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## Alain Badiou's Pasolini The Problem of Subtractive Universalism

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**ABSTRACT:** In the following analysis, I wish to show how Alain Badiou's work is crucial to understanding the exact sense of change as 'inactuality' or paradoxical actuality, and I wish to do so by scrutinizing his references to Pasolini. Badiou in fact investigates the concept of change through Pasolini's depiction of the figure of Paul, arguing that it exposes a specific tension between universality and singularity, and between eternity and novelty, which constitutes the very dialectic of change.

# ALAIN BADIOU'S PASOLINI

The Problem of Subtractive Universalism

Bruno Besana

## INTRODUCTION

The theme of a Pasolinian 'beyond Europe', at the origin of the project from which this volume starts, seems to appear, in Pasolini's work, via two different, although inseparable, lines of inquiry. On the one hand, that which is 'beyond Europe' evokes a generic, ahistorical humanity, an always-already lost world of *muthos*, of which the poet follows the traces and the acts of reappearance within Europe, outside of it, and at its borders – from the portrait of ancestral reminiscences in modern India to the emergence of Rome's 'borgatari' through the thickness of the consumerist modern metropolis, passing by way of Medea's declining universe at the gates of Europe. But, on the other hand, if there is an evident risk of idealizing and indeed substantializing such an ahistorical, generic humanity, this humanity always appears to be inseparable from singular moments of fracture and transformation. This can be seen not only in the prophecy of the radical destructive force of *Alì dagli occhi azzurri*, but especially in the intricate form of *Appunti per una Orestide africana*. This film *en suspens* – a documentary which mixes theoretical and visual notes for a film to come, and which ultimately becomes a fictional film of its own – re-stages in Africa the *Oresteia*, the archetypical tale of the foundation of a society organized around reason, order, and individual responsibility. By doing so, the African continent is both subtracted – in a very problematic move – from historical time and portrayed as the place from which a new foundation of history is possible. But what is at stake in this film is the possibility of understanding that which is 'beyond Europe' not as a mythical and static reality, but rather as the appearance of a moment of creative and destructive interruption, as is suggested not only by the socio-political inquiry that Pasolini attempts in the film, but also and especially by his use of free-form jazz, in which a new formal strategy appears that is inseparable from the introduction of noise and from the destruction of codified musical forms.

In this and in other examples, that which is ‘beyond Europe’ appears as a mythical dimension, as the constant return of an ahistorical ‘forza del passato’, producing the possibility of radical change in the present. In order to understand this, I propose to read the idea of such an (internal or external) ‘beyond Europe’, the idea of a change produced by the return of an ahistorical ‘forza del passato’,<sup>1</sup> together with Pasolini’s script concerning Paul, in which change appears rather as something radically new. More specifically, change appears in it, as we will see, as something that has no dialectical relation with the present, as something that emerges in the present, against the present, but disjointed from it. If the script about Paul has something in common with the theme of a ‘beyond Europe’ from which a ‘forza del passato’ emerges, it derives, I think, from the fact that, in both cases, change appears as something that acts in the present via the absence of relation, as an absolute interruption. Change appears as something ‘inactual’, something which is *in actuality*, but disjointed from it; it appears as an unspeakable or mute fracture, something which is inconsistent with the very laws of enunciation on the basis of which the present narrates itself.

In the following analysis, I wish to show how Alain Badiou’s work is crucial to understanding the exact sense of change as ‘inactuality’ or paradoxical actuality, and I wish to do so by scrutinizing his references to Pasolini. Badiou in fact investigates the concept of change through Pasolini’s depiction of the figure of Paul, arguing that it exposes a specific tension between universality and singularity, and between eternity and novelty, which constitutes the very dialectic of change.

Pasolini transposes the travels of Paul – the ‘founder’ of ‘European Christianity’ – into the twentieth century. More precisely – via a system of analogies according to which Jerusalem becomes Paris, Rome becomes New York, and Athens becomes Rome<sup>2</sup> – Paul’s action is located in the time-span between the occupation of Europe by the Nazis and the first years after the Liberation. Through Paul, who at once is led into the very core of Europe and wanders at its ideal or geographical margins – from Damascus to New York – Pasolini interrogates at the same time the trajectory of Christianity and that of communism as two universalistic projects, which bring about something novel that addresses everyone.

Badiou in particular focuses on three aspects of Pasolini’s reading of Paul: the fact that his universalistic project is built by destructive

means, through the undoing of the very divisions that govern the logic upon which the present is structured; the fact that Paul's universalism appears to be very poor in content, almost voided or *empty* of facts or doctrinal basis; and the fact that Paul appears to be traversed by an *internal split* – a split between the Paul who announces Grace, which is given freely and concerns everyone, and the Paul of the Church, the founder of a closed and hierarchical structure. The radical change produced by Paul's universalistic project is thus depicted in terms of a double dialectic: on the one hand, a movement of embrace, of inclusion, which is almost devoid of content and realized by destructive means, and, on the other, the construction of a new community that turns immediately into a church, thus producing new hierarchies, divisions, and exclusions. In other words, there is a dialectic between a form of 'subtractive universalism', in which change can address everyone as long as it is nothing but a fracture, and a dividing ecclesia, or (I will later justify this expression through Pasolini's script about Paul) a 'diabolical church'.

Only via the analysis of such intricate universalism can some light be shed on Pasolini's idea of change as that which is twice inactual, at once the return of a non-historical 'force of the past' *and* the emergence of a radical novelty.

## 1. SUBTRACTIVE UNIVERSALISM

In a widely discussed philosophical text, Alain Badiou interprets, through the figure of Paul, the relationship among the concepts of universality, event, subject, and militancy.<sup>3</sup> In this book, the script for Pasolini's project of a contemporary filmic transposition of Paul's life constitutes a fundamental axis of inquiry. What Paul does, in Badiou's perspective, is to announce an event. An event, for Badiou, is neither one fact among others, nor is it simply a very remarkable fact. Rather, it is a fracture introduced into the present – a fracture that, on the one hand, exposes the contingency of the laws organizing any given present situation and, on the other, exposes a truth that, because it is addressed to everyone, has a universal extension. Badiou gives, as an archetype of this structure, the example of a declaration of equality that is not founded on any objective ground (since equality cannot be positively proved), but instead interrupts a given mode of organization of unequal-

ity (of the unequal roles that different subjects have in a given situation), showing that such inequality is in no way a natural condition, but the result of contingent relations of forces. At the same time, equality has a 'universal address':<sup>4</sup> equality is in fact equality only if it concerns everyone, if it addresses everyone.<sup>5</sup> These two characteristics of the event (appearance in the form of a radical fracture and universal address) can also be found in Paul's predication, in which an event, the resurrection of Christ, is announced. First, Paul presents the resurrection as a 'pure event, opening of an epoch, transformation of the relations between the possible and the impossible'<sup>6</sup> – in other words, as a 'pure beginning'<sup>7</sup> that divides history into two. Secondly, Paul insists on the fact that the resurrection of Christ implies that the possibility of defeating death is given potentially to everyone, i.e., regardless of any positive criteria (such as belonging to a given community), even regardless of any criteria of compensation for the acts accomplished. For Paul, a supplement of grace is posited *for all*, thus constituting a *fracture* with the previous law, with Moses' law.

