

Like a Rolling Stone

Risks, Implications, and Trajectories of Educational Events

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WHAT MIGHT IT MEAN to be seized by an “event,” to have your symbolic notion of self and world shattered, and to ultimately put at risk a sense of your own prior significance as you work to reconstitute who you are and your relationship to your social world? Using Badiou’s (1998/2001) notions of “event” and subsequent “truth process” to explicate what we mean by the term “educational event,” we explore what might constitute an education beyond its socialization function, that is, an education that begins where and when inherited understanding breaks down. In this regard, we follow Felman and Laub (1992) who suggest that “teaching, as such, takes place precisely only through a crisis, if it does not ... it has perhaps *not truly taught*” (p. 53, emphasis in original).

While we acknowledge vital questions raised in this *Journal* about various influences on curriculum and schooling globally and the importance of tracing the multiple ways particular school systems include and exclude various populations, we propose here to explore two questions we believe at the heart of debates about the aims of schooling and purposes of education: What might be educational about education beyond its qualification and socialization functions? In what ways might we arrange knowledge for the possibility of an “event” to occur and a subsequent “truth process” to proceed?

Before we explicate a more detailed picture of what Badiou potentially offers to respond to these questions, we begin with some key distinctions made by the European scholar, Gert Biesta (2010), those between “qualification, socialization, and subjectification” educational rationales. In addition to the certification of capabilities to do something (e.g., plumbing, some basic knowledge of textbook versions of official political rule), qualification also refers to that deemed necessary to participate in collective life. Here, the notion of qualification overlaps with schooling’s socialization function by referencing “the many ways we become part of particular social, cultural, and political ‘orders’” (Biesta, 2010, p. 20). These orders include the “hidden curriculum”

regarding expected but implicit language codes, bodily schedules, and mental routines. They also include those more intentional aims such as “the continuation of particular cultural or religious traditions, or for the purpose of professional socialization” (Biesta, 2010, p. 20). Both qualification and socialization measure in part complicity in body, mind, and imagination within a historically distinct influential social order.

While he notes the role played by qualification and socialization for the vitality of cultures, Biesta’s (2010) concern lies with the potential of an educational aim, specifically what he calls subjectification. As he details, the question of what is educational about education is largely absent in mainstream Euro-American discussions about public education, and subjectification constitutes a compelling response to the question:

I take the position that subjectification should be an intrinsic element of all education worthy of the name. ... It is ... a normative statement expressing the belief that education becomes uneducational if it only focuses on socialization—i.e., on the insertion of “newcomers” into existing sociocultural and political orders—and has no interest in the ways in which newcomers can, in some way, gain independence from such orders as well. (Biesta, 2010, p. 210)

Subjectification, he argues, begins in the “excess” present in every teaching situation (Biesta & Safstrom, 2011). We might think of this excess in terms of both observable happenings when teachers and students study together and alternative potentials also present in such acts. We can observe what seems to be going on in a classroom interaction, what may be going on depending on who is asked, as well as what could already always be happening that constitutes the immeasurability of “excess” in a teaching situation.¹ Working within this excess, what makes an activity educational in a teaching-learning situation lays in people’s “particular interest in freedom”—a freedom (as we interpret) to subjectify, to not only *learn a subject* but *to become a subject* beyond or in excessive addition to that which we have been taught we are.

In many ways, Biesta’s work rearticulates key distinctions made by Canadian scholar Kieran Egan (1983). Egan (1983) distinguished between schooling’s dominant *socialization* function so as make the case that educators must embrace its potential *educational* aspect. How does he distinguish between the two?

