfilment of the Law (Boyarin 1994). Under the condition of the event, works (and this means also circumcision, food rituals, Sabbath) are neither here nor there.¹⁴ One must not become a stranger to the state, the state says. This *indifference*, nevertheless, is the severity of the subjective effect (and the cause of much of Paul's

¹³ Today, every transgression is met with either a new law or calls for more education.

¹⁴ We should not miss the connection to the contemporary pastoralism here whereby the student will fare well under capital if he is correctly subject to the order of the labour market. It is only there that the student's access to goods will be secured (the price is debt, of course) and his/her existence counted.

anxiety and suffering with regard to the new collectives). Such things that pertain to the Law have become as nothing. Sacrifice, circumcision, status: these no longer signify nor have the effect once accorded to them. Paul decides – by deciding for the event – to not *know* these things!

6.

An entirely new mode of being in the world is enacted. Like the Socratic *orientation* to the *nomos* of the sophist, it requires a decision to not know what is known as knowledge. This is a decision and a procedure. A decision not *against* the world of the Law, but *for* the event of Christ's coming. This is crucial: that Paul *orients* himself not by the Law or the state, not even negatively, but by that which happened *without the Law*. This decision ushers in a living procedure of 'dying to the Law', an *education by truths*, if we may, which is to say, of subtracting oneself from the teachings current, from the knowledge which secures the situation *of* (as opposed to *for*) all and in which one is inevitably caught up and must work through. This 'dying to the Law' is not a negation of the Law per se but an affirmation of the event as consequence, whose actuality is given in the fidelity of those who participate, in, we might say, an entirely new 'welfare'.

From the point of the break with the Law that has to be *for all* Paul enacts a reversal. He un-re-presents faith and denominates the procedure of this reversal, which takes place 'point-by-point', brother by brother, sister by sister, Jew by Jew, Gentile by Gentile, city by city, as the work of love. It is by love – the name of the work that cannot be represented by Law – that all will fare-well, Greek and Jew, slave and free, man and woman and so on and it is by this love that reconfigures all these differences in relation to the central point of the Christ-event that these distinctions will become indistinct and thus become 'inoperable' for the state. The state being that whose operation is entirely

predicated on the ‘operability’ of these aggravated *differences* – that they exert ‘an unfathomable essence’ (Cf. Badiou 2001: 26). For Paul, anyone can be transformed by what happens, anyone at all, thus making these differences inessential to thought itself.

Page | 205

For Paul, the Law *will not* matter. Crossing discourses (those of ‘signs’ and ‘wisdom’) and reorienting them to the central point, Paul says, ‘Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge’ (Cor.1.8.1-2). In other words, the pedagogy of the Law *will have* given way at the approach of the education of love (Badiou 2005: Part VIII).

7.

As with Plato’s Socrates (1997: Ap. 17b), Paul’s ethic can be given axiomatically: ‘love thy neighbour as thyself’ (Rom. 13.9).¹⁵ As an axiom, it cuts the new community Paul founds by faith – manifest in his travels, his letters and so on – out from Law and, as a declaration, separates this generic part from the otherwise necessary subjection to pedagogical mastery that (Greek) ‘wisdom’ or Law demands (Badiou 2003: 59). Like Socrates, Paul’s is a subtractive procedure. To ‘love thy neighbour’ subverts the entirety of the Law – as Paul says, it makes the plurality of the commandments redundant (Rom.13.9) – forcing first the establishment of a fixed point – that of which this declaration is a declaration – and from there the reconfiguring of the relations that organize and order the state of the Law. The key is that this axiom is the concrete expression of everything the Law says but *it is not a Law* – it’s a prescription on the situation itself. It registers an orientation – rigorous, exacting and divisive. Indeed, it functions as such only so long as there remain subjects faithful to its effect, those who ‘know what time it is’ (Rom. 13.11). The Christ-event, for Paul, founds time: what Badiou in an absolutely heretical move and thus a fundamentally anti-theological move

¹⁵ Socrates: ‘...I am an orator, yes, but not after their [sophists] pattern...’

will call ‘evental time’ (Badiou 2005: 210). ‘Time – if not coextensive with structure, if not sensible form of the Law – is intervention itself, thought as the gap between two events [...] The intervention is a line drawn from one paradoxical multiple, which is already circulating, to the circulation of another; a line which scratches out. It is a *diagonal* of the situation’ (Badiou 2005: 210-11).