First, 'Paul's revolutionary kernel', Badiou states, is that 'the One (of monotheism)' is 'for all'.<sup>8</sup> As such, it is not addressed to any specific particularity: 'no eventual One can be the One of a particularity. The universal is the only possible correlate for the One.'<sup>9</sup> The grace of the One is such if it is addressed to all. Secondly, such grace is something structurally outside of law: as Badiou puts it, it is 'an event', and the truth exposed by it

is always nondenumerable, impredicable, uncontrollable. This is precisely what Paul calls 'grace': that which occurs without being couched in any predicate, that which is translegal, that which happens to everyone without an assignable reason. Grace is the opposite of law insofar as it is what comes without being due.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, the salvation offered by the death and resurrection of Christ is out of reach of the law in two ways: it operates regardless of the eternal death to which we are condemned, in retribution for our original sin (which has the force of law), and it is also indifferent to (or out of proportion to) the law (in the sense of the Mosaic law), which determines our salvation or damnation according to those acts by which we confirm or overcome our sin. This is the core of the doctrine that will be later called of 'justification by grace alone', in whose name Paul claims, in the Letter to the Romans, that 'a man is justified by faith apart from

works of law'.<sup>11</sup> Faith alone saves, but is there no measure for the content of faith (by definition, that in which one has faith is not an object of proof), nor does faith come with the possibility of measuring which extension or intensity suffices to obtain salvation.

This has a dramatic consequence: for Badiou, the doctrine of justification is fundamentally a profound doctrine of equality, as Müntzer and the Anabaptists saw.<sup>12</sup> Salvation is given regardless of all substantive or even factual differences among humans;<sup>13</sup> moreover, it is 'for all' (it addresses everyone, although not each one will be saved) precisely because, as it is in excess over all determinations, it cannot be connected to any specific fact or cause.<sup>14</sup> It is because it has no positive ground that grace is for all, that it addresses each one potentially: as Badiou puts it, 'there is for Paul an essential link between the "for all" of the universal and the "without cause"'. There is an address for all, only according to that which is without cause. Only what is absolutely gratuitous can be addressed to all.'<sup>15</sup> Equality appears to be connected with something excessive, lacking predicable content, which appears as a fracture and addresses all inasmuch as it has no positive, measurable content.

By announcing such an event, which concerns everyone equally, Paul appears, according to Badiou, as the paradigm of the subject. A subject, for Badiou, is neither a transcendental condition of possibility of experience, nor a specific object of the world, a *res*, such as (for instance) a specific living being provided with cognitive faculties. Instead, a subject is a function that inscribes an event, a fracture, an inconsistency, in the world. It is the function through which the universal address of the event is realized.<sup>16</sup> Such a 'faithful subject', as Badiou calls it, 'is the *local* status of a procedure, a configuration that exceeds the situation'.<sup>17</sup> Anywhere such a subject appears, it represents the emergence of an absolutely *singular* moment, which is nonetheless strictly connected with – and even inseparable from – the unfolding of something of the order of the *universal*. Paul is thus a 'subject' because his actions are directed toward inscribing an excess into a situation, toward unfolding the consequences of the 'illegality' of grace. Furthermore, the universalism of his preaching (the idea that the grace is for all) is immediately and absolutely singular, for it is outside of law (since grace exceeds the logic of retribution of good and evil acts), thus appearing, in each contingent, historical situation in which he preaches, not as a logical element of that situation, but as an a-normal, absolutely singular one.

Starting out from these considerations, Badiou observes that Pasolini's idea of Paul as our contemporary is not simply a cinematographic gimmick. Pasolini's Paul is structured around the idea of a 'constant contemporaneity', which takes the form of 'a fictive contemporaneity': according to Badiou, Pasolini 'wanted to say: Paul is our fictional contemporary because the universal content of his preaching, obstacles and failures included, remains absolutely real'.<sup>18</sup> Badiou chooses his words carefully here: what makes Paul our contemporary is not a series of factual or positive data, such as, for instance, a supposed analogy between our time and the Roman Empire or between Paul and a political figure that we would be in need of today. What is contemporary, still *real*, are his singularity (his being in excess over the law) and his universal address, 'the universal content of his preaching' (which proceeds from that excessiveness). But what such an action produces is a *fictive* contemporaneity: Paul is our contemporary, but in the mode of a 'fiction', of the  *fingere* . In fact, he is our contemporary insofar as he is someone who produces, in the present, a supplement inconsistent with the present, someone who produces an absolute singularity that makes a 'hole' in the present. Paul is contemporary because of his ability to be in each present, against the present.<sup>19</sup> And, Badiou continues, starting from this 'making a hole in the present', the contemporaneity of Paul takes the form of 'the holy will to destruction'.<sup>20</sup> What is contemporary to us is that which eludes both the symbolic order of Paul's time and the symbolic order of our present: what is contemporary is something which, as the Lacanian real, 'pierces a hole' in the knowledge organizing the present, something which presents itself as an absolute singularity or anomaly by exposing a universal, and indeed eternal, trans-historical content. As Badiou reminds us, a subject is contemporary to its time in a 'negative', or rather 'piercing', way: a subject unfolds the consequences of a truth, and such 'truth is not a qualification of knowledge nor an intuition of the intelligible. One must come to conceive of truth as making a hole in knowledge. Lacan is paradigmatic on this point. The subject is thus convoked as a border-effect or a delimitating fragment of such a hole-piercing.'<sup>21</sup> This is why Paul's universalism can only take the form of a 'will of destruction': the truth exposed by the Pauline preaching, i.e. the gratuity of salvation, erodes from inside, by its mere appearing, the system of values upon which the hierarchization of society is organized. As Badiou puts it, 'truth is diagonal relative to every communitarian subset, it does not depend upon any given identity, nor does it

constitute any. It is offered to all, or addressed to anyone, without a condition of belonging being able to limit this offer, or this address.<sup>22</sup>

What exactly is such a destructive aspect? Two features of Paul are commonly highlighted: the universalistic address of his preaching and his mimetic capacity. Universalism, as Badiou puts it, proceeds from the dogmatic core of Paul's doctrine of free grace, specifically from the fact that the grace of overcoming death is for all, regardless of any positive distinction. Secondly, Paul's preaching constantly displays a mimetic attitude: he strictly adapts to each situation, respecting every local law, and speaking in accordance with the specificity of his audience, as a Jew among Jews, a pagan among pagans. But at the same time, as Badiou notes, in his mimetism Paul 'traverses *all* differences':<sup>23</sup> he merges with the specificities of the situation where he preaches, but behaves *as if* such differences were non-existent, so as to unveil through these differences the universal meaning of his message. In this sense, as we can read in the beginning of the first letter to the Corinthians, his mode of relation with a given situation appears to be what one can call a *negative mimetism*. Paul, in fact, manifests himself as *ignorant* among the Greeks, for whom knowledge is the most praised value; likewise, he manifests himself as a *scandal* among the Jews, the people of the law. But he also addresses the Romans, the administrators of justice in the empire, by stressing the idea of grace as a gift, in excess over justice and retribution.<sup>24</sup> Free, disconnected from acts and thus incalculable, salvation defies at once justice and knowledge: it does not deny them, but rather appears within them as a hole, an inconsistency which cannot be eliminated and which progressively expands – namely, via Paul's preaching. In an analogous fashion, Pasolini portrays Paul preaching amongst Marxists, who 'ascoltano con simpatia i suoi discorsi, ma [sono; author's note] assolutamente inamalgamabili a lui sul terreno della religione'.<sup>25</sup>

In all these cases, Paul does not act *against* knowledge or against the law (as noted, he strongly insists on the necessity of always respecting both the secular power and the Jewish law): in other words, he does not relate to a specific situation by positing a determinate negation – for instance, by entering in a dialectical conflict with institutions. Rather, what he does is to add an element that is specific to each situation but that functions as a hole which can only appear in the specific fabric of one situation: a divine word that appears as stupid within knowledge, a divine word that nullifies the law without negating it. 'The righteous-



ness of God has been manifested *apart* from law', Paul claims: something is manifested, is undeniable, and yet is subtracted from the logic of the situation in which it appears.<sup>26</sup> In his pastoral journeys, he drags this negative supplement from place to place, from institution to institution, undoing the fabric of each situation from within.<sup>27</sup> Universalism is thus not constructed by negating particularities, but by adding to those particularities an element, always specific, which subtracts their evidence and undoes their power: he introduces an empty supplement, an in-actual element, a nothing that consumes particularities. And, to put it in Paul's words, 'God chose [...] things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are.'<sup>28</sup>

This peculiar negation, which affirms the universal novelty without entering in a dialectical relation with the present, is what Badiou considers the fundamental operation by way of which an event penetrates into the specificity of a situation. As he affirms in 'Destruction, Negation, Subtraction', a novelty 'implies negation, but must affirm its identity apart from the negativity of negation'. It must thus perform an 'affirmative part of the negation':<sup>29</sup> universalism progressively destroys the particular order of a situation, its particularity, by affirming a specific point that is inconsistent with that particularity and that, appearing within the situation, consumes its fabric, without entering in relation to it.

