



JOMEC Journal
Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies

Published by Cardiff University Press

Anticipating the Educational Encounter as Event

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Keywords

Education as 'event'
Transformative education
Educational theory

Abstract

This paper attempts a consideration of some aspects of what has become known as the 'philosophy of event' as they apply to educational theory and specifically to the educational question of how individuals as subjects can undergo transformation, understood as change that brings forth something new. The centrality of this question is based in the idea that education does not have any meaning or potency without an understanding of how thought, opinions, dispositions and behaviour can be and are changed in educational engagements with knowledge, the world and with other human subjects. Equally important, and therefore also considered briefly here, is the question of the *agency* of the subjectivity of the individual and whether external social, cultural and historical forces provide a complete frame in order to explain the educational subject. In other words, questions are raised as to whether education can bring about change and if so whether individuals in their subjectivity have any control over this.

Contributor Note

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Citation

Seery, Aidan (2016), 'Anticipating the Educational Encounter as Event', *JOME C Journal* 10, 'Teaching and the Event', ed. Éamonn Dunne.
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18573/j.2016.10086>

Introduction

The title of this paper contains two key ideas: that of the 'educational encounter' and of the 'event' which require some clarification for an education audience at least before it is possible to speak about the way in which their possible connection can create a radical new way of thinking about a central concern of education. The first part of this paper will say something about what might be described as the philosophy of the 'event' but I will preface these remarks by placing them in a broader context that also contains important educational, social, and political dimensions.

In the broadest terms, the context of these ideas is contemporary social, cultural and political *change* and the way in which education and the education of the individual particularly, is connected with change and/or its conditions and possibility. To be more precise, I am referring to that key question of any educational theory or practice of *how individuals as subjects can undergo transformation, understood as change that brings forth something new*. This question is of special importance in any discussion of educational theory especially since the idea of education does not have any meaning or potency without an understanding of how thought, opinions, dispositions and behaviour can be and are changed in educational engagements with knowledge and with other human subjects. A second important question that frames the context of the idea of 'event' is whether and if so to what degree such change is in some way connected with the *agency* of subjectivity of the individual or whether external social, cultural and historical forces provide a complete frame in order to explain the phenomenon. In other words,

can education bring about change and if so do individuals in their subjectivity have any control over this.

In our contemporary situation, there is some considerable doubt about the latter. Orthodox Marxist and structuralist arguments have been joined by postmodernist relativism and appellative identities in undermining or discrediting any notion of human beings being in rational, conscious control over their actions, or even their thought, in a way that could bring forth something new that changes or modifies a status quo that is shaped by structures in a determinate way. This provides a clear challenge to many ideas on the possibilities for education which has generally regarded itself as a force for personal agency and autonomy. On the other hand, my generation at least, despite this declared *theoretical* impossibility, has seen tumultuous social, cultural and political change and at least for the generation following the students of 1968 who famously claimed that 'structures do not take to the street', change, transformation and revolution does not seem to be accounted for fully by economic or historical determinism or by socio-cultural structures.

Pursuing the nature of change/transformation and how it can or does come about a little further, I want to consider two questions, both of which lead to the idea of the 'event'. The first is the question of the 'newness' of change and in what can it be recognised and grasped as such by individuals, but also by groups. The second question concerns how it might come about and its origins. Both questions concern a number of influential contemporary thinkers such as Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, Adrian Johnston and Claude Romano. For instance, a recurring theme

in the writings of Badiou is to investigate the conditions and possibilities of 'profound, universalisable innovation in any situation' (Badiou 2003: 111) and his work has had considerable influence on Žižek's more recent work. For this reason, I will start then with Badiou and his thought concerning the conditions and possibility of change and the new.