Anything which may reasonably be called socializing has implicit in it the impulse and tendency to make people more alike, and the contrasting impulse and tendency in education is to make people more distinct. (Egan, 1983, p. 27)

We can note this difference most clearly in reference to schools:

Those activities which are engaged in so that people can get on more easily in society at large—can get jobs, can fulfill the basic responsibilities of citizenship, parenthood, and so on—will tend to be mainly matters of socialization. Those activities which lead to personal cultivation will tend to be mainly educational. Socializing activities are justified on the grounds of social utility; educational activities on the grounds of cultivation of individuals. (Egan, 1983, p. 31)

These are productively provocative distinctions in regard to schooling possibilities. We now turn to explicate a portion of Alain Badiou's work related to ways we might further respond to the question, what is educational about education beyond its socialization and qualification rationales?

Educational Events & Truths

Badiou's (1998/2001) first philosophical assertion is that "truth" ought to be the primary category of philosophy and that ethics, in contrast to its concern with "abstract categories (Man or Human, Right or Law, the Other ...), should be referred back to particular situations" (p. 3). Badiou's (1998/2001) "ethic of truths" is premised on "the strong, simple idea that every existence can one day be seized by what happens to it and subsequently devote itself to that which is valid for all" (p. 66). In this formulation, "seized" is designated as an "event," such as *falling* in love, that shatters any pre-existing intelligibility of self, other, or any topic at all. Thus seized, a "becoming subject" is bequeathed the opportunity to reestablish new terms of understanding via a "truth process."

For Badiou, truths are not achievements arrived at through predetermined techniques of reasoning, properties of power (that is, power only controls opinion, not truths) or facts temporally imprisoned by any dialectic (Balibar, 2004). Truths, rather, consist of the material traces of thinking/of thought expressed through love, art, science, and politics that a "becoming subject" produces through a truth process (den Heyer, 2015). Badiou argues that it is to these situated truth processes instigated by an event that ethics and philosophy (and, we assert, the educational) must lend support.

Badiou (2005) makes several key moves to rehabilitate contemporary interpretations of "truths" aiding thought about educational events. First, he situates philosophy in a supporting role to ontology, derived from his interpretation of mathematical set theory. Mathematics is ontology for Badiou. Or, more accurately, mathematical set theory provides a precise mapping to think of ontology and our contemporary configuration as symbolically represented beings, making our way according to those identities and beliefs required by the "situation" in which we have been socialized (or have been set up) (den Heyer, 2015). Badiou's attention to ethics as "situation-al" constitutes his Foucauldian angle (in French, situation, State, and status quo are etymologically kin). That is, Badiou is quite clear that a subject, or, in his term, a "perseverance in being," only initially exists situationally as a legible-credible being as much as it is recognized and perseveres through the gaze of States' symbolic order through which a subject position is offered and/or assumed. We get bent to the shape we take.

Recognizing the situation as such, Badiou asks that we think about being and becoming in relation to the "without-one" that is the Lacanian "void" at the heart of all status quo situations: "The multiple 'without-one'—every multiple being in its turn nothing other than a multiple of multiples—is the law of being. The only stopping point is the void" (Badiou, 1998/2001, p. 25). The "void" lies at the heart of all "situations" and their supporting knowledge claims—that at any given and unpredictable moment one may encounter a person, a thought, a question, that causes an "event" utterly voiding the status quo derived legitimacy of what we just had thought or desired about ourselves or anything in particular (e.g., how falling in love shatters everything we thought about "our" situation as an any-"one" *mind our own business* before the "event" of "falling" in love—see *The Crying Game* or *Romeo & Juliet*) (den Heyer, 2009).²

Like love as an event, we are confronted with the question and task of “fidelity,” which is where, for Badiou (1998/2001), the question of ethics, and, we think, the educational, begins: “A crisis of fidelity is always what puts to the test, following the collapse of an image, the sole maxim of consistency (and thus ethics): Keep going! (p. 78–79):

There is always only one question in the ethic of truths: how will I, as some-one, *continue* to exceed my own being? How will I link the things I know, in a consistent fashion, via the effects of being seized by the not-known? (Badiou, 1998/2001, p. 50, emphasis in original)