The extent of the consequences produced by introducing such an excessive element can be found – in an explicit, if multifarious, relationship to Paul – in Pasolini's *Teorema*. Pasolini's *Teorema* book (published the same year he wrote the first version of *Saint Paul*) displays – in a peculiar style, which goes back and forth incessantly between essay, cinema script, novel, notebook, and poetry – the arrival of a guest among a family belonging to the Italian industrial bourgeoisie.<sup>30</sup> The reader is left ignorant of any specific aspect of this guest: we do not know the exact reason for his presence, the type of relationship he has with the family members, or his background. One by one *all* the members of the family fall under the spell of this guest, who is voided of all positive coordinates and who is properly excessive: he seems to be nothing but an excess of light or of beauty.

The text contains multiple references to Paul. Paul's figure is somehow fragmented and reflected in different characters. The guest incarnates a sort of Pauline figure – the figure of the one bearing an event, the one who by his presence fissures the consistency of the roles of *all*

*the members* of the family, thus progressively flattening out all differences.<sup>31</sup> But one can also read the guest as a Christ-like figure, a nameless event, whose heritage is then carried by the other characters. The name of the *paterfamilias* is in fact Paolo, and his character is structured in terms of Pauline references: he is a rich bourgeois who is struck by an encounter, the first consequence of which is that he (exactly like Paul, who is struck by light on the way to Damascus) contracts a major problem with his vision.

In this text one can discern a further consequence of the idea of a universalism that operates by subtractive means, i.e. of the idea of an event that addresses everyone, eroding the codes that assign different roles to each individual. In the script about Saint Paul, this subtractive universalism has two aspects: the fact that Paul's preaching relies on a hole or an inconsistency (the appearance of something out of order, out of proportion, unprovable) and the fact that his action is characterized by a constant attempt to remove particularities. In *Teorema*, this logic seems to unfold a third, further aspect: the presence of a supplementary element, which, on the one hand, destroys the logic upon which a community is structured, the logic according to which each member occupies a differentiated, stable position, but, on the other hand, creates a new community, founded exactly upon that absence of relation. In this sense, Pasolini writes:

l'amore che li accomuna per l'ospite non è qualcosa che li *accomuna* [...] Tutti i membri della famiglia sono *resi uguali fra loro* dal loro amore segreto, dal loro appartenere all'ospite: non c'è più dunque differenza fra l'uno e l'altro [...] *ma, tutti insieme, non fanno certo una chiesa.*<sup>32</sup>

The presence of the stranger, of the extrainstitutional, the nameless or unaccountable term, produces the collapsing of a specific community (the bourgeois family). At the same time, the members of the family are reconstituted as a new *koiné* (a community in the broad sense of 'having or being in common'), but a *koiné* that has no substantive basis. In fact, by falling in love with the perfect stranger, the different members of the family break with the specific social roles organizing their mutual relations, and they maintain in common only the scandalous act by which they separate themselves from these roles. This change does not produce a new positive community, based on this or that exclusive feature (wealth, language, religion, and so on). The new community is no longer identified by any positive characteristic, but by the eccentric tra-

jectory that each member undergoes in escaping his or her position in the family. Not only is that which is ‘common’ to them not anything substantive, but, moreover, this ‘common’ is a trajectory of the removal of qualities, of subtraction of respective differences – a trajectory by which they are finally ‘*resi uguali*’. This new ‘community’ is thus not a new ‘societal form’, but rather a simple ‘having in common’ that cannot turn into a new community, identifiable on the basis of given criteria, exactly because it has ‘nothing’ in common but the very act by which each individual removes her- or himself from the common structure that had assigned them different, specific places and roles.

## 2. THE PARADOXES OF NEGATION AND THE PRODUCTION OF NOVELTY

The idea that an evental moment cannot simply lead to the constitution of a new, specific form of community is central in the above-mentioned article – ‘Destruction, Negation, Subtraction’ – in which Alain Badiou constructs his argument in terms of a commentary on Pasolini’s poem ‘*Vittoria*’.<sup>33</sup> The poem stages the desperation of the ghosts of dead communist partisans, who perceive the impasse of the next generation, the generation after World War II. The problem – which is at stake both in this text and in Pasolini’s script about Paul – is the following: a novelty, a radical break ‘insists’ within the present but has no dialectical relation with it. This leads to a double-bind. Either the evental moment of fracture continues in a purely destructive attitude (in this specific case, the partisan struggle of liberation could have continued after the war, endlessly refusing every political compromise), or the consequences of the event are progressively put in a dialectical relation with the present (in this specific case, the communist resistance entered, after the war, within the frame of the parliamentary dialectic). In the first case, the event as radical fracture is maintained, but no positive consequence is built out of it, and it perpetually consumes itself in a series of evanescent, destructive acts. In the second case, a solid edifice of consequences is apparently built, but the idea of a radical interruption is lost through the very fact of accepting a common terrain of dialogue with the reactionaries (who, after the war, are no longer the fascists but the agents of consumerist capitalism). On the one hand – this is Badiou summing up Pasolini – a pure action of destruction has as result ‘the impossibility of

politics, [...] a sort of nihilistic collective suicide, which is without thinking and destination', while, on the other, if we enter in the logic of dialectical opposition, we have 'the death of negation', which is 'the death of political hope'.<sup>34</sup>

In the complicated dialectic of the poem, those who are trapped in the second 'dead end' appear as the 'fathers': they are the partisans who, having survived the war, not only have reached an age at which they might be the fathers of the ones killed, but who in particular have become the fathers of the party and of the republican institutions. Each of these fathers is now an 'eroe ormai diviso', who 'si rivolge alla ragione non ragione, alla sorella triste della ragione, che vuole capire la realtà nella realtà, con passione che rifiuta ogni estremismo, ogni temerità'.<sup>35</sup> On the other side, the dead partisans are described as sons – retrospectively abandoned by the fathers – where 'sons' at once suggests the impulsive idealism of youth and their dependence on the fatherly figure of a revolutionary idea. In a dialectical twist or inversion, those who had no time to develop the consequences of the resistance – to be its faithful sons – somehow get frozen in the evanescent moment in which they rise up and, as 'sons' of the idea, perform it in reality, in an evental manner; on the other hand, those who developed the consequences of the revolutionary moment in a diachronic way – and not simply as part of an evanescent revolutionary outburst – find themselves forced into the necessity of performing mediations. Their actions grow more and more distant from the non-dialectical dimension of the event: they appear to depend more and more upon the mediations operated by those who speak in the name of the event. In other words, these subjects take the place of the event; they become 'fathers' in its place.

The reason of the revolt is thus split: on the one hand, the coherence of the sons, free from consequences; on the other, the construction of consequences, manipulated by these new fathers, who have lost all coherence. The fathers, are lost in a 'ragione non ragione', proclaim that 'bisogna sacrificare la coerenza / all'incoerenza della vita, tentare un dialogo / creatore'; at the same time, Pasolini says about the sons, 'che ragione volete che ascolti questa ansiosa / masnada di uomini, che hanno lasciato – come dicono i canti – la casa, la sposa / la vita stessa, proprio nel nome della Ragione?'<sup>36</sup> On the one hand, reason has lost contact with its own reason – the reason of the revolt – and it resolves into a sterile illusion, i.e., the illusion that *dialogue*, mediation, can create a novelty ('bisogna tentare un dialogo creatore'); on the other hand,

the reason of the revolt, refusing all reasonable mediation, ‘non ascolta ragione’, is unable to produce consequences: it dissolves into an evanescent fracture.