I. The matter of 'newness'

With regard to the first question, both authors associate 'newness' with *the figure of abrupt discontinuity*. Newness can be recognised minimally in an occurrence of *rupture that separates*. In different contexts, such ruptures can be in relationships, communications, or in historical understandings, among other things. They are also often associated with some *violence*, either in the literal physical sense or in the sense of a metaphorical explosion or irruption and, as such, they are *not expected and occur suddenly without warning*. These first characteristics distinguish newness (and as we shall see, 'event') as a disruptive happening rather than the product of more gradual modification or assimilation as is known from theories of human development much regarded in certain educational circles. The claim is that this radical newness cannot be absorbed into any pre-existing creative or innovative processes, no matter how much these may invoke chaos or fractal theory to demonstrate their non-determinate form. In a deeply radical way this newness is firstly, not part of history and the usual understanding of the passage of time and secondly and equally importantly, is not amenable to *measurement* in any way. Considering these one at a time, the first feature, that an occurrence of newness in some way

stands *outside of time and does not have a history* that can explain its emergence or appearance, is one that is addressed in Badiou's work only by way of his developing a fuller theory of history and time that cannot be pursued here. Secondly, the difficulty that newness is not amenable to measurement is disappointing to those who would restrict all that can exist to that which can be measured and, as we will see, it will also make a demand in educational settings to develop ways of recognition and identification of happenings that do not depend on a metric or development over time.

II. The matter of origins

The second question concerning the 'happening' of newness posed above concerns not the nature of it but its *origins and the ways in which it comes about, or the problematic of its conditions*. Some of the difficulties and challenges of Badiou's description of the temporality of the event of newness have been mentioned and these have particular consequence for any attempt to employ Badiou to explain the origins and antecedents of newness. If it is the case that newness is a rupture in the normal course of history and time, then it would seem to follow that the event of newness can have no history and therefore it is impossible to identify conditions, objects or situations that triggers 'the new.' This clearly poses a major difficulty for anyone, an educator for instance, who is interested in priming or preparing the ground for the explosion of the transformatively new in an educational engagement. There is a sense in which the new can be recognised in its product only from a position in the future and that an

understanding of the process by which something new comes about can only be had from the perspective of the future perfect. The after, in a real sense, becomes constitutive of the before and changes the actual nature and status of the past in a way that makes it impossible to reconstruct its prior ontological status. In this way it is no longer possible to identify the conditioning and enabling factors in any situation that leads to a transformational event since the very transcendental possibility of making the identification has been altered by the very occurrence itself. Our coming event is becoming more and more mysterious!

A definition of 'event'

Badiou distinguishes between four kinds of change and newness; modification, weak singularities (which have no lasting consequences), strong singularities (which bring existential change but which remains measureable), and finally (and here we get to the central concepts), events, which are *strong singularities whose consequences are virtually infinite* (Badiou 2003: 132). Putting this together with a number of the claims and observations above, we can attempt a first definition of the event as *the unpredictable and unexpected irruption of a destructive, transformative singularity of newness of truth whose consequences are virtually infinite*.

The concept of the event has attracted the attention of a number of philosophers recently and it is often regarded with an attitude of messianic awe as something secularly sacred that stands 'outside of ideologies, structures of power, linguistic systems, etc' (Gratton 2010: 2) and capable of effecting

fundamental change and bringing about a new way of being in the world. The 'event' indeed has some seemingly strange features and some of these challenge the way in which we normally think about change and transformation. They also, I believe, challenge the way in which we normally consider educational growth and development. But my central claim is that, at least at certain times and places that cannot be known in advance and cannot be prepared for, an event, such as described here can occur in educational encounters. These educational events possess a certain aura of purity and clarity, a radical openness to the future, a fundamental indeterminacy and the possibility that it can erupt from within an individual, group or system or can come unexpectedly from the outside. In either of these cases, the event retains the feature that its occurrence cannot be predicted or explained by any chain of detectable causal elements.