In this process, a becoming subject embodies a “disinterested interest” in one’s situated subject position and concomitant opinions to, for example, mind your own business and attempts to articulate what exceeds identification, concern for status, or self-interest:

All my capacity for interest, which is my own perseverance in being, has poured out into the future consequences of the solution to this scientific problem, into the examination of the world in the light of love’s being-two, into what I will make of my encounter, one night, with the eternal Hamlet, or into the next stage of the political process, once the gathering in front of the factory has dispersed. (Badiou, 1998/2001, p. 50)

Set in motion by an event, a “becoming subject” is someone who is “simultaneously himself ... and in excess of himself” (Badiou, 1998/2001, p. 45).

In pursuit of that which is an interminable “excess of,” a “becoming-subject” seeks to name that which it will have been absurd not to have believed, “making seem possible precisely that which, from within the situation, is declared to be impossible ... an event-ality still suspended from its name” (Badiou, 1998/2001, pp. 121, 126). The proper verb tense, therefore, with Badiou’s event-truth procedure, and as we argue, with Biesta (2010) in mind, the educational, is neither the present, past, or future, but rather the future anterior.

By maintaining fidelity to articulating the implications of the event in a consistent fashion, a “becoming subject” declares “this will have been true,” pursuing exactly “what it will be absurd *not to have* believed” (Gibson, 2006, p. 88, emphasis added) (e.g., Pluto is a planet one day, the next day not; laws against miscegenation have sufficient support and, then, appear for most absurd). For Badiou (as cited in Bartlett, 2011), such truth processes conducted in the future anterior tense “are beginnings [that] will be measured by the re-beginnings they authorize” (p. 118). So, potentially, begins an education that is educational. With each truth process, there is the risk that an Evil, what Badiou terms “le Mal” might emerge. Here, we will briefly outline Badiou’s notion of both the Good of human becoming and the Evil to which such good gives rise before turning to story Jagger, Richard, and The Rolling Stones.

Potential Evils

Badiou warns against the “Evil” (translated from his term in French, “le Mal”) made simultaneously possible only because of the human potential to engage in the “Good” of truth-processes.³ For Badiou, the Good of human capacities for affirmative inventions precedes, indeed makes possible, the le Mal/Evil that, for Badiou, comes in three forms. Evils include *simulacrum*

(of an event and truth-process), which is to embrace a teleological fantasy of an existing situation's promised fulfillment, usually proclaimed as a people's "destiny"; *betrayal*, which is to either give up on a truth-process due to situational discouragement or to deny that an event ever occurred; and *terror/disaster*, when, interpreting truth as a noun rather than verb, one's Truth justifies the destruction of the material conditions that others need to enact their potential truth-processes.⁴

Recall the mythological figure of Procrustes who forced guests to fit his guest bed through the tortures of stretching or amputation (den Heyer & van Kessel, 2015). No one ever exactly fit, including Procrustes when he was captured and forced by Theseus to be "fitted" according to the dimensions of his own guest bed. Obviously, history is full of examples where Truth terrors become "disaster" (Badiou, 1998/2001). For Badiou, the relevant conclusion is not to deny the affirmative Good that is a truth-process, but the necessity for vigilance against the distortion of the Good that is Evil.

What examples exist beyond schools to shed further light on these distinctions? We turn now to argue that Keith Richards and Mick Jagger and The Rolling Stones have experienced a Badiou-ian event and continue to work as "becoming subjects" through its ensuing truth-process (Badiou, 1998/2001). We posit that their eventful encounter reveals the condition(s) through which eventful teaching might arise, namely, the condition of humility on the part of educators whose aims are to *educate* their students. We juxtapose our discussion of Richards's/Jagger's exploration of blues as truth-process with another story, this one of the author's failed teaching event to explore/explicate Badiouian philosophy as pedagogical strategy reaching beyond socialization towards a hoped-for educational experience for his students.