Badiou reads this poem starting exactly from this complicated and thwarted dialectic and aims at finding a solution for the double impasse to which the construction of novelty apparently leads. He writes:

All creations, all novelties, are in some sense the affirmative part of a negation. ‘Negation’, because if something happens as new, it cannot be reduced to the objectivity of the situation where it happens. [...] But ‘affirmation’, the affirmative part of the negation, because if a creation is reducible to a negation of the common laws of objectivity, it completely depends on them with respect to its identity. So the very essence of a novelty implies negation but must affirm its identity apart from the negativity of negation.<sup>37</sup>

For Badiou, Pasolini’s poem is ‘a manifesto for true negation’;<sup>38</sup> it is the tragic attempt to escape the two impasses and find a viable, ‘affirmative part of negation’.<sup>39</sup> A true negation has to escape the dead end of the fathers, who are ultimately the fathers of the institution of the republican state, in which they play the role of the opposition.

The heart of ‘Opposition’ is ‘to substitute some rules for the violence of the real [...] to substitute rules of history, or rules of economy, to the rupture of the Event. And when you do that, you ‘share the rules of the struggle’ with your enemy. And finally you become a ‘slave of your enemy’, a ‘brother’ of your enemy. So opposition is in fact the death of negation. And it is the death of political hope.’<sup>40</sup>

The ‘fathers’ thus transform negation into a determinate negation, which ultimately affirms the present. But a true negation also has to escape the impasse of the pure revolutionary moment of the ‘sons’, which resolves negation into a destructive drive: ‘The army of dead young men was on the side of destruction, of hate. They existed on the hard side of negation’.<sup>41</sup> Badiou concludes that, in order to escape both determinate and destructive negation, one needs to think negation primarily in terms of subtraction: a rejection of mediation, a construction at a distance from that which is negated. In this sense, ‘the way of freedom is a subtractive one’. Destruction can only have an accessory role: ‘to protect the subtraction itself, to defend the new kingdom of emancipatory politics, we cannot radically exclude all forms of violence’.<sup>42</sup>

What Badiou sees in Pasolini's Saint Paul goes exactly in this direction: Paul, first of all, is the destructor who tries to subtract his action from the logic of the situation, refusing both determinate negation and evanescent outbursts. But, at the same time, Paul constantly oscillates between evanescence and the constitution of a new dialectic with the present. For Badiou, both this attempt and this oscillation constitute the very motor of Pasolini's screenplay on Paul. As Badiou puts it, Pasolini's 'script charts the trajectory of saintliness within an actuality'.<sup>43</sup> The problem is that

the principal aspect in this trajectory gradually becomes that of betrayal, its wellspring being that what Paul creates (the Church, the Organisation, the Party) turns against his own inner saintliness' [...]. [F]or Pasolini, reflecting on communism through Paul, the Party is what, little by little, inverts saintliness into priesthood through the narrow requirements of militantism.<sup>44</sup>

This trajectory appears almost as a tragic destiny: if we go back to the moment in the script when Paul states his subtractive strategy in the clearest way – thus proving that he is 'irreducible' to the logic of the Marxists – we see that, in order to face their ironic rejection, he reacts by claiming the necessity of a strict codification of acts and behaviours. In this part of the script, Pasolini reproduces the change of tone that takes place between the first and the second part of the First Letter to the Corinthians; by doing so, he shows us the very moment in which the revolution is transformed into a structured reformism. This finally produces nothing but the intensification of the negative reactions that he tries to mitigate, and in fact the Marxist intellectuals react as follows: 'ti meravigli? Chi parla è uno che non concepisce nulla al di fuori del codice [...] è un ex-fariseo, [...] È soprattutto un grande organizzatore'.<sup>45</sup>

Throughout the last part of the script, this aspect becomes increasingly important, to the point at which Paul declares: 'dobbiamo difendere questo futuro bene di tutti accettando, sì, anche di essere diplomatici, abili, ufficiali'.<sup>46</sup> More precisely, the revolutionary impact of Christianity is defended not only by producing mediations, but also via the constitution of a structured organization of which the aim is to 'manage' such mediations and compromises: 'il nostro è un movimento organizzato... Partito, Chiesa, chiamalo come vuoi. Si sono stabilite delle istituzioni anche fra noi, che contro le istituzioni abbiamo lottato e

lottiamo'.<sup>47</sup> By doing so, Paul becomes progressively aware, in the words of Pasolini himself, of the ineluctable necessity to 'essere ipocriti. Fingere di non vedere le vecchie abitudini che risorgono in noi'.<sup>48</sup> In the aftermath of the event, Paul, who is placed before the same double-bind as the partisans above, chooses the side of construction, but also of compromise, of dialectical relation with the present.<sup>49</sup> He thus becomes 'non santo, ma prete'.<sup>50</sup>

I suggest that Pasolini's insistence on Paul's illness, an aspect that is hardly stressed in the New Testament (which, on the contrary, focuses on his thaumaturgical healing capacity, which is totally absent in the script), should be read in this perspective. Progressively, with the unfolding of the text, Paul the healer gives way to Paul the sick man, consumed by the unavoidable contradictions of his action: the more the script proceeds, the deeper Paul gets involved in the contradiction between the universalist announcement and the construction of the Church and the more frequently and violently his sickness recurs. In this sense, Badiou reads Paul's weakening in Pasolini's script as the growing of an 'internal darkening',<sup>51</sup> which culminates in his death. In fact, in Pasolini's text sickness can neither be attributed solely to the moments of universalist predication, nor solely to the moments when Paul appears as a bureaucrat: sickness punctuates the whole text; it lingers somehow in between the two sides of Paul, as a symptom of this contradiction. Such a connection between the figure of Paul and the theme of sickness appears also in *Teorema*: as Paolo, the bourgeois *paterfamilias*, enters into an amorous relation with the nameless guest – an amorous relation with the duration of an evanescent event – he is struck by a temporary blindness, which, similarly to Saint Paul's, comes with an extreme weakness. Paolo appears to be hypersensitive to an excessive brightness pervading the house, a light about which Pasolini says that it has a 'compito senza rapporto con le cose del mondo'.<sup>52</sup> The light intervenes as a caesura, it 'enlightens' Paolo, and at the same time it suspends his normal, current 'rapporto con le cose del mondo'. Just as in the script on Paul, so too sickness is identified here with a state of lingering or of suspension, with an unresolved contradiction. This contradiction is exposed by the eventual encounter, but it is not resolved or closed. Even earlier than these two texts, the relation between the figure of Paul, sickness, and a state of suspension between contradictory terms is also present in a letter of Pasolini's of 1964. In the letter Pasolini declares himself stuck:

sono bloccato, caro Don Giovanni, in un modo che solo la Grazia potrebbe sciogliere. La mia volontà e l'altrui sono impotenti. ... Forse perchè io sono da sempre caduto da cavallo ... e un mio piede è rimasto impigliato nella staffa, così che la mia corsa non è una cavalcata, ma un essere trascinato via, con il capo che sbatte sulla polvere e sulle pietre. Non posso né risalire sul cavallo degli Ebrei e dei Gentili, né cascare per sempre sulla terra di Dio.<sup>53</sup>

In each of these three examples, the sickness has a slightly different role. If in *Teorema* Paolo's sickness is caused by the unbearable presence of an event which exposes his contradictions, in the script on Saint Paul the sickness is caused by the contradictions embedded in the necessity of developing the consequences of such an event. Finally, the Paul of the letter to Don Giovanni is mired in a further complication, as he can neither exclude himself from the Pauline contradictions nor fully embrace them. At his closest to the contradictions of militancy, to the contradictions of the church, to the contradictions between the necessity of a radical change and the organization of such a change, Pasolini does not even fall from the horse; he does not even land on the soil on which Paul receives God's light: Pasolini remains in the powerless position of the intellectual, not stuck in the contradictions of the event but a step removed from them. Perhaps, after the failure of the 'fictional return' of Paul in the historical situation of the war and post-war period, it becomes clear that a bourgeois intellectual (as Pasolini is) is unable to embrace, and to try to solve, the contradictions emanating from an event.