III. The 'Grasping of the self'

A further important feature of the event, or the event of newness, is the way in which it *grasps* the human individual and compels him/her to take on a difficult labour of changing existing, determinate circumstances in the world, a task referred to by Johnston as 'inscribing...truths back into the textured being of the world' (Johnston 2007: 10). Newness comes in a flash but it is transformative in a real material sense only when a human subject *acts* on the experience of the event, moving from blinding insight to action. Materially, it is only to the extent that this labour is evident (and can even be measured) that transformation and newness can be detected and recognised. Of course, this

effect raised the question about what it is in an event that is capable of laying hold of an individual to such an extent that her/his very being is caught up and transformed in the experience and capable of attracting faithful devotion. Here Lacanian/Žižekian thinking around *desire* provides the most convincing argument. In some real sense, the happening of newness in an event must be the partial fulfilment of 'pre-evental' desire, of which I will say something more below. Now, however, having defined what is meant here by 'event', it is time to say something about the second key concept of the paper.

The educational encounter

The second concept central to this paper is that of the educational encounter. By this I mean *the embarking upon and sustaining of a dialectical relationship between a curious, inquiring and desiring human subject and some immediate object of a desire that promises the individual meaning, knowledge and truth*. The immediate object that offers itself as fulfilment of the desire for meaning can be a teacher/mentor, a group of inquirers, a book, film, play, or idea or any number of activities. Some of these relationships of truth-and-knowledge-desire have a certain longevity while others are transient and I want to argue that some of these relationships bear the possibility of being the locations and material conditions of educational or learning events.

The argument is quite straightforward. In a similar way to all other social, cultural and political relations, the educational relationship is one of structured, symbolic exchange and ritual. As such, it is, in the same way as any cultural or political setting, subject to relations of power and ideology. Therefore, as Badiou

and Žižek argue that the event is the only way in which to think of the possibility of a radical transformation of the symbolic order, I think something similar can be claimed for real transformative learning as an event. The consequences of thinking of educational encounters and learning as a Badiouian/Žižekian event are considerable and I want, in the rest of this paper to refer to some of them.

First, a learning event is a sudden irruption or disclosure within the imminent confines of the learning situation of something that *did not 'exist' as a factor prior to the event* and which can only be named and identified after the event. This clearly constitutes a difficulty for all 'planning' of such learning but also for any prediction of its effects or outcome. This includes any prediction about its effects on individuals. A study of the aftermath of great social, political and religious events indicates clearly that some people are transformed while others are not. The event of the French Revolution, or that of the life of Jesus of Nazareth or the Prophet Mohammed transformed many who belonged to the world-situation in which these 'explosions' occurred but equally many were left untouched by them. Similarly, in educational settings, events happen in some and do not happen in others, the subjects that are transformed by and then sustain the event do not always include everyone who was part of the pre-evental situation. Not everyone is carried along and it may be necessary to assume that there is something in some people at certain times and in certain spaces that facilitates certain kinds of transformation.

IV. Anticipating the educational event – the desire for change and the new

One way of understanding how some individuals, in educational and other settings, can be amenable to the experience and embrace of the event is to invoke the idea, mentioned above, of 'pre-evental desire'. A desire for change and transformation could generate an ability to perceive or detect the signs and 'figures' of an imminent event, and there may even be a way to educate in a manner that develops this ability. Adapting a suggestion made by Žižek and Badiou, an 'education of searching and anticipation' might begin with an examination of the rhetoric and themes of the discourse of government policies and values since it is to be expected that the state and its apparatuses are likely to be concealing the weak points of the system either by an overly enthusiastic endorsement or by means of distraction. Thus, for instance, the rush to confirm commitment to democratic and liberal values in the face of attack by fundamentalism and even terrorism can also be perceived as a way of concealing the weak and ineffective nature of many democracies; the public and educational over-emphasis on scientific and technological knowledge as the means to the solution of all of the problems facing the human species could also be a way of distracting from the intuition held by many that these systems do not offer the complete narrative and are, indeed, manipulated by power groups. Bringing this even closer to education, policy insistence on matters of inclusion, multiculturalism, the importance of STEM and so on, may well be shouted so loudly in order to conceal the whispers that all is not right with these clearly obvious, common-sensical values and commitments and that an eruption is perhaps about to occur.