To begin, we argue that The Rolling Stones fulfill Badiou's (1997/2003) requirements of becoming subjects of truths, being, namely:

- 1) The music industry The Stones helped create "did not pre-exist the event" (Badiou, 1998/2001, p. 14) they declared;
- 2) Badiou writes "truth is entirely subjective ... every subsumption of its becoming under a law will be argued against" (p. 14)—in The Stones' case, their well-documented entanglements with law-enforcement and perception as counter-cultural might speak to this requirement; the industry they helped to create—mass pop music—existed outside the law at the most banal level. Cops at concerts and other public appearances of the new stars were ill prepared to adequately deal with this new audience and, more profoundly, the necessity for the band to invent a new process of staging rock shows on a scale not conceivable prior to advent of what popular magazines referred to as The British Invasion;
- 3) Once an event has been declared—being seized by Chicago Blues, for example—"fidelity to the declaration is crucial, for truth is a process and not an illumination" (p. 15). In Richards' case, his entire life has been a militant conviction to spreading the gospel of the blues, nothing more, nothing less (Richards, 2011);
- 4) Finally, "a truth is a concentrated and serious procedure, which must never enter into competition with established opinions" and is "indifferent to the state of the situation" (Badiou, 1998/2001, p. 15)—for Richards and The Stones, this indifference is perhaps essential to their initial and eventual burgeoning success both within the industry that grew up around them and as forces shattering and reshaping these realms in potential re-beginnings.

The Rolling Stones' storied career helps us contemplate the complexities of experiencing an event that leads to a compelling response to the question, what is educational about education?

The Rolling Stones as a Whole

We approach the question of what may be learned from the lives of Keith Richards and The Stones about the educational, the event, and subjective materiality as “a whole.” In unequivocal terms, philosopher Gilles Deleuze (as cited in Buchanan, 1999) writes that, unless one takes the work of a philosopher *as a whole*, “you just won’t understand it at all” (p. 7). Specifically, it is by treating a philosopher, a filmmaker or musician *as a whole* that we begin to understand a syntax of style that emerges, that takes different directions, reaches impasses, and makes breakthroughs or that we begin to detect the “machine” that they create and the functions it operationalizes for thought and action (Buchanan, 1999).

While we examine in broad strokes this career whole, we also acknowledge the troublesome aspect of highlighting another white band, and British at that, to give body to the philosophical assemblage we seek to deploy. The mal-distributed, policed, and unequal access between artists of color and white artists to North American and European popular audiences through forms of music, film, and art are undeniable, as they remain to a disturbing degree today. But Richards and The Stones are not those white knock offs of American blues who made their fortune using the forms of segregated black musicians who were limited to the “colored radio” and “live chitlin’ circuit” and whose influence was ignored by most of white America. In fact, this racialized segregation begins to break down for a complex range of reasons, including the growing influence of Motown and The Stones themselves when they demanded that their favorite Chicago Blues musicians perform as opening acts for their live US and UK shows and television appearances (Neville, 2015). More than lip service or token recognition, we see Richards/Jagger as singularly committed to living and honoring both their blues masters and a form of blues music that had seized them in their youth and had “ruptured” their lives.⁵

In the documentary *Under the Influence*, blues guitar legend Buddy Guy recounts the first time he saw fellow Chicago Blues men Howlin’ Wolf and Muddy Waters on television. What Guy reveals is that it was at the insistence of Mick Jagger—who was set to appear on the show *Shindig* with the rest of The Stones—that the producers acquiesced and permitted Wolf and Waters to perform in front of the cameras. Guy recounts, “I even cried about that, man. And sure enough, that’s when they brought Howlin’ Wolf and Muddy. And that’s the first time I’d ever seen ‘em on television” (Neville, 2015). It is in the spirit of this kind of reverence and advocacy for the musicians whose music shattered them that we elect to move forward with using The Stones to exemplify the subjective materiality of an educational event.