The conflict between an event and its consequences is not only incarnated by the (multifaceted) figure of Paul. In Pasolini's script these contradictions are also transferred onto the figure of the disciple. The disciple is the central figure of every revolution: it is via a disciple that a revolution spreads and becomes more than an individual episode; at the same time, the organization of disciples requires discipline, structure, law. Timothy, Paul's beloved disciple, is a silent but crucial figure in Pasolini's script: half Jewish, half pagan, he appears to incarnate the image of the generic humanity to come, a humanity between worlds, similar to Pasolini's 'borgatari' – stretched between an ancient world and capitalist society – of whom he is, I think, an echo. At the same time it should be remarked that, of all the epistles, it is the Letters to Timothy in which Paul insists most on the church as institution, on the new law, on internal hierarchies.<sup>54</sup> Not only are the two letters struc-



tured as a list of obligations and prohibitions, but they are an attempt to classify Christians using *specific, positive, distinctive characteristics*: which type of man is fit to become a bishop, which one a deacon, and so on.<sup>55</sup> On top of this, the letters to Timothy produce a narrowing, a closure of the church. A shift of focus from external to *internal enemies* can be read in them: the central polemic is the one against fake doctors and fake preachers,<sup>56</sup> and it culminates, in the letter to Titus, in the will to silence insubordinate Christians.<sup>57</sup> In Paul's address to his beloved disciple, we witness the progressive transformation of universality into particularism, of the freedom of grace into the necessity of a new law – even as the law was precisely what universalism was supposed to overcome.

Consistently with this, in Pasolini's script Timothy performs a complete parable, which leads him from being the bearer of the most generic humanity to being the incarnation of the most hierarchized, bureaucratic structure. The end of the script shows Timothy (who has become a bishop) reading the foregoing letter. 'Il Vescovo è Timoteo' is the brutal incipit of scene 105, depicting him with all the attributes of *distinction*: 'vestito dei vestiti prelatizi e lo zucchetto cremisi, egli è seduto alla sua scrivania, potente, lussuosa, neoclassica. [...] Anch'egli è un po' di cera, come i Cristi, gli Angeli, i Santi barocchi o neoclassici fissati sulle pareti e sulle volte della sua ricca casa'.<sup>58</sup> 'Distinto' is here not only a synonym for 'rich' or 'of higher rank', but also means 'bearer of distinction', i.e., a bearer of the opposite of that drive towards indifference which is at the core of Paul's universalism.

### 3. FREEDOM, NECESSITY AND THE CONTRADICTIONS OF ORGANIZATION

The result of all the inner contradictions of the universalistic project is – as Badiou puts it – that Paul's trajectory develops an '*almost necessary movement of an internal betrayal*', the result of which is that 'Paul also dies to the extent that saintliness has darkened within him'.<sup>59</sup> This internal betrayal – the reconstitution of a positive realm of the *law* – is here described as a *necessity*, leading to *death*. The more reactions Paul has to face in opposition to the universalistic project, the more his subtractive universalism turns into its opposite: a hierarchized machine able to respond to any specific situation, by means of organization, classifi-

cation, exclusion. Paul's necessary betrayal is structured around two axes: on the one hand, his actions become more and more structured according to the specificities of the situations to which he has to respond; on the other, in order to do so, he has to focus on the construction of a social machinery able to fulfil the complicated tasks of mediation (as opposed to the 'simplicity' of subtraction). In the last pages of the script we see him in a 'solenne chiesa, barocca o neoclassica che sia, piena di tutta la sua terribile e idiota, sfarzosa e deprimente violenza controriformistica': a church in which 'risuona l'ammonimento precettistico di Paolo',<sup>60</sup> a series of positive prescriptions of specific behaviours concerning this or that type of person, which goes on for two entire scenes.<sup>61</sup> But such behaviour is an untenable contradiction, for the Paul of grace, and in these last pages of the script, death is in fact at the door.

Universalism has thus turned into law, into specification. But furthermore: via the means of universalism, particularization is extended to all humanity. As Pasolini was later to write, regarding another pope: '*sono ridivenuto un Ebreo: / un Ebreo, si capisce restato fedele alla Legge. / Sono dunque codificato Capo / del Ghetto dove sta tutta l'Umanità, / in quanto tutta esclusa rispetto a Dio*'.<sup>62</sup> Thus redefined in a universal particularism, humanity is once again bound to the law and inevitably assigned to death. Both (in a literal sense) for Paul, and (in a metaphorical one) for humanity, the reinstatement of law coincides with exclusion from the gratuity of grace and therefore with the triumph of death. As Paul writes at the end of First Corinthians: 'the sting of *death* is sin, and the power of sin is the *law*'.<sup>63</sup>

In this perspective, this passage can be read as follows: what the free grace of Christ destroys is the *necessity* of eternal death (everyone, given original sin, receives retribution – by an automatism that has the force of a proper law – in the form of eternal death, although according to the law of Moses some can be saved by their acts, thereby following, once again, a *law* of just retribution). The freedom given to each individual by Christ is not only the opposite of law: as *freedom*, it is first and foremost the opposite of *necessity*. But this freedom *necessitates* a structure, an organization, in order to be activated and spread throughout the world, and this is precisely, as has been seen, the task that Paul is called upon to fulfil. This is the point of internal fracture: in order for *everyone* to be free, *freedom has necessarily to turn into a necessity, a*

*structured law*. And what is the opposite of freedom (what is ‘necessity’), if not that which condemns us, if not the devil?

This is why in Pasolini’s text the devil is identified with the very figure that orchestrates the constitution of the Church, actively working to structure Christianity as a Church endowed with a system of laws. Indeed the script itself is punctuated by the figure of Luke, who conspires to establish a new law: in one of his last appearances, Luke has a dialogue with the devil, of which Pasolini writes ‘lungo dialogo fra i due: Luca riassume ghignando al suo capo la continuazione della storia di Paolo. Praticamente ormai il fine è raggiunto. La Chiesa è fondata. Il resto non è che una lunga appendice, un’agonia’.<sup>64</sup>

The work of the devil, orchestrated by Luke, seems to be strictly connected with the function of writing. If the devil works through Luke, it is because he is the one who, as we know, stabilizes Paul’s actions and words by putting them in the written form of the Acts of the Apostles. As Badiou notes, ‘the Acts [...] present us with the saint erased by the priest’.<sup>65</sup> The problem is that, on the contrary, Luke insists throughout the Acts on the effectiveness of communal aspects, focusing on communal life and the abolition of property. I therefore suggest that Pasolini’s insistence on the relation between Luke and the devil should be seen not at the level of content, but rather at the level of form – namely at the level of his will to systematization and to (written) codification. The kernel of the Pasolinian figure of Luke, I suggest, consists in the fact that, by way of the very act of writing, he produces something that is of the order of fixation.<sup>66</sup> What is at stake in the very process of codification – which is doubtlessly one of the strongest instruments in the history of evangelization – is *the transformation of the tools of freedom into a set of necessary forms, into a normative instrument: and there is no evil other than the growth of necessity inside the freedom of grace*.<sup>67</sup> There is no solution to this: in fact, freedom is such only if it is without distinction, if it is a free grace for all. But such a for-all institutes, *de facto*, a necessity. And necessity is structure, order, law, and ultimately division between the church and its exteriority. Necessity, the work of the devil, appears as the internal betrayal of the universalistic project. Again, it is here that ‘the goal of the devil is reached, the Church is founded’. Universality has turned into *diabolé*, into division.<sup>68</sup>

There is thus a double dialectic structuring the contradictions around which Pasolini’s script on Saint Paul is built. On the one hand, there is a universalistic project, which has no substantive ground and is

not the infinite expansion of a *koiné* but is instead founded on a radical fracture or disconnection, on the introduction of an empty supplement that breaks down the validity of given differences. On the other hand – as the mirroring opposite of this disconnective universalism – there is the fact that the construction of a structured community is that which produces new divisions: the division between the church and its exteriority and, even more, the division between all the different elements of the church, differently classified and hierarchized according to their specific features. The universalistic project is thus founded on disconnection, while the constitution of a new community produces new divisions. The problem, as we now know, is that the second dialectic is the necessity embedded in the freedom of the first.