Where else might we anticipate the signs of a possible imminent occurrence of a radical transformation? In a first detailing of what is involved in the detection of the weakness of the system, Badiou suggests the identification of *paradoxical or seemingly paradoxical relations* as one point of access. More particularly again, he invites attention to the status of policies and political directives which manifest a change or even a minimal difference in significance over time as indicators of a more radical event that is to come. To give an example from the field of educational policy, it is possible from a present standpoint to discern that the European and national policy of what is known as 'life-long learning' shifted in its ideological status even before the economic downturn of the mid 2000s and was evident even in countries in Europe which did not experience an economic crisis. There seems to have been a dawning but barely recognisable acknowledgment that this conceptual pillar for policy was shifting in a way that pre-empted the event that brought about its demise, the radical new era of entrepreneurial and 'innovation' education. The fact that it is only with hindsight that it is really possible to see the shifts in the change-categories of certain phenomena illustrates how difficult an educational task it is to learn how to discern in this way.

Another indicator of imminent transformative change that can serve in this role is, according to Badiou, the *excessive insistence on the orthodoxy of common-sense or the aggressive demand for conformity to a standard view*. These together with even more extreme outbursts of violence or brutality in enforcing regulations and standardisation are often symptomatic of what Johnston refers to as 'an underlying impotence on the verge of being



revealed, desperate last resorts to protect an insubstantial Symbolic authority' (Johnston 2009: 40). What is suggested in the case of the possibility of political change seems also to apply to educational settings in which inherited knowledge, methodological discipline and relational hierarchies can be insisted upon in a way that borders on hysterical. There is also the sense in much disciplinary education that some do protest too much and thereby reveal that their confidence in the system may not be as solid as might be expected and that the system of knowledge itself may be more fragile and insubstantial than anticipated. Badiou sees in the overt exercise of power a weakness and claims that 'truly effective...power is thus always and necessarily a shadowy, potential sort of power' (Badiou 2005: 144).

Matters are made even more complicated by the realisation that the post-event world changes the language and conceptual frame in such a radical way that it is simply not possible to identify any of the prior conditions of the event. This is a point made by Terry Eagleton in his commentary on Badiou and is certainly known in the history of science when a new view or paradigm so changes the language of the field that, certainly after a time, it is impossible in the new language to re-construct the conditions that led to an event such as the conclusive formulations of the calculus by Leibnitz and Newton. If this is the case, then it also should not surprise in the field of education that a learner, following a transformative experience of real insight, does not have the language in which to explain how the event came about or even to describe the conditions that prevailed before the event that could have been involved in the process. Once again, this is not the kind of news

that a curriculum planner or a teacher trained in designing learning interventions with pre-determined outcomes that depend on the construction of enabling pedagogical conditions that are meant to bring about learning is likely to welcome. Nevertheless, it is important to examine the extent to which the occurrence of transformative events can be discerned from afar since the adoption of a quietist stance that proposes that they cannot be foreseen would be to renege on the possibility of bringing about change by means of prior behaviour.

In addition to the indicator of overt expressions of power and coercion in the antechamber of transformative events, Badiou (and Derrida also) regard the increase in *technological complexity and sophistication* in many aspects of social and political life as the source of weaknesses that are capable of undermining and ultimately destroying a system. As with all networks, the greater the complexity, the greater the chance of it containing bugs or flaws that expose it to manipulation and collapse or indeed achieving a 'life of its own' in a way that removes it from the control, not only of any single individual, but even from those who designed the network. There is ample evidence in the social and political realm of highly complex systems showing either the tendency to slip out of control or providing terrorists, for instance, multiple opportunities to crash the system. The increasing complexity of educational encounters and interactions mediated also to a great extent by ever more sophisticated technology but also increased bureaucratic systems would seem susceptible in a similar way to manipulation and collapse. *The ubiquitous and loud claim that technology is about to transform education could become true in a*