A Rupture at the Heart of Being – Keith and Music

We begin by tracing Keith Richards’ encounter with music, an encounter that opened up the possibility of an original life-long trajectory or, in Badiou’s terms, a “truth process.” A vital moment for Keith Richards is his exposure to instruments and music at home. As he listens to music on the radio through the influence of his mother’s love of different forms of music. Richards declares, “It was like a drug. In fact a far bigger drug than smack. I could kick smack; I couldn’t

kick music” (Richards, 2011, p. 57). Elsewhere, Richards recounts the first time he heard Elvis Presley’s “Heartbreak Hotel.” It is worth noting Richards’ reaction to hearing it, as the words he uses signal an “event”-ful encounter. Words such as explosion, stunner, overwhelmed, and trigger, in addition to his claim that he was a different person after hearing “Heartbreak Hotel,” suggest his encounter with the song instigated a becoming to articulate an excess of his being. He describes hearing the opening lines of the song, and particularly, “the sound” as being “the last trigger” that would compel him to investigate the “roots” of that music (p. 88). Keith said that the song was “a stunner” and that it “was almost as if I’d been waiting for it to happen” (p. 87). Richards states, “when I woke up the next day, I was a different guy,” and he describes feeling “overwhelmed” (p. 87).

Shortly thereafter, Keith Richards fell in love—with his first guitar. He “never parted” from it, and he “took it everywhere and [he] went to sleep with [his] arm laid across it” (p. 59). As Richards is learning his instrument, he eventually has a fateful encounter with Mick Jagger at a train station, and the two of them immediately bond over the Chuck Berry and Muddy Waters records Mick carries in his possession.

One of the things that Mick brought Keith was a proximity to the records Keith loved. And, “it was, always, about the records”—the sounds of Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf, Lightnin’ Hopkins, and Buddy Guy—these were the “seminal sounds,” the “tablets of stone” (p. 75) that moved Richards and Jagger toward an as-yet-unknown trajectory of a truth process, a search for what music can do.

Another sign that Jagger and Richards maintained fidelity to their eventful encounter with the Chicago Blues sound is in their appreciation for a certain flexibility of expression that some other listeners had no tolerance for. Elsewhere, Richards suggests what Badiou might term an emerging Evil or *simulacrum* of truth taking place: “people were not really listening to the music, they just wanted to be part of this wised-up enclave. ... None of these blues purists could play anything. But their Negroes had to be dressed in overalls and go ‘Yes’m, boss’” (p. 83). For Richards, these purists possessed “the One truth” of what blues music must be. Keith notes his disdain for these audience purists who would boo artists off the stage and exhibit hostility toward what their artistry might be in process of becoming when any performer they hear strayed and stretched their form.

Here we can hear echoes of Badiou—how a “wise enclave,” party, or authority is wont to apply their own truth onto others, a declaration of a one truth for all, even if this application results in epistemic violence by curtailing the potentiality of the new: every new beginning will be “measured by the re-beginnings they authorize” (Badiou as cited in Bartlett, 2011, p. 118). One response to the question regarding what is educational about education is that of an eventful encounter bequeathing opportunity for becoming subjects to our learning and lives. Richards and Jagger continued to search throughout their career for how they might create new expressions of the music that seized them so long ago.

Keith and Grandpa Gus – Educators as “Eventful Teachers”

Badiou’s work, thus covered, allows us to ruminate on a notion of “eventful teacher/teaching” by asking a curricular question for educators: In what ways might we arrange knowledge for the possibility for an “event” to occur and a subsequent truth process to proceed? While he does not address education in any systemic manner, Badiou (2005) proposes that

“‘education’ ... has never meant anything but this: to arrange the forms of knowledge in such a way that some truth may come to pierce a hole in them” (p. 9). For Keith Richards, a third party mediated the eventful encounter. It is perhaps Keith’s grandfather Gus—who arranged Keith’s encounter with the guitar—who offers us the closest analogy for what we mean by eventful teaching and the condition of humility that might be pre-requisite for such an educational potentiality, one that stretches beyond socialization into a realm of the educational. As we will develop below, Gus proceeded by humbly arranging his own knowledge of the instrument to increase the likelihood that Keith would reach for it.