But so long as there are such subjects they are constrained to the discipline the evental intervention effects. The subject is precisely the non-state *form* truth takes. This movement of the production of its form is not the replacement of one state by another or one authority by another. It’s the displacement of the state authority itself *as* the effect of what Paul all but calls ‘free invention’, to wit: ‘where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another (Cor. 2.3.14-15).¹⁶ We are as far from those state discourses that espouse liberal, laissez-faire, or consumerist subjects of choice as is possible to get, and yet, of course, they stalk the same ‘educational’ territory.

8.

A critical feature of the education of Paul is precisely this aspect of a-voiding the state and not lapsing into liberalism (or anarchy). His sharpness on this (as with Mao’s) is distilled in this excerpt from Romans: ‘For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under Law but under grace. What then? Should we sin because we are not under Law but under grace? By no means!’(Rom.6.14-15). In more secular terms, it is the question of justice that’s at stake: justice without judgment, given that, despite the

¹⁶ Note here that Paul is obviously riffing on the story of Moses ‘looking away’ or awry as Žižek would say. This is important because the whole question is of *orientation*.

rumours, the latter requires the Law and is a posteriori while the former is a priori (cf. Badiou 2003a: 76). What Paul needs to think is essentially how the Spirit, which is not, can subordinate the flesh, which is everything. Putting aside the beautifully complex and rigorously structured discussion of sin, Law, flesh and spirit through which the question of justice is considered in *Romans*, what is at stake here is the organising principle of the new collectives. Being under grace – which is not Law but event – these collectives are subject to that which happens for all. This is the ‘just’ point, the point through which these new relations must ‘pass’. Justice is integral to these collectives qua collectives and is not the *known* end some collective pursues as in their interest.

The trajectory is manifestly recursive and temporally retroactive. These collectives are the manifestation of this generic principle of equality (that every element is marked by the capacity to not be known by the state), which is itself the discursive formulation of the Christ-event, which, in turn, in breaking with the pedagogical knowledge of the state, addresses itself to anyone at all. The trajectory to be traced from this central point is in itself infinite – nothing inhibits the possibility of connecting one more element to the chance event – and yet its collection is singular. In Paul’s words: ‘For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another (Rom. 12.4). As noted, everyone is therefore equal before the event and diverse in their functions. The event equalises what the Law makes unequal in the name of equality, frees what it made unfree in the name of freedom. The link between the two must be reconfigured such that the ‘saying and doing are “indistinguished”’. ‘The production of equality and the casting off, in thought, of differences are,’ Badiou says, ‘the material signs of the universal’ (Badiou 2003: 109). The problem of course – and this explains Paul’s terse and complicated analysis of the Law, in *Romans* particularly – is that the Law

is so very nearly universal, so very nearly for all and always functions on the assumption or conceit that it teaches: that it absolutely is so. Without this conceit, concealed at its heart, the Law, as Paul manages to show, is nothing. Indeed, it is its absolution that paradoxically puts it in excess – and hence, as such, marks its void: the inconsistency upon which any true education must ‘Rest’ (Badiou 2001: 77).¹⁷

9.

Badiou’s conception of this ‘almost the same’ is given in the term ‘minimal difference’ and it is this minimum that makes all the difference. Paul’s ‘world’ – Corinth, Galatia, Rome, Palestine, Greece, ‘Spain’ etc – is a reconfiguration of an existing set of points, under this new orientation which is precisely what allows Paul to reverse the terms of this minimal difference. The difference remains minimal, let’s say, but love subverts the force of Law, displacing it, reversing its terms, rendering it lapsed for all. To die to the Law, to the pedagogy of the state, is thus Paul’s diagonal curriculum and this death is essentially the grace of all. Paul’s axiom is not an inclusive one but it is a universal one and thus must be forced as procedure. It’s a retaking of the cities of the empire on the basis of this fundamental divide between truth and knowledge: between what is *for all* and what *regulates* this all and issues in a procedure that is decidedly not that of ‘normalisation’ or return, and that makes no one safe or secure.