manner not envisaged by those making it. Already there are ample signs of the undermining of traditional educational relations that apportioned well-defined roles to the teaching and learning actors as a result of the access that all have to information. However, there are signs also that the transformation could be even more radical, touching not only these relations but also undermining the very foundations of the knowledge of the disciplines and of education itself. Again, viewed from a materialist viewpoint, there are clear indications that the destruction of education will come from within, from the very things that have been invited in, adopted and value-laden with the aim of 'improving and enhancing' it. The danger comes not from the imposition of external views such as often claimed of the workings of neo-liberalism and managerialism in education, the destructive event is much more likely to come from within a system that has become so complex that it bears its own destructive bugs.

Ironically, but in a true Žižekian sense, another place to look in order to detect the precursors, or figures of change and newness in the weaknesses of a current symbolic and socio-political order might be in *those very things that we hold most dear; the chains that we embrace most readily and eagerly.* Often these overlap with those of the state apparatuses and we are such enthusiastic democrats and scientists, espousing equality and empirical rational thought to the extent of unquestioning loyalty that our position can border on an evangelical and colonising valorisation of a system that has no view to its own deficiencies and the inherent contradiction of a superiority based on avowed tolerance, equality and acceptance of difference. Perhaps our classrooms are such places of

exemplary tolerance, equality and acceptance of difference that anyone who does not see this and does not act accordingly is excluded and we cannot see how this is a contradiction until the explosion of the other that has been excluded in this way.

It is important to note here however, that the identification of points of weakness that could indicate the emergence of something new in an event is not the same process, nor has it the same object of critique, as proposed by advocates of a critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy still often regards the system as an external ideological force operating on the level of language and rhetoric. It does not see that the system is willingly and affectively embraced by its victims in an almost completely encompassing libidinal economy. In a Badiouian-Žižekian world it is much more difficult to identify systemic weaknesses that might lead to something new and transformative if one is emotionally and passionately involved in a system that could collapse as a result of a deeply transformative event. For educators, the very passion of our commitment to our disciplines, to ways of thinking about pedagogy, human development, intelligence and all of those other things that we are attached to in education, may be the very things that will or must be jettisoned when a transformative event grasps us.

To an education of anticipation and preparation

The possibilities for *education in preparation* or even identification of the conditions for transformative change are complex and even contradictory in pre-eventual situations. On the one hand, the



traditional role of education and learning has been the induction into and the preservation of the status quo of knowledge and its promises. On the other hand, education is also called upon, now more than ever before, to be an instrument of change and innovation. The difficulty faced by education would seem not only to lie at the level of the processes and how to identify and bring about change but, much more fundamentally, the facing of the possibility that by engaging with real change and transformation, the very foundations of traditional education could be threatened. A real educational event, in the sense of a Badiouian event or a Žižekian act, is likely to result in an experience of the trauma of the real in the first instance and then, in any subsequent embrace of the event, to the demand for significant 'unlearning' and rejection of much hard won intellectual and educational achievement. I am quite sure that this is not the kind of 'innovation' and 'creativity' that the ubiquitous education TED talkers want.

Are educators in a position to and do they have the appetite to take pedagogical approaches that can be employed in order to reveal the weaknesses of the system and even provoke traumatic change and destruction? Are they willing to question the power of the standard bodies of knowledge that exist only because the activity, beliefs and trust of learners supports and nurture them? The belief-world and the action of *learners* and not teachers are the only things that really give existence to the knowledge that is proposed to them and they bear considerable responsibility for their learning, not in the sense of the efficiency of their knowledge gain, but in a sense of providing an existential basis and justification for that knowledge. This

is by far a much greater and ethically grounded material responsibility than normally attributed to learning.