In his autobiography, Keith relays this story of how his grandfather “taught” him to play guitar. In his home, Gus always had the guitar in view. He kept it, however, hanging above a piano. Keith could not reach it. Arranged in this fashion, the instrument caught Keith’s eye. Richards (2011) writes, “And I just kept looking at it, and he didn’t say anything, and a few years later I was still looking at it” (p. 48). Reflecting on this pivotal and transformative moment of his life (Richards has also written a children’s book called *Gus & Me*—a story of getting his first guitar), Richards (2011) again writes that “Gus was leading me subtly into getting interested in playing, rather than shoving something into my hand and saying ‘It goes like this’” (p. 48).

Here, I (Robert) wish to offer one of my own stories of teaching and, in particular, a story that reveals how I ended up imposing “...like this” onto my students, despite my intentions of provoking an eventful encounter for them. I am a high school English Language Arts teacher and a doctoral student at a local university. One doctoral course was event-ful for me. Engaging with the readings and class discussions lead me to understand how my teaching, up to that point, focused more on standardized test-preparation—what Biesta would deem qualification and socialization. I understood, after taking this class, that there was a third function of education, namely, to educate. In class one day, the professor mentioned the novel *Ishmael* by Daniel Quinn (1992) and, having read it once before, I decided this novel would be fruitful for my own students to read as their novel study in grade 12. Years earlier in my first reading, *Ishmael* had shifted something within me and lead me to understand that many of the “Truths” I never questioned were, in fact, stories, myths, or cosmologies that had embedded themselves in a version of our human collected memory so deeply that I, like many, had forgotten they were stories (Kearney, 2002). I thought that, since this novel had ruptured my framework of understandings, it would do the same for my students—that it was a text I could use to arrange an encounter with an event, leading students toward truth-processes of their own.

That semester, I offered the novel to my students and lay in wait for the rupture to begin. Suffice it to say that the only shattering was that of my hopes to have bestowed upon my students an eventful education. They hated the book; most students did not read it, did not discuss it, and did not write about it. When asked what they would change about the course in my end of term survey, they responded, near-unanimously, “*Ishmael*—never again!” I puzzled at this reaction and thought that perhaps it was this batch of students (all 120 of them) that was the issue—not me or the novel. After all, *I* was trying to educate *them*!

The next semester I tried the same, only to receive a similar result. I chalked it up to my pedagogical strategies or the length of the novel or the complexity of the text itself. However, in researching and writing this paper, I have come to another realization—I needed to be more like Keith Richards’ grandfather Gus. In his aim to encourage Keith to fall in love with music and the guitar, Gus’ approach was not to thrust the songs and instrument into Keith’s hands and demand that he learn; instead, Gus hung the guitar on the wall whenever Keith was around. The presence of the guitar in the room on its own seduced an interest by Keith. Keith was drawn to the guitar.

In my own case of teaching *Ishmael*, not only did I thrust the book into their hands, but the implications of their not reading it led to failing assignments, a lower overall course mark, and being less competitive for post-secondary acceptance. More significantly, the education and event I had demanded did not occur, at least not in the way I had envisioned. It is instead, I, co-writing this paper, who received an education. I realized that, much like Charlemagne who imposed Christianity onto his subjects upon pain of death, I too was guilty of such an act of disaster—the Evil act of imposing my truth as a “One truth-path” for all or, alternatively, the cause of my event as being necessary for all. The death in my case was not a physical manifestation, rather, the death of possibility for an “event-ful” education to be encountered. I had proceeded arrogantly and unwittingly stultified such possibilities from arising. Ironically, my doctoral work is in contemplating humility and my teaching practice—which in this case was devoid of it. Humility is what we see as Keith’s grandfather Gus having possessed—a certain kind of restraint, an understanding of a certain impossibility of teaching at the heart of its doing (Felman, 1982, p. 22).