Paul’s insistence on this axiom of ‘love thy neighbour’ is wholly unlike the hegemonic function this *axiom* will have in the Church whereby it is made an *injunction* and an *imperative* and, as such, is rightly pathologised by Freud in *Civilisation and Its Discontents*. For Paul, by contrast with this uptake and also in contradistinction with its use in Leviticus and Matthew, to fare-well means to risk what is known – ‘I decided to know

¹⁷ Badiou is citing Paul Celan.

nothing among you' – for that which is true – 'except Jesus Christ, and him crucified' (Cor.1.2.2). Transformation, then, is the (im)possibility of faring-well, of *caritas*, and of doing so neither as judge or master nor as being under one, but according to a 'declaration and its consequences' (Badiou 2003: 46), from the point where 'knowledge will [have] come to an end' (Cor. 1.13.8). 'Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch' (Cor. 1. 5. 6). For Paul, love as the overcoming of the Law, never ends (Cor. 1.13.8). It never stops having done with the old yeast that, regardless, always threatens to leaven the whole batch. What is true for Paul is that the welfare of all requires a non-state form – 'the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth' (Cor. 1. 5. 8).

10.

Like Boyarin, Breton points out that Paul's discourse is permeated and indeed structured by a series of doublings: Law/faith, flesh/spirit, Jew/gentile, truth/knowledge and so on. Despite appearances, these doublings are not symptoms of an ambiguity in Paul, nor strictly speaking of oppositions, but are rather the consequential couplings of a more fundamental doubling; that of singularity and universality. Breton, whom Badiou himself partially follows, argues that Paul's discourse is singular and universal at once. Paul's singularity emerges discursively, Breton notes, from his use of Me and I which, he says, forges the apostolic discourse and the discipline it affirms (Breton 2011: 41). But it's not a matter simply of personality, that staple of contemporary psycho-pastoralism, as we can already see from Gal. 4.12: 'Friends, I beg you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are.' In his discussion on this Breton cites Spinoza wondering about the subject position of those who prophesise – whether they do so as prophets, apostles or teachers. What interests Spinoza, Breton says, is the use of reason and thus the articulation between the 'I', the speaking in one's own name, and the universality of a reason that is

not opinion. Between the 'I' who speaks and the 'reason' to which this speech is submitted a 'We' is forged Breton says. The 'We' in becoming', which Paul projects as the end and which in turn orients his entire practice in the here and now. The apostle contra the prophet, as Breton says Spinoza says, is the one who enacts the capacity for reason and in so doing addresses in anyone at all a similar capacity. This is what constitutes this newly forged 'We': the capacity to not be known by the state, to not be activated by Law. The implication here is that reason is found outside or 'beneath' (or before) the Law and is subject not to knowledge but thought – which rests, precisely, on an inconsistency knowledge cannot know. The key here is the structure of Paul's address, presuming as it does the equality of all without or *before* the Law. This equality – unwise and illegal – requires its own reason, its own discursive discipline in order to sustain the force of its announcement beyond its place. Paul, as noted, works on the basis that anyone at all convinced of the rising of the son is thereby capable of entering into the production of this new praxis wherever they are, whoever they are and despite customs, rites, sex and class and so on. Equality is declared here and now and indeed it's this declaration that renders the subject (always) out of time with its time. It provides all Paul's 'teachings' – no doubt he remains in his action a Pharisee – with an orientation that makes them untenable as such before the Law.

11.