A further reason why eventual educational encounters may not be welcome concerns the destruction that occurs that is beyond any planned or intended change. The kind of transformation that comes about under the weight of the internal complexity of systems either in the individual or in a group is one that is *without a goal*. The educational encounter as event is unpredictable and non-teleological. It could go anywhere! This is quite different from the idea of a transformation being brought about in a conscious way in order to achieve a pre-determined outcome. If this is indeed the case, then the idea of educational events or acts that are truly transformative is itself one that is capable of traumatic disruption of the usual concept of education as either gradual or evolutionary growth or incremental, progressive development.

Truth events can be on the point of breaking through into the world in their disruptiveness and then because of certain contingences of situations do not actually succeed in emerging. This demonstrates clearly that truth-events are dependent on the empirical features and characteristics of the world into which they break or not. In this way, Badiouian truths are not Platonic since the latter inhabit a separate world in a pure form and what is evident in the world is a mere temporal and flawed copy. Because of the materialist nature of the event with its dependence on the contingencies of world-situations, there is no such thing as a repetition of a potential event. In fact, there can be no such thing as repetition at all since it will always be the case that a given situation will have changed in some way by the

time the next 'repetition' comes along. Certainly, the question remains whether these changes are such as to affect the successful happening of a 'repeated' event but an over-concentration on a positivist approach that would isolate mechanical elements in an attempt to construct a causal network is reductive and misses the key message that the complete material situation is bound up with the event in a way gives an undecidability to the emergence of something new. As a result, Badiou uses the term 'resurrection' for the re-emergence of an eclipsed transformative event rather than the term repetition. A resurrection implies a two-fold new world in the sense that the world in which it takes place is always new and the event itself then also inaugurates a new post-evental world.

From the perspective of the possibility and occurrence of educational events in the life of a learner, the suggestion here is that situations in which something was perhaps about to happen but did not can come around in a similar fashion again, but a seeming repetition in educational settings is probably never such and it is likely the case that reductive analyses reduce the richness of educational encounters to the extent that the value and the newness of 'repetition', a currently much maligned if not discarded idea, is completely missed.

As a final thought on educational events and their anticipation, there is some evidence in Badiou's work, particularly in the final sections of *The Logics of Worlds* (2013), of an even more radical idea that human situations may not be singular in the sense that they can be described in any one coherent conceptual frame and that human beings are capable of inhabiting a number of worlds and symbolic orders at the same time. A

consequence of this thought is that when individuals engage in educational and other encounters, they can do this as different symbolic actors, living, for instance in the worlds of mature student, parent, friend and lover, diabetes sufferer and so on. It is then possible that significant pre-event factors could have a different status in these worlds so that even a repeated gesture or intervention has changed in both meaning and possibility. Once again these possibilities and shifts may not be consciously accessible to either those who experience them or other members in a group, underlining the incalculability of situations. Both Badiou and Žižek are united in their conviction that the prevailing symbolic order, 'the big Other' constantly operates in a way that dismisses or conceals this multiplicity and uncertainty, offering the illusion of a comprehensive, controlled and stable world.

Engaging in an education that is not only open to 'event' but actually desires and seeks out the signs and places of possible transformation demands of the learner a number of virtues and abilities connected with an education not of intellectual insight but of virtue and character. The anticipation of an event that will transform perspectives and behaviours fundamentally requires the belief that it will indeed come about and bring about something that is good. It requires the confidence, courage and perseverance to continue on a path of effort already taken. Clearly this is not an easy task and it is not at all obvious what the origins of such courage and confidence are. It can be conjectured, however, that in the case of educational events and their possibility, that the language of the learning environment and the presence of someone or others who have already experienced the