Such restraint or humility is not always easy to enact, “it is as possible, of course, to plan an event as it is to schedule when one falls in love—a fact at the heart of education as a most impossible profession” (den Heyer & Conrad, 2011, p. 13). Perhaps it is this humility that might provide the possibility for teachers to arrange the forms of knowledge such that students might encounter an event and ensuing truth process. In such an arrangement—what we might think of as “Gus-ful” teaching—typically the elder or teacher uses that position to invite or beckon youth to link what they know to that which they “do not in a consistent fashion” (Badiou, 1998/2001, p. 50) rather than demand from them what we teachers may not be able to provide: a subjectively implicating relationship to the possibility of learning about one’s own possibility of new possibilities.

I have begun to see my teaching more humbly as an arrangement of required knowledge, while also being attentive to the possibility of my students encountering an educational event without imposing my own truth-process or timelines onto them. Here, we wish to unpack, briefly, how we might consider teaching in a way that may invite students to encounter an educational event. By “educational” event we mean to signify a Badiou-ian event within the situational context of formal teaching and learning.

Can Curriculum Truly Invite? Aoki’s Invitation & Badiou’s Event

We use the word *invite* to suggest that an encounter with the educational event cannot be thrust upon students. I (Robert) know this because on many occasions I have attempted to coerce my students into a “new” educational dimension of education (in contrast to qualification and socialization aims of such) and, worse, provided them the template through which their resultant personal transformation was to occur. My intentions were not borne of nefarious aims; I have experienced an educational event, and in the hopes of providing my students that same (in my view) *good* education, I stripped them of their agency, and they, in many ways, revolted. Unwittingly I thought I could thrust an object, like a guitar, into their hands to instigate an educationally eventful encounter. We return to this story regarding teaching *Ishmael* to help us think through the distinction between demand and invitation.

In reflecting on my pedagogical approach and urge to thrust the novel *Ishmael* into my students’ hands and minds, I realize that perhaps the object of Keith’s eventful encounter was foremost music, and Chicago Blues in particular. What Gus offered him through the guitar was a

vehicle through which he might be able to express his truth process. In my teaching of the novel, I tried to dictate the object of my students' eventful encounters in the hopes that their emergent truths would map directly onto the experience I had with *Ishmael*. What I have learned is that the object of an educational event is education itself, and the texts that I deploy, alongside our classroom conversations, act, at best, as vehicles through which my students may come to express or embark on a truth process. In this sense, we cannot dictate or demand the specifics of what an educational event will concern itself with, nor may we select a universal specific object as a catalyst for an eventful encounter. Instead, like Gus, we can offer an array of texts through which our students might be seized, along with an invitation to follow through on the aftermath of their event. Here, we wish to further explore the invitation as a context for encountering educational events.

Ted Aoki (1991) writes that, “for [curriculum] to come alive in the classroom, the curriculum itself has to contain, said or unsaid, an invitation to teachers and students to enter into it” (p. 19). Biesta's (2010) qualification, socialization, and educational subjectification functions of schools echoes what Aoki's (1991) offers about three “views” of what schools can be.

First, schools can focus on “rational thinking” where students are perceived as “containers” to be “filled” with “intellectual skills” (Aoki, 1991, p. 19). Aoki's second view is a “utilitarian” school given primarily to “doing,” emphasizing “practical skills” (p. 19). In this view, “the school is a preparations place for the marketplace and students are molded into marketable products” (p. 19). The third and final view is most closely aligned with educational subjectification, or, from Badiou, a “becoming subject” to a learning and life: the “school [is] given primarily to being and becoming, a school that emphasizes and nurtures the becoming of human beings” (Aoki, 1991, p. 19).