One can thus wonder if the tragic end of the other Paul, the Paolo of *Teorema*, is caused by the attempt to solve this internal necessity of failure. Paolo, who initiates the disaggregational process that his bourgeois family undergoes, not only does not try to reconstruct a *koiné* starting from the eventual appearance of the stranger, but also proceeds without compromise towards a process of self-destruction. Instead of dying progressively, like Saint Paul, from an internal darkening that is the consequence of these contradictions, Paul prefers to destroy himself so to leave room for the new to appear. In the last part of the book, Paolo gives his factory to the workers, to which the workers react by arguing that a gift obligates them in the manner of a debt and connects them with the bourgeoisie – which wouldn't have been the case if the factory had been obtained by means of political struggle.<sup>69</sup> The problem is that, through the donation, 'la mutazione dell'uomo in piccolo borghese sarebbe totale'.<sup>70</sup> But at the end Paolo eliminates himself, in a final *ekpurosis* that aims to create a new radical fracture. If the gift of the factory is a consequence of the first fracture (the one initiated with the arrival of the stranger), then this second fracture (Paul's self-destruction) aims at eliminating the contradictions necessarily generated by the consequences of the first. For Paolo, finally 'the only good bourgeois is a dead bourgeois', because only by his own death can he interrupt the process that progressively transforms the consequences of an event into a new mode of unequal organization of the present.

## CONCLUSION: A PRESENT SUSPENDED BETWEEN TWO EVENTS

The contradictions of change (the subtractive form of universalism; the necessity of organizing universalism, which produces new divisions; the impossible choice between the evanescence of the event and the construction of consequences which turn the event into its opposite) constitute for Pasolini, as he states in 'Vittoria', the 'antinomie simmetriche che io tengo in pugno come vecchie abitudini',<sup>71</sup> something that forms the very kernel of his writing activity and which he therefore holds as he holds his pen, but which at the same time – like the Paolo of *Teorema* and like himself in the letter to don Giovanni – he cannot properly manipulate.

It is by way of these contradictions that Pasolini (or at least the axis of perspective constituted by Badiou, Pasolini, and Paul) thinks the emergence of change, the apparition – within and against the present – of something which, disconnected from the historical dimension of the present, intervenes in it as a disconnective force. In Pasolini, I suggest, such an 'inactual force' is always double, always dividing itself: both an evental manifestation, inscribing itself in the present, at once through non-dialectical means and through forms of compromise, and the return of a transhistorical 'forza del passato' – a past which, like the event, has no substantive materiality. Such a past cannot be identified with a previous historical time or with a primordial era: it is rather a 'force' that appears, as Pasolini tells us, 'più moderno di ogni moderno'.<sup>72</sup> This is, I think, the 'other' of Europe – that which appears each time as a radical fracture and as a new foundation (Paul from Damascus, Medea from Colchis, a new Orestes from sub-Saharan Africa). When such a 'forza del passato' appears, in order to overcome its merely subtractive or destructive moment, it needs to produce a new historical beginning, and in the sequence opened by this foundation, the historical determinations, that this change was meant to overcome and destroy are reproduced. This is why each revolution needs to fight *against* the very form of its *necessary* historical inscription. And at any given moment, only the further, completely different reappearance of a 'forza del passato' can wipe away the necessary compromises produced by a previous event.

Each revolutionary process thus necessarily stands in between two events (as we have also seen in the case of *Teorema*): and this in-betweenness constitutes what I would call 'Paul's limbo'. Pasolini's Paul

is properly trapped in a logical limbo: he is caught between the event of a *freedom* that is evanescent and bears a universal address, and the *logical necessity* that comes with the ‘for all’ of the universal address of this same freedom – that is, a ‘universal freedom’ that can realize itself only through its transformation into necessity, into law, but also into division and particularization. As Pasolini’s Paul says: our situation ‘è un limbo [...] Noi non siamo la redenzione, ma una promessa di redenzione. Noi stiamo fondando la Chiesa’.<sup>73</sup> Trapped in this limbo, the revolutionary subject can survive only by believing in the idea that the revolution, internally doomed to failure, will be indefinitely restarted. This, I suggest, is why the theme of the *parousia*, of the second coming, is so central in Paul. As Badiou says in other texts, a revolutionary subject is never only the subject of one event, but is always in between two events. Literally speaking, there is no event without a second one that re-activates the first. Somehow, ‘there will have been’ an event only when a second one re-activates it. In this sense, Badiou claims that ‘for there to be an event, one must be able to situate oneself within the consequences of another’.<sup>74</sup> With evident resonance with Paul’s theme of the second coming, Badiou calls this ‘resurrection’. As Badiou puts it, an event has infinite consequences and a universal address, but its concrete realization in a sequence is necessarily finite (given the necessary internal contradictions leading to its darkening). Therefore, for an event to be an event, it must necessarily be reactivated by another one, which means that the existence of an evental sequence is only possible from the standpoint of a current, open sequence.<sup>75</sup> Spartacus exists only through Müntzer, and the Commune only through the October Revolution, but one might also suggest that there will have been Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* only if it comes to be reactivated in Africa.

In Paul’s case, this logic implies that the work of the devil – the constitution of the Church, the creation of laws and rules of exclusion, the identification of internal enemies – forms a sort of new dialectical engine, which, on the one side, extinguishes the previous event, but which, on the other, accelerates the next event to come. Paul himself is aware of this: as he writes in the Second Letter to the Thessalonians, the construction of the Church will produce fractures, reactions, and persecutions, and this increasing evil is what will accelerate the second coming.<sup>76</sup> In political terms, the organization of a revolution (its darkening) extinguishes universalism by producing new fractures and contradictions, but this harshening of contradictions is also what might acceler-

ate a new revolutionary process, a new event. It is probably also for this reason that Pasolini insists on the fact that ‘le istituzioni sono commoventi, / e commoventi perchè ci sono: perchè / l’umanità – essa, la povera umanità – non può farne a meno’.<sup>77</sup> If the necessity of institutions (by which the event escapes its own evanescence) is that in which the freedom of grace – but also the infinite return of a certain ‘force’ – is extinguished, this necessity has at the same time a certain ‘grace’: institutions are ‘touching’, as if they were somehow ‘touched’ by grace. In their perversion, they are that which allows, and even accelerates, the possibility of a second coming, or of a further revolutionary moment driven against them.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, universalism might fade, but the contradictions resulting from this darkening might lead to another revolution – always to come. In Pasolinian terms, the consequences of the Resistance might fade into the multiform and pervasive softness of immaterial capitalism, but this is also what produces the possibility for the arrival of an ‘Alì dagli occhi azzurri’, with whom no mediation will be possible. It is here that we see the point of convergence of the religious theme of the second coming, the revolutionary theme of a change that has no dialectic relation with the present, and the theme of the return of a mythical ‘forza del passato’. These three sides of change undergo a specific and twisted logic: a logic in which the freedom of a new, radical change collapses because of the necessity of creating consistent means of realization, and in which the disaster of novelty is also its own promise. It is here that Pasolini, caught in the line uniting Paul and Badiou, interrogates our present, cutting the present at the very point where the eternal, the ‘ancient’, or the ‘inactual’ – which is nothing else than the very force of radical change – reappears again and again.