To say it again: Paul's discourse of reason is a discourse of the spirit and not of the flesh, which is not to say there is no discourse of the flesh or that the flesh is as nothing. Indeed, the movement from flesh to spirit, which is the movement that reason as the truth of love is to bear, is the basis of the transformation of all from I to We, from ego to subject. This move from the knowledge of the Law to the work of love is as impossible for the prophets that Spinoza invokes as it is for the profiteers of Marx's

diagnoses (Breton 2011:43). For both, only knowledge (re)produces knowledge. The thought of love, the manifest conviction that there is that which knowledge is not, cannot be known and so *must* not be thought. This ‘must not be’ is the basis of all state pedagogy even as downstream the thinking of this thought will itself be circumscribed, represented and exploited by the prophets and the profiteers. Paul opposes this epistemic subordination of thought to Law with the pure invention of the discourse of love. Love, for Paul, names the active fidelity of those becoming subject to the Christ-event: for which, again, there is no knowledge. This existential declaration, made in response to the Lawless event of the resurrection, in which the ‘I am’ of Paul opens the space for the ‘We are’ of the subject is the key effect of what we might deem Pauline ‘pastoralism’. This is a pastoralism whose essence, then, is the praxical avoidance of Law, of the return to the comfort and servitude that security under the Law provides.

12.

We can go further still and recall that for Paul this ‘we’ in becoming will have been the *refuse* of the world, ‘what is low and despised in the world, [the] things that are not’, and it is of course this refuse which will, he affirms, ‘reduce to nothing [the] things that are’ (Cor. 1.1.27-9). For Paul, this We is refuse in relation to the discourse of the flesh and not the spirit; after all it is God who has chosen the things that are not even as they are not nothing to God but only to the world, that is to say to the ‘state of the situation’. Let us recall that it is to this *refuse* that contemporary pedagogy, local and global, addresses itself as its great virtue. For contemporary global pedagogy, the *refuse* is identified, placed, proscribed, *recognised* and recycled in a not dissimilar fashion to what Paul describes, albeit according to the dictates of contemporary discourse and pathos. As such, those unreconstructed cases suffering what UNESCO calls Low Development Capacity

(LDC),¹⁸ are desperate, ignorant and in need of pedagogical *inclusion*. The discourse of the flesh, on the side of death and so sin, of sin and so Law via its pedagogical intervention at this site, can only force this victim's return, as it were, to the predations of this same flesh. We could ask of UNESCO, *knowledge* incarnate in terms of contemporary global or encyclopaedic pedagogy 'for all' the question Paul asks the Galatians: 'Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh' (Gal. 3.3)?

As Paul our contemporary allows us to see, global pedagogy operates *only* from the perspective of the flesh no matter how intimately it supposes itself to be aligned with the spirit. For what Badiou calls 'democratic materialism' (pedagogy) there is no other discourse than that of the flesh, of goods, of commerce and its reproduction and the languages that sustain it and so that which is included as nothing in this discourse, lacking *knowledge*, are treated as refuse – to be saved. If this is not quite an ontological categorisation it is definitively an *objective* categorization, pertaining to the criteria of the rule and thus to judgment. Pedagogy, in this sense — and this is not a flippant remark — is a recycling venture.¹⁹ For Paul, on the contrary, to be *refuse* is entirely *subjective*: to be refuse is *to refuse* and even, stretching things a bit, to re-fuse. In other words, then, to be

¹⁸ I cannot go into this here but the recent UNESCO document on education, *Capacity Development for Education for All, CapEFA*, effectively plays out the reversal of the reversal Paul's discourse is here seen to enact vis a vis the current refuse of the world. Space precludes giving a fair hearing to this document. Suffice to say the orientation it takes to its object is a decidedly de-subjectivising one and the circularity of its logic is profound, based as it is on a significant occlusion: that the cure (the logic of capital) might be the cause. Its an entirely familiar colonialist project, thinly disguised with a new language indexing new objects and presented – like so many interventions today – under cover of education's (unconceptualised) *good*. @ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002122/212262e.pdf> 2011. Cf. A. J. Bartlett, 'Innovations in Incapacity: education, technique, subject,' *Digital Culture and Education*, Vol. 5, March, 2013, pp. 2-17.