anticipation and the fulfilment of a radical transformation of their thinking and views are of central importance. In the case of language, Badiou suggests that creative and inventive language, even poetic language, plays an important role in the anticipation of a different world to come. It is as if a rejection of the standard terms of curriculum and learning, an abandonment of the inherited vocabulary of the sciences, arts and humanities and a playful engagement with the possibilities of language and expression could be a way of actually 'forcing' the change in perspective that is hoped for and anticipated. This is an important idea in the way in which it points also to the grounding of subjectivity in the very limits of language. It suggests that subject formation occurs at the very boundaries of language and concept, even at the points where these break down. For Badiou, *the subject is actually formed by a truth event and by the fidelity that an individual bears to the event in the time after its occurrence*. These events, difficult as they are to predict, identify and understand are at the core of what it means to become subject. They generate truths which break open symbolic orders and transcend the individual and his or her desires, needs and previous thought. In the work of both Badiou and Žižek, these events or acts are real, traumatic interruptions of the workings of the quotidian world that are constitutive, in their newness, of subjectivity. Education, thought of as self-formation in this way, becomes an exercise in the anticipation of transformation and the preparation for what is to come even though that which is to come is likely to be traumatic and disruptive even to the extent of destroying and re-shaping one's self.

For Badiou, subject formation is concerned with truth-events that erupt in four conditioning areas: love, science, politics and art. It does not seem at all unreasonable to argue that these are also the central domains of education, as those tentative and porous dimensions of learning about self and the world in the construction of a human subject. The anticipation and experience of educational truth events in these domains are not simply intellectual activities or matters of pure cognition. Both anticipation and experience as educational phenomena are encompassing of bodies, desires and affectivity at the very limits of linguistic expression and perhaps even beyond. The affects of happiness, joy, enthusiasm and pleasure which Badiou associates to each of these domains are the results of events but also serve to support the anticipation of future transformations by providing affective motivation. This is important since Badiou avoids romanticising the event and contends equally that truth procedures are always also accompanied by anxiety, terror, courage and justice. Viewing the educational encounter as at least containing the possibility of transformative events, implies then not only the idea that we do not completely determine our own nature in some progressive determined developmental way, it suggests that being subject in the world means accepting that one remains a mystery to oneself, never truly knowing how the next event is going to change oneself. It is not surprising then that events are accompanied not only by feelings of elation, satisfaction and happiness but also by anxiety and fear and consideration of others in courage and justice. Herein lies a core ethical consideration of the process of education. If it does occur by way of transformative event, then the process



needs to be supported by the fostering of the virtue and qualities that are needed in order to secure the conditions of events. These virtues, as indicated, include those of courage, perseverance and patience. At the same time, there is an ethical imperative not to try to avoid anxiety and fear since there can be no transformation without these accompanying effects. In a world in which education and its language have been re-cast in terms of technologies of cognitivism, systems and methods, this view restates the importance of the negative, the subvertive and the disruptive and the ethical considerations that adhere to their embrace.

Of course, this view begs the question of what if certain individuals never have the experience of an educational truth-event necessary to make them true subjects. The Badiouian/Žižekian event/act understanding of education could leave itself open to the criticism of elitism and even proto-Fascism as a result of the idea that certain individuals might be chosen or 'graced' by an event and others not. This is a clear difficulty with this view and one that must be addressed. At the very least it must be clear that eventual experience is open to all and that to some considerable extent, there is a decision involved on the part

of individuals, teachers and learners, to engage with the world in such a way that they put themselves in the way of events. On the other hand, it would seem not impossible that certain individuals could decide for the ideologically promoted stable monolith of the status quo without disturbance. The degree to which it is possible to live in this way, or whether indeed it is possible at all, is questionable, but it cannot be dismissed completely. However, on the view presented here more is required for the formation of a human subject than the development or realisation of an embodied, linguistic being; this embodied, linguistic being has to have the experience of truth in event, has to recognise this and then embrace this in some kind of lasting fidelity that shapes him or her. Systems of education and schooling, educational encounters and relationships cannot be the sites of subject formation and subjectivity unless this dimension of truth is present and the necessary conditions for its emergence are fostered. The challenge to education to think these possibilities seriously, even at the cost of undermining its own best-held beliefs is now given and demands attention.

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This article was first published in *JOMEC Journal*

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Editors: Evelina Kazakeviciute and Alida Payson

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ISSN: ISSN 2049-2340

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