Whereas the first two views of school are encountered through “implementation” of curriculum, the latter view is one whose encounter must be reciprocally invited and accepted (Aoki, 1991, pp. 19–20). In our view, Aoki (1991) is suggesting that rigidly implementing a “curriculum-as-planned” not only sees teaching as a series of executable scripted commands, but diminishes the potential for something unknown to emerge; attention to the “curriculum-as-lived” (p. 7) is thwarted.

Aoki (1991) further reinforces this idea of being attuned to the possibilities of the curriculum-as-lived when he offers “curriculum improvisation” as an alternative to curriculum implementation (p. 20). This improvisation of curriculum is premised on participants who willingly accept the invitations to encounter educational “possibilities yet to be” (p. 21). Aoki's notion of curriculum improvisation calls to mind the unexpected and undetermined qualities of Badiou's event. Bartlett (2006) suggests “this education can have no predication *in* those forms of knowledge” (p. 54). That teaching can be considered potentially “event-ful,” from which emerges the possibility of an undetermined re-cognition, is precisely what we mean when we use the term *educational event* and attempt to describe the conditions through which such an event may be encountered.

Final Thoughts – On the Road? Keep Going!

The Rolling Stones continue to write and perform music as a continuation of their truth process. They were seized by the music of the Chicago Blues and subsequently invented a worldwide influencing industry that did not precede them. In what we read via Badiou as their

“truth process,” they continue to honor the legacy of that eventful music and musicians. Their most recent album, *Blue & Lonesome*, features covers of mostly Chicago Blues songs. While some may suggest The Rolling Stones “sold out” long ago, this recent record suggests a band working to promote the art and artists that seized them. It is worth noting that none of the songs on the album are attributed to Jagger and Richards; any songwriting royalties would go to the Chicago Blues artists whose songs were recorded therein—The Stones are putting their money where their logo is.

Despite how you might feel about their music, The Rolling Stones *as a whole* have offered us a way of thinking educationally about education. We also take a moment, in closing, to note that our educational journeys might always be fraught with missteps and feelings of having compromised one’s fidelity to our always situated and singular truth processes, as was the case in my (Robert) teaching of *Ishmael*.

Despite this lack of satisfaction, Badiou’s words to en-courage event-ful becomings—“Keep Going!”—compel us to freshly rearticulate what this eventful failure “will have meant?” These words resonate when we realize that practices of teaching often stand in stark contrast to the reasons we became teachers in the first place—we find ourselves, at the end of a semester, shattered and asking, what have we done? Our academic preparation also leaves us wanting:

As with anything that constitutes an event, worlds are turned upside down, neuroses engendered, terrible beauties are born and education departments are forced to confront something that they are professionally required to find incomprehensible, namely, the desire to be educated, as something over and above the development of a specialist-knowledge, vocational competence, or the vague promotion of currently venerated “values.” (Cooke, 2013, p. 3)

In these moments of compromise or of wonderment, we might remember Keith Richard’s grandfather, and in the spirit of such Gus-ful humility and pedagogy, remain open to the educational possibilities that may arise as we Keep Going!

Notes

1. We provide an example of such excess further below in the teaching story about *Ishmael*.
2. For Badiou, events-truth processes occur within four conditions or fields of human endeavor, love, science, art, and politics. We see education as encompassing each.
3. It is important to note that Badiou’s French translated into “Evil” is “le Mal,” which also connotes sickness in addition to something *very bad* and, thus, invokes shades of Lacanian and Foucauldian analyses into human situations. Evil, however, is a tactically useful translation in that it secularizes the term as a question of ethics and human situations.
4. For a wonderful explication of Badiou’s notion of evil placed alongside that of Lyotard, Said, and Derrida, see Jenkins, 2004.
5. Please note we do not suggest that these artists and band were the only ones to either be seized by the blues or to honour through subsequent work those masters. Many other examples across musical genres exist.

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