¹⁹ That the University of Melbourne, which prides itself on its global ranking as an educational institution, employs the likes of SERCO to remove its refuse only serves to give this point a pathos it could do without. In the Australian context there is a further dimension in that SERCO has contracts to manage Australia's on and off-shore internment camps for seekers of asylum; that manifest body of contemporary refuse.

subject is to not be under the Law and so to re-configure from *the* nothing, what the situation consists in.²⁰

Page | 213

Of course, UNESCO or any other of the burgeoning global pedagogical entities that seek our inclusion or our security does not say any of this in the way I have presented it but when one takes into account the full stage on which such pedagogues are players, that is to say, when one thinks the ‘must not be thought’ conditions of their possibility, one sees that *this* is indeed what our pedagogues are saying. As ‘described’ by the state and so ‘down by law’, the refuse lives (and indeed must be en-cyclo-paedia-cally reproduced) as subjective incapacity; as what is describable and not what prescribes, as an objective fact of the matter that only state knowledge, efficiently distributed under the law of the market, can cure and make conformably subject. Paul asks, ‘Am I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness (Cor. 1.4. 21)?’ That is to say, with the spirit or with the flesh, with the old or with the new? The paradox is that for Paul this rhetoric invests the Corinthians (in this case) with the capacity for decision, a capacity he ascribes to all. Thus there is a division in the real between discourses: between spirit and flesh, which Paul works interminably. In the discourse of *global* pedagogy, however, these two articulate a whole (Cf. Breton 2011: 48). One is the repressive force, the other its currency, thus its knowledge – something Althusser (2001: 98-9), always the good Catholic boy, picks up on.

13.

The paradox is that the avatars of global pedagogy manifest what they *represent* as the *real* itself. The LDCs, as with a recalcitrant child or wilful student, will be redeemed in the pincer movement of a state pedagogy that always already knows its subject and thus

²⁰ Cf. Frank Ruda’s decisive rereading of the *rabble*. *Hegel’s Rabble: An Investigation into Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, London, Continuum, 2011.

‘what its subject will do’ – to cite Lacan. This connotes its vision of welfare: a dialectic of Law and trespass. Paul declares *against* the Law: this Law that teaches ‘subjective incapacity’. Paul’s is a discourse in which to fare-well is precisely what is at stake. To ‘love thy neighbour as thyself’ is the very fulfilment of the break accomplished with the Law, with the knowledge of the state and, as we still see today in our lettered Academies, escapes all state knowledge at the same time as this same knowledge presumes to represent it. To ‘love thy neighbour as thyself’ is to say, ‘the state cannot educate!’ The ethical orientation here, one entirely within this world, within evental time, manifestly affirms the declaration: “For the present *form* of this world is passing away” (1 Cor. 7: 31 emphasis added). To be educated by truths is to participate in the construction of the new form of this passing away.

References

Althusser, L. (2001) 'Ideology and the State,' in *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, New York, Monthly Review Press.

Page | 215

Badiou, A. (2005) *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham, London, Continuum, 2005.

- (2001) *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward, London, Continuum.

- (2005a) *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, trans. Alberto Toscano, Stanford, Stanford University, Press.

- (2003b) *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, (ed.) & trans. Justin Clemens & Oliver Feltham, London, Continuum.

- (2009) *Logics of Worlds*, trans. Alberto Toscano, London, Continuum.

- (2003) *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier, Stanford, Stanford University Press.

Bartlett, A. J. (2011) *Badiou & Plato: an education by truths*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

Bartlett, A. J. & J. Clemens (ed.) (2010) *Badiou: Key Concepts*, London, Acumen, 2010.

Bartlett, A. J., J. Clemens & J. Roffe (2014) *Lacan, Deleuze, Badiou*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

Bornkamm, G. (1971) *Paul*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, Minneapolis, Fortress Press.

Boyarin, D. (1994) *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, Berkley, University of California Press.

Breton, S. (2011) *A Radical Philosophy of Saint Paul*, trans. Joseph N. Ballan, New York, Columbia University Press.

Maggi, A. (2009) *The Resurrection of the Body: Pier Paolo Passolini from Saint Paul to Sade*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Martyn, J. L. (1997) *Galatians: A new translation and commentary*, New York, Doubleday.

Ruda, F. (2011) *Hegel's Rabble: An Investigation into Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, London, Continuum.

Taubes, J. (2005) *The Political Theology of Paul*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.

Plato. (1997) *Complete Works*, (ed.), John M. Cooper & associate ed. D. S. Hutchinson, Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Co.