## NOTES

- 1 See Pier Paolo Pasolini, ‘Poesie mondane’, in *Poesia in forma di rosa*, in *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by Walter Siti, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2003), 1, p. 1099.
- 2 In more detail: Rome, the centre of political power, becomes New York; Jerusalem, the centre of cultural life, becomes Paris; Athens, symbol of the historical tradition, becomes Rome; Antioch is announced as London (in the short text called ‘Progetto’) and displayed as Geneva (in the script): if Antioch is the capital of the Macedonian Empire, coming before the Roman Empire, in analogous

fashion London is conceived as the capital of the empire which precedes American imperialist domination. Damascus is an independent town, and it is therefore identified with Barcelona, which was ‘independent’ from the Nazi regime. The point around which Paul’s voyages revolve is no longer the Mediterranean, but the Atlantic Ocean. Bonn, Naples, the north of Italy, Vichy and Genoa also appear in the script. See Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Appunti per un film su san Paolo*, and *Progetto per un film su san Paolo*, both in *Per il cinema*, ed. by Walter Siti and Franco Zabaglio, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2001), II, pp. 1881–2020 and 2023–30. The first text is the actual script (or rather a late draft of the script), while the second one is a short note explaining Pasolini’s intentions in the project.

- 3 Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. by Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).
- 4 Badiou uses the expression ‘universal address’ (‘adresse universelle’ in French) throughout *Saint Paul*.
- 5 See Badiou, *Saint Paul*, ch. 2 (‘Who is Paul?’), and his *Being and Event* (London: Continuum, 2006), meditations 16, 17 and 23.
- 6 Badiou, *Saint Paul*, p. 45.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 49.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 76 (see also, in more abstract terms, p. 81).
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 76–77.
- 11 Rom. 3, 28 (Revised Standard Version). The Revised Standard Version, in comparison to the Authorized and the New Revised Standard Versions, often appears to be closer to the translations used by Pasolini and Badiou. Therefore we refer here to the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.
- 12 In one of his earliest texts, Badiou notes that ‘the theological contents of Thomas Müntzer’s preaching constitutes a frame for the aspiration of the plebeian class’; namely they serve the idea of a complete equality, the kernel of which is the ‘suppression of all institutions’. Alain Badiou and François Balmès, *De l’idéologie* (Paris: Maspéro, 1976), pp. 27 and 57. My translation.
- 13 Rom. 4, 2ff.
- 14 Of course one can argue that a substantial division of humanity still exists, namely that between those who have faith and those who do not. That said, faith does not automatically imply grace, but it is faith in the fact that grace can touch anyone gratuitously, regardless of given differences or particularities. Anyone can be touched by grace, and anyone can bear faith. The relation between faith and grace remains in this context problematic: in fact, if faith is a product of will, nonetheless it cannot force grace, which remains free and can potentially touch anyone; on the contrary, if faith is not a product of will, but a symptom of grace, then such faith can be given to anyone regardless of his/her differences. Both options confirm the point relevant to Badiou’s reading, namely that grace does not rely on any substantive, positive character and is not a compensation for specific acts.
- 15 Badiou, *Saint Paul*, p. 77.



- 16 For a synthetic overview on the concept of the subject in Alain Badiou's thought, see Bruno Besana, 'Subject', in *Alain Badiou: Key Concepts*, ed. by A. J. Bartlett and Justin Clemens (Durham: Acumen, 2010), pp. 38–47.
- 17 Alain Badiou, 'On a Finally Objectless Subject', trans. by Bruce Fink, in *Who Comes after the Subject?*, ed. by Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 24–32 (p. 27).
- 18 Badiou, *Saint Paul*, p. 37.
- 19 In the text published as the introduction to the script (*Progetto per un film su san Paolo*), Pasolini stresses at once his 'convizione della sua [Paul's] attualità', and the fact that Paul speaks with a language that is 'universale ed eterno, ma inattuale (in senso stretto)'. Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Progetto per un film su san Paolo*, in *Per il cinema*, II, pp. 2023 and 2025. Paul is at once contemporary to his own time, and *stricto sensu* inactual, i.e. *in-the-actual, but against it*. That which, precisely, is inactual, is the universal content of his preaching. Luca Di Blasi's article 'One Divided by Another' for this volume alerted me to the second quotation.
- 20 Badiou, *Saint Paul*, p. 37.
- 21 Badiou, 'Of a Finally Objectless Subject', p. 25.
- 22 Badiou, *Saint Paul*, p. 14, translation modified.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 102; see all of ch. 10 more generally.
- 24 Rom. 4, 1ff.
- 25 Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Appunti per un film su san Paolo*, in *Per il cinema*, II, p. 1949. In order to stress the 'inamalgabilità', the radical difference, of his doctrinal content from any present form of discourse, Pasolini's Paul here pronounces the well-known passages from the beginning of First Corinthians, where Paul describes the content of his own preaching as 'a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles' (1 Cor. 1, 24). Following the Italian edition, Pasolini in *San Paolo* quotes the phrase 'scandalo per i Giudei, stoltezza per i Gentili' (p. 88). In the pages following this passage Pasolini quotes further from 1 Cor. 2 and 3.
- 26 Paul, Romans 3, 21 (my italics). 'Apart' has to be understood in a strong sense as 'with no relation'. The Authorized Version translates 'without the law', the New Revised Standard Version 'irrespective of law'.
- 27 This attitude is the one that drives him from Corinth to Rome, through the different stages of his trial. At each level of judgement, Paul shows extreme respect for the institution, and thus makes clear that what he stands accused of needs to be judged on a further, superior level. By doing so, at each step of judgement he manages to evade the possibility of its being decided whether his acts are legal or illegal. This attitude ends up consuming the legal power, which appears to be powerless or at least aphasic.
- 28 1 Cor. 1, 27–28 (New Revised Standard Version); the Revised Version reads 'bring'.
- 29 Alain Badiou, 'Destruction, Negation, Subtraction – On Pier Paolo Pasolini', in this volume.
- 30 Pasolini published *Teorema* in 1968, and he worked on the Saint Paul project in two periods, in 1968 and in 1974.

- 31 The arrival of the guest in the household creates a setting in which each member of the house undergoes a triple elimination of differences: first, each falls in love with the guest according to a fairly repetitive pattern; second, each progressively abandons her or his role in the structure of the family; and, finally, although each reacts absolutely differently when faced with the stranger, a closer look shows all these these differences to be flattened out: the daughter sinks into a state of catatonia, the mother embarks on a sort of sexual overdose, which has a kind of anaesthetic or catatonic effect, the son dives into a pure repetition of artistic stupidity, the father abandons everything, and the servant shuts herself off in a mystic stillness and ends up being buried alive. Each of them proceeds towards a progressive subtraction of the given differences that had fixed their societal roles – although, of course, the result of such a subtractive attitude is not the same in each case.
- 32 Pasolini, *Teorema*, in *Romanzi e Racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori 1998), 1, p. 966.
- 33 Pier Paolo Pasolini, ‘Vittoria’, in *Poesie in forma di rosa*, in *Tutte le Poesie*, 1, pp. 1259–70.
- 34 Badiou, ‘Destruction, Negation, Subtraction’.
- 35 Pasolini, ‘Vittoria’, in *Tutte le Poesie*, 1, p. 1267.
- 36 Ibid., pp. 1267–68.
- 37 Alain Badiou, ‘Destruction, Negation, Subtraction’.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Badiou, *Saint Paul*, p. 37.
- 44 Ibid., p. 38.
- 45 Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Appunti per un film su san Paolo*, in *Per il cinema*, 1, pp. 1953–54.
- 46 Ibid., p. 1974.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 The theme of such a split is a recurrent one. We see it not only in ‘Vittoria’ (1964) and in the script on Paul (1968); in *Teorema* (of the same year) we find that Paolo, the *pater familias*, facing the impossibility of reforming the bourgeois family, drives the narrative towards a destructive end that alone can erase such the contradiction between radical change and reform. Finally, in 1971 Pasolini again describes such contradiction in ‘L’enigma di Pio XII’, in which he affirms: ‘Paolo è nella mia coscienza UN PRETE (come me)’. By means of all these examples, the role of the Communist party in the post-war political situation and the mode of constitution of the Christian ecclesia appear to converge in Pasolini’s very name, as a subjective bearer of such contradictions. Pier Paolo Pasolini, ‘L’enigma di Pio XII’, in *Trasumanar e organizzar*, in Pier Paolo Pasolini

- lini, *Tutte le poesie*, II, p. 17. Many thanks to Robert Gordon for drawing this text to my attention.
- 50 Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, I, p. 1988.
- 51 See Badiou, *Saint Paul*, p. 38.
- 52 Pasolini, *Teorema*, in *Per il cinema*, I, p. 936.
- 53 Pasolini, letter to Don Giovanni Sossi, 27 Dicembre 1964, in *Lettere, 1955–1975*, ed. by Nico Naldini (Turin: Einaudi, 1988), p. 576. I would like to thank H. Joubert Laurencin for drawing my attention to this text.
- 54 It should of course be considered that the attribution of the Letters to Timothy and Titus is controversial and that the majority of scholars tend to think they were written by a disciple of Paul, who had to face increasingly complex problems concerning the internal organization of the Church. This, I think, confirms the very ambivalent role of the disciples, highlighted in Pasolini's script.
- 55 And it even goes so far as to show how to deal with different widows in accordance with their factual characteristics. Compare I Tim. 5, 3–16.
- 56 I Tim. 1; 4; and 6 and II Tim. 2.
- 57 Titus 1, 10. Also striking in this regard is the example of the slaves: not only does the Christian slave have to respect the pagan master, so that no one will say anything bad of Christians, but she or he also has to respect the Christian master, because the latter, being a Christian, will be a good master (I Tim. 6, 2).
- 58 Pasolini, *Appunti per un film su san Paolo*, in *Per il cinema*, II, p. 2013.
- 59 Badiou, *Saint Paul*, p. 39; my italics.
- 60 Pasolini, *Appunti per un film su san Paolo*, in *Per il cinema*, II, pp. 2014–15.
- 61 *Ibid.*, scenes 107 and 108, pp. 2014–17.
- 62 Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'L'enigma di Pio XII', p. 19. It should of course also be noted that Pio XII appears in the poem as the one whose name is inseparable from a criminal silence regarding the deportation and extermination of millions of Jews.
- 63 I Cor. 15, 56 (my italics).
- 64 Pasolini, *Appunti per un film su san Paolo*, in *Per il cinema*, II, p. 2000.
- 65 Badiou, *Saint Paul*, p. 39.
- 66 In his article for this volume, Luca Di Blasi also correctly points out that this identification of Luke with the 'diabolic' act of writing has to be understood from the perspective of the 'Paulinian distinction between the letter and the spirit'.
- 67 Di Blasi points that this is, for Pasolini, ultimately a senseless necessity, as opposed to Badiou's political necessity of constructing the organized consequences of the event. In fact, such necessity, in Badiou's perspective, has the form of an ethical obligation (it is necessary to subtract the event from its own evanescence, by constructing its consequences); however, one should also consider that this same ethical obligation forces one to proceed to construct an organized structure, which necessarily (and here we again come across a 'senseless' necessity, or a doom) produces a 'darkening' – that is, the bureaucratic or institutional decay of the event.
- 68 The idea of a 'diabolic ecclesia', of a gathering (*ecclesia*) that divides into differences (*diaballō*), is of course a semi-invented etymology. In fact, the word 'devil'

- comes from the verb *diaballō* and among the various meanings of the verb, that with the strictest relation with the devil is ‘to defame someone’. Notwithstanding, one should bear in mind that *ballō* means ‘to throw’ or ‘to put’, and *dia* has as its primary meaning ‘separation’ (as it has the same origin as ‘duo’). Calumniation or defamation is something that is thrown in the way of someone, and the devil is then the one who (also by the use of calumniation) ‘throws separations’, i.e., produces divisions. This is strongly present at the core of the linguistic elements composing its etymology.
- 69 Pasolini, *Teorema*, in *Per il cinema*, II, ch. 17 and 18 of the second part, pp. 1045–52.
- 70 *Ibid.*, p. 1051.
- 71 Pasolini, ‘Vittoria’, in *Tutte le Poesie*, I, p. 1266.
- 72 Pier Paolo Pasolini, ‘Poesie mondane’, in *Tutte le poesie*, I, p. 1099.
- 73 Pier Paolo Pasolini, *San Paolo*, in *Per il cinema*, II, p. 1974. Interestingly enough, Pasolini is here talking about opposition: ‘l’opposizione è un limbo’, wherein one is trapped in the double-bind of determinate negation and destructive outburst.
- 74 Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 210.
- 75 For Badiou, the ‘resurrection’ is ‘a fragment of truth inserted under the bar by the machinery’ of a reactionary process, of a process of ‘obscuration’ of a truth, – a fragment which ‘can be extracted from it at any instant’ (*Logics of Worlds* (London: Continuum, 2009), p. 63). Concerning the activation of such a fragment, Badiou declares: ‘we will call this destination, which reactivates a subject in another logic [...], *resurrection*’ (*ibid.*, p. 65). This figure is thus nothing but the one of the event itself, of the sudden appearance of something radically ‘out of place and time’ in a situation that is completely normalized, stable, obscured. *An event is thus always a second event*, given that, if there was a first one, it would not have existed, as event, until reactivated by a second one.
- 76 In this sense, as one reads through Paul’s letters, one can discern a progressive harshening: if, on the one hand, this is a darkening of the process, on the other, it is the acceleration of a new one.
- 77 Pier Paolo Pasolini, ‘L’enigma di Pio XII’, p. 20. See the end of the poem as well, p. 25.
- 78 Of course there is a fundamental difference that cannot be underestimated: although there is a common structure between the second coming and the idea of the ‘resurrection’ or ‘reactivation’, the second coming is definitive, while a revolutionary event is such only if it is indefinitely reactivated, resurrected. One should nonetheless also consider that the second coming has been interpreted (namely by Giorgio Agamben) along the line of a messianism that is realized in the waiting itself, and that is thus always ‘in between’. In this sense the Pauline second coming and the Badiouian time of the subject, stretched between two events, share a similar logic, as they both are times ‘in between’, and somehow thinkable only in retroactive terms (the Christian considers the first event, the resurrection, from the perspective of the end of the world, and the Badiouian revolutionary subject considers the first event from the perspective of its possible reactivation via future events to come). In his ‘The Split and its Split’ for the

Pasolini-Conference 'Beyond Europe' (31 March–2 April 2011 at the Villa Vigoni), Luca Di Blasi devoted the second part of his talk to a comparative analysis of Pasolini's split figure of Paul and Agamben's interpretation of the messianic time that resides at the core of Paul's preaching: namely, he insisted on the fact that messianic time identifies the present as a split time, a time which is split or suspended between an 'already' and a 'not yet'. Starting from the considerations raised in Di Blasi's talk, one should also acknowledge that the time between events, the time of *parousia*, is the same time as the historical one, but considered from the standpoint of another 'clock' or rhythm. The time *alongside* time, the time of the par-ousia, said Di Blasi, following Agamben, is the time of the 'as if'; I think that such a time has a strong structural resemblance with that which I above called, following both Pasolini and Badiou, an *inactual* time, *a time in-the-actuality, but acting against the actual present.*

Bruno Besana, 'Alain Badiou's Pasolini: The Problem of Subtractive Universalism', in *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction: Pasolini's Multistable Subjectivities, Geographies, Traditions*, ed. by Luca Di Blasi, Manuele Gagnolati, and Christoph F. E. Holzhey, *Cultural Inquiry*, 6 (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2012), pp. 209–36 <[https://doi.org/10.25620/ci-06\\_12](https://doi.org/10.25620/ci-06_12)